5-2011

Perceptions and Actions Regarding Parent Involvement in a Small Northeast Tennessee School District.

Randy Adam Watts
East Tennessee State University

Perceptions and Actions Regarding Parent Involvement in a Small Northeast Tennessee School District

---

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

---

by

Randy Adam Watts

May 2011

Dr. Virginia Foley, Chair

Dr. Eric Glover

Dr. Don Good

Dr. Elizabeth Ralston

Keywords: Parent Involvement, Teacher Perceptions, Administrator Perceptions

ABSTRACT

Perceptions and Actions Regarding Parent Involvement in a Small Northeast Tennessee School District

by

Randy Adam Watts

The purpose of this study was to compare the perception scores and action scores of teachers in a northeast Tennessee school system in terms of parent involvement. Also, this study examined the relationship between perception scores and action scores of administrators and teachers across the district. Lastly, this study determined if significant differences existed in the perception scores and action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

Data were collected by questionnaires containing sections for demographic information, perceptions of parent involvement, and actions involving parent involvement. The population consisted of 437 certified teachers and 24 building level administrators. From that population, 298 teachers and 18 administrators responded.

Independent-samples *t* tests were used to compare the action scores of teachers in a high perception group and a low perception group. As a whole, teachers in the low perception group tended to have lower action scores than those in the high perception group. However, when analyzed by grade level, no significant differences were noted between the high perception and low perception groups.

One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) testing was used to test for differences in the perception scores and action scores of teachers by grade level. Significant differences were noted in the perception scores and action scores between the elementary, middle, and high school groups. A post hoc Tukey procedure clearly indicated that elementary school action scores were significantly different from middle action scores, and middle school action scores were significantly different from high school action scores. A post hoc LSD procedure clearly indicated that elementary school perception scores were significantly different from middle perception scores, and middle school perception scores were significantly different from high school perception scores.

Single-sample *t* tests revealed a significant difference in the perception scores and action scores of teachers and administrators across the district. In each single-sample *t* test, the mean administrator score was used as the test value. Each test confirmed that the sample mean was significantly lower than the test value.

This study was important in uncovering information about the perception scores and action scores of teachers and administrators in the area of parent involvement. Parent involvement has been consistently shown to have positive benefits on students but is still an underused resource. Recommendations are made with the intention of helping schools better understand how to serve their students and communities more effectively.

DEDICATION

For my wife Amanda and daughter Madelyn,
I love you both very much!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for helping make this degree possible. First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Virginia Foley, Dr. Eric Glover, Dr. Don Good, and Dr. Elizabeth Ralston for their time, expertise, and encouragement. You all were with me from the very beginning of my cohort and have helped build a leadership program which I am proud to be a part of.

Next, I would like to thank all of the people who volunteered their time to participate in this study. These educators went above and beyond, allowing me time and flexibility to invade their faculty meetings with little notice. I am extremely fortunate to work with such dedicated professionals.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for all of their sacrifices and support. I cannot begin to express my gratitude to my wife Amanda for bearing with me the emotional, financial, and scheduling burdens that we have over the past 4 and a half years. I can't imagine what our lives will be like with neither of us in school but I can't wait to find out! And to my precious daughter Madelyn, I thank you for constantly reminding me what is truly important in my life. When the stress of graduate school and work became overwhelming, your smile alone made it all disappear. You will always be my little princess.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 3 decades, the definition of parent involvement has become more and more complex. Clark (1983) defined parent involvement as distinctive parent-child interactions such as helping students with homework, expressing expectations for school performance, and providing supportive learning environments at home. McNeal (1999) provided a more detailed view of parent involvement as participation in parent teacher organizations, monitoring progress, and providing educational support measures. Lee and Bowen (2006) added to these definitions and took them a step further to include attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school, and being involved in school sponsored activities. Wong (2008) said parent involvement was "the extent to which parents are interested in, knowledgeable about, and willing to take an active role in the day-to-day activities of the children" (p. 497-498). Regardless of the definition, students need more support than ever from home as schools struggle with increased accountability, teacher shortages, and budget crises.

Parent involvement is such an important resource to a school because, besides being essentially free of monetary charges, it has been shown to have a significant influence on student achievement (Barnard, 2004; Fan, 2001). Similarly, a review of literature by Becher (1986) revealed "substantial evidence" of increased academic performance and overall cognitive development for students whose parents are more involved in their schooling. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) backed up these claims by showing a 30-point difference on standardized achievement tests between students with involved parents and students whose parents

were not (Dietel, 2006). Research has also found associations between parent involvement and a greater likelihood of aspiring to attend college (Cabrera & Steven, 2000; Horn, 1998), lower rates of behavioral problems (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and lower instances of high school dropout and truancy (McNeal, 1999). In light of these and other positive research results parent involvement gained national attention as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was passed as a "landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 7). The following is a summary of the rules provided by NCLB on how school districts are advised to involve parents.

- Write parent involvement policies that are developed jointly with parents;
- Hold an annual meeting to explain parents' rights to be involved;
- Write school-improvement plans that include strategies for parent involvement;
- Spend around 1% of their money on engaging families;
- Inform parents, in understandable language, about the progress of their children and what they can do to help;
- Notify parents if a teacher does not meet the federal definition of highly qualified;
- Distribute and annual report card on the performance of schools;
- Inform parents if a school is low performing and provide options for transferring to a better-performing school and free tutoring the following year; and
- Spread information about effective parent involvement practices and help schools with lagging parent involvement programs (Johnsen, p. 6, 2007).

Since NCLB in 2001, the school has emerged as the leader in initiating parent involvement. Unfortunately, parents are not always able to overcome certain barriers preventing them from taking a vested interest in their child's education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (1994) school initiation of parent involvement is more important than certain family characteristics such as parent education level, family size, marital status, socioeconomic level, or student grade level for determining parent

participation. Fortunately, the foundation for building a strong system for parent involvement is relatively simple with only three fundamental steps. Staples and Diliberto (2010) advised that schools must first begin by building a positive rapport with parents. This is started on the very first day of school with a positive, inviting atmosphere and should be a continuous process throughout the year. Second, schools must develop a system for communication. Telephone calls, emails, newsletters, or parent-teacher conferences are just a few common communication tools that may be used. Once a system is developed, the school needs to commit to it and stick to the established pattern for the entire year. Finally, the school must create additional opportunities for parents to be involved. From open houses to chaperoning field trips to volunteering in the classroom, parents need to be presented with multiple opportunities to become involved throughout the year.

Statement of the Problem

Under NCLB, schools are required to reach the goal of 100% proficient on State standardized tests. If research has shown a positive impact of parent involvement on critical factors such as achievement, behavior, attendance, and motivation, where are schools in terms of parent involvement? What type of strategies can be implemented to improve parent involvement in our schools? The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions and actions of teachers in a northeast Tennessee school system in terms of parent involvement. Also, this study examined the relationship between perceptions and actions of administrators and teachers across the district.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group?
2. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary, middle, and high school levels?
3. Is there a significant difference in the perception scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?
4. Is there a significant difference in the action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?
5. Is there a significant difference in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide?
6. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide?

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to an underrepresented area of research on parent involvement. Most research in this area has been focused on student outcomes and school actions with little attention given to educators on the front lines, what their perceptions are, and if their actions are reflective of those perceptions. Furthermore, research on the effects of administrators' perceptions regarding parent involvement on teachers is virtually nonexistent. Lastly, this study was valuable in helping this northeast Tennessee school system diagnose where its educators are in terms of parent involvement, uncovering

whether teachers are acting according to or against their own perceptions, and showing similarities and differences between school leaders and teachers regarding parent involvement.

Definitions of Terms

1. Parent Involvement – the extent to which parents are interested in, knowledgeable about, and willing to take an active role in the day-to-day activities of the children (Wong, 2008).
2. Parent – person or persons having legal guardianship of a school aged child.
3. Perception Score – the sum of questionnaire items 7 – 14 for this study, representing a participant's perception level regarding parent involvement.
4. Action Score – the sum of questionnaire items 15 – 23 for this study, representing a participant's action level regarding parent involvement.
5. High Perception Group – the group of teachers who perceived parent involvement to be important, having a perception score above the population median of 72.
6. Low Perception Group – the group of teachers who did not perceived parent involvement to be important, having a perception score below the population median of 72.

Limitations and Delimitations

One obvious limitation of this study is the population size. In 2009 the school district reported 437 teachers and 24 building level administrators on the TN Department of Education Report Card (2009). From that population 316 questionnaires were returned with usable information. Also, the size and diversity of the school district are such that generalizations to a greater population may not be appropriate from this study. Another

limitation is the timing of data collection. Because data collection occurred shortly after the second semester began, many secondary teachers had brand new students and may not have had time to establish relationships with parents.

Overview of Study

Chapter 1 provides some background information on parent involvement, research questions posed, the significance of the study, definitions of terms, and limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 is a review of literature including the evolution of, positive benefits of, various strategies for, barriers commonly associated with, and the school leaders' role in parent involvement. Chapter 3 provides information on the procedures and methods used for data collection in this study. Chapter 4 contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data collected during the research process. Chapter 5 provides a summary and conclusion as well as recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Public schools face more pressure today than ever before due to increased federal and state laws, budget deficits, state standards, test scores, achievement gaps, and teacher shortages, to name a few. Consequently, schools must search for alternative measures to meet the ever growing demands of this highly specialized, results-driven society. One way that schools can relieve some of these pressures is by using the families and communities that they serve. Bryan (2005) defined school-family-community partnerships as collaborative initiatives or relationships among school personnel, parents, family members, community members, community members, and representatives of community-based organizations such as businesses, churches, libraries, and social service agencies. Vonde, Maas, and McKay (2005) said family partnerships were catalysts for change that are necessary to prepare students to become leaders in society. No matter what the view, family-school relationships have been shown in the literature to be slow to evolve, have positive results on student achievement, require strong leadership, be effective when implemented into actual classrooms, and present various challenges to all stakeholders.

Epstein and Salinas (2004), who have worked extensively with parent involvement, suggested that successful students are almost always supported by their families, while students without such support almost always struggle. She also suggested six types of involvement necessary for partnerships to be established and to flourish (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The first type of involvement is the most simplistic, which

deals with basic family obligations. Under this category parents provide for the health and safety of their children as well as building a positive home climate that supports the learning and behavior goals of the school. The next level of involvement is basic school obligations. In this level schools are held accountable to provide basic communication with families about grades, progress, and any other information that parents need to know. The third level of involvement is parent volunteering at school. This is the level where more in-depth interaction begins to happen. Parents are challenged to volunteer and assist teachers or children in classrooms and attend various school performances such as sporting events and PTA meetings. The fourth level is parent involvement in school activities at home. Aiding in homework, school projects, and even school decisions in the home are critical for student success at all levels. At the fifth level parent involvement is pushed into the realm of decision making. Parents can achieve this by taking an active role in PTA, school board meetings, curriculum committees, or even textbook adoption committees as these opportunities present themselves. Schools must play an active role as well, communicating to parents in how and when to become involved in such roles at the school. The final level of parent involvement is collaboration with community organizations. This type includes connecting the school with various agencies and businesses throughout the community that could be an asset to students. Activities such as cooperative learning, after school programs, and increased resources are potential benefits from such community interaction (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Parent Involvement, an Evolving Idea

Over the past 20 years little progress has been made to prepare future educators to effectively work with parents and communities (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). In 1988 a study by Chavkin and Williams showed that between 4% and 15% of 133 universities studied taught a full course or part of a course on parental involvement. Of the same educators surveyed, over 70% reported their belief that such courses should be required as part of the undergraduate curriculum. Such gaps were also noted by Becker and Epstein after a 1982 survey of elementary school teachers in Maryland revealed that only a few respondents linked their practices of parental involvement to knowledge gained while taking formal education classes. Typically, the only formal training on the subject of parental involvement was identifying legal implications for those specializing in early childhood or special education (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

More currently courses on parental involvement are still scarce, with most of the parent focus on conflict resolution and how to handle challenging situations rather than building relationships and collaboration (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Preservice teachers have the most need in this area because many of them are just coming out of an anti-parent mindset of college, without children of their own, bringing them into the profession with negative attitudes about parent involvement (Flanigan, 2007). Despite the need, a study of all 50 states uncovered no requirement of a family involvement course for the purpose of teacher certification or licensing so new teachers are simply not getting access to the training that they need at institutions of higher learning (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Universities are not solely to blame for under preparing teachers in parent involvement strategies. Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2003) discussed the importance of parent involvement strategies being included in building level professional development activities. Without it teachers lack that ongoing training needed to gain the skills and confidence to effectively communicate with parents. She suggested a number of critical areas to address based on what the research shows as known parent-teacher barriers. These areas include: providing various techniques for approaching parents, offering opportunities for hands-on field work, discussion of appropriate grade level involvement procedures, development of communication skills outside of a conference room setting, and how to handle sensitive socioeconomic, ethnic, or cultural issues when communicating with parents. Chavkin (2000) summed this up by pointing out that if we truly believe the connection between parent involvement and student success, we must stop merely giving it "lip service" and start allocating the necessary resources for staff development in this area.

Times are slowly changing and with new research and legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, family and community partnerships are gaining momentum. Epstein and Sanders (2006) outlined multiple instances of change in this area including increased discussion between deans of education, new course design to include class work and fieldwork, required courses with specific community focus, the backing of key educational reform groups, and increased awareness in textbooks. Changes such as these are necessary to both incoming and veteran educators given the vast importance of parent involvement outlined in the literature.

Barriers Facing Parent Involvement

Although it has been widely accepted that parent involvement is a positive practice, it is not without some difficulties. One of the most obvious barriers mentioned in the literature was time constraints. Educators and administrators are stretched to their limits with paperwork and expanding curricula, so finding the time to develop and implement new programs requires an extra level of dedication. Also, parents have so many commitments and responsibilities that their time is also limited, making it difficult for them to become more involved. To help combat this issue, Brannon made the following suggestions:

- Make sure there are clearly defined avenues for parents to get involved – using newsletters, web pages, meetings, or other parent leaders are all ways to spread the word about ways to be involved.
- Offer special evening or weekend events that provide hands-on application of what students are learning – not only does this strategy address the time issue by catering to working parents, but it also provides valuable interaction time between parent and child which makes learning more enjoyable.
- Provide opportunities for parents to be involved throughout the day – utilizing evenings, mornings, and lunch times will allow working parents more opportunities to be involved.
- Offer monthly or quarterly awards or recognition assemblies designed to attract parents – events that celebrate student achievement are likely to attract more parents.
- Capitalize on events that are well-attended – events like open-houses are generally have the best attendance and should be used as avenues to provide information about opportunities available. Also, parent buddies can be assigned at these events to help new parents learn more about the school and how they can become active members (Brannon, p. 62-63, 2007).

Another time issue according to Wherry (2009) is not providing communication fast enough, especially when there is a problem with a student. Marzano (2003) noted timely notification of child misbehavior as the number one intervention reported as important by parents. Parents simply do not like learning about problems when it is too late to solve them. If a child is failing a class or misbehaving at school, the teacher needs

to find time to reach out to that parent instead of waiting for report cards because "working together to solve little problems before they become big problems encourages future cooperation" (Wherry, 2009, p.7). It does not cost a cent of money but can make a world of difference. Furthermore, teachers need to reach out to parents for positive behaviors as well because it will serve to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents, making all future communications much easier.

Time is not the only barrier to parent involvement. Many times, the parents themselves present the problems even though they want to see their child succeed. Wilford (2005) explained that difficulties may arise from parents' own negative perceptions from their school days or from the unwelcoming or judgmental attitudes of administrators. If parents had a poor school experience, chances are they will be very cautious of approaching the school and building a trusting relationship. It is not uncommon to find those parents who seem to be confrontational and defensive any time the school tries to reach out to them. These parents most likely harbor some of these preconceived feelings that can make communication almost impossible. Similarly, it is very common for parents to feel that because they did not do well in a particular subject; their child is somehow destined for the same fate. Skwarchuk (2009) gives a specific example of this idea in terms of numeracy development in preschool children. She explained how children's numeracy scores are predicted by parents' attitudes towards mathematics. When parents have positive attitudes towards math, children tend to inherit that same attitude and vice versa.

Furthermore, parents may also be resistant to school communication because they simply do not have the content knowledge necessary to be involved or feel that teachers

will look down on them because of their lack of knowledge (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). This idea is especially true at the high school level because classes become much more difficult and specialized. Many parents have either forgotten or simply cannot help with the chemistry, algebra, or literature classes their kids are taking. Feeling inadequate, they put up a wall rather than seeking out alternative ways that they might can be of assistance. Another source of frustration and intimidation is the structure of many parent-teacher interactions (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). More specifically, IEP meetings often involve multiple school personnel members discussing their child's deficiencies more than their strengths. To combat these feelings of intimidation, the school needs to provide plenty of opportunities for parents to stay involved so that they will feel better equipped to participate in meetings and are allowed opportunities to celebrate their child's successes at school.

Family structure often serves as a barrier to parent involvement in schools. King, Mitchell, and Hawkins (2010) performed a study of the living arrangement of children with nonresident biological parents and found that those situations are quite diverse. Living arrangements in this study ranged from one or two parent figures, one or two grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, all the way to living alone. Furthermore, these difficult living conditions resulted in higher levels of behavior problems, lack of supervision, and a general disengagement between child and caregiver.

Smetana, Villalobos, Rogge, and Tasopoulos-Chan (2010) discussed another barrier to parent involvement, secrecy. They found that secrecy of adolescents with parents occurred on a daily basis among the urban teen population studied. More specifically, they reported lying or withholding information about one out of every six

activities in their daily lives. The same sample studied also identified themselves as having good relationships with their mothers (who were the primary care takers) and spending adequate amounts of time with them. Therefore, the implications of Smetana et al.'s study are that students do not always open up with their parents, making it more difficult for them to become involved in school work, activities, or problems.

Among minority populations, African Americans are one of the fastest growing in public schools (Brandon, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy, & Sileo, 2010). However, African American parents do not always enjoy positive relationships with the school because they feel alienated by the schools. In a study of 421 African American parents in an urban district, Brandon et al. (2010) challenged the stereotypes often associated with this group's low involvement (child placement, SES, family composition, parent education level, and employment status). She found that the parents studied gave little importance to these factors proving that schools need to be more concerned with reaching out to these parents who do have a desire to be involved. Similar results were found of Latino populations as well (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, 2010). Despite popular stereotypes, Latino parents are often scrutinized as not valuing their child's education enough to become involved. However, Ryan et al. found that Latino parents value education as much as White parents but are more negatively perceived by school officials for not conforming to dominant cultural norms. Consequently, these minority families are not able to build the trusting relationships necessary for effective school involvement.

Barriers to parent involvement can also be enhanced by learning disabilities as well. In a study that compared students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to those without it uncovered some unique challenges (Rogers, Wiener, Marton,

& Tannock, 2009). For example, parents of children with ADHD were found to feel less able to help their children academically despite having similar knowledge and skill sets. The same parents reported higher feelings of disengagement with their children and having higher instances of coercive parenting styles. School psychologists are particularly helpful in overcoming these barriers by providing professional development to teachers and principals in strategies for helping ADHD kids and stressing the importance of visibility, availability, and positivity when approaching parents of students with learning disabilities. Matson, Mahan, and LoVullo (2009) shared this idea by saying "parent training should serve as the center piece for interventions geared towards children with intellectual disabilities" (p. 965). He continues by saying that without remediation, these challenges that prevent students and parents from gaining the confidence to work effectively with the school system.

Other important barriers hindering family involvement in school are parental stress and depression. Semke, Garbacz, Kwon, Sheridan, and Woods (2010) defined stress as negative strain related to self, child, or parent-child interactions. This negative strain serves as a barrier to parent involvement and leads to adverse academic outcomes. In a study of 207 parents and children Semke et al. found that the stress levels reported by parents were indirectly related to their beliefs about their role in their child's education and their perception of efficacy at influencing education outcomes. Consequently, these negative perceptions ultimately have a negative effect on their actual involvement at school. Similar results were noted by LaForett and Mendez (2010) when studying the relationship between involvement practices and depression. The 203 parents studied categorized themselves as chronically depressed, sometimes depressed, or never

depressed and then were analyzed as to their levels of involvement. Mothers in the sometimes depressed group reported less involvement at school, at home, and in parent-teacher interaction than those in the never depressed group which further proves how issues at home can spill over into the school. To overcome these barriers, LaForett and Mendez suggested that schools must reiterate the importance of parent involvement, conduct family needs assessments to uncover any potential problems, and require parents to get involved in certain activities to rebuild the feeling of efficacy and better define their role in the educational process.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

The importance of parent involvement in schools is widely mentioned in the literature, with themes ranging from academic achievement to student motivation. In every case parent involvement always produces positive results and is relatively inexpensive to implement. Furthermore, parent involvement has also been shown to be a positive factor for all students regardless of age, race, socioeconomic status, or gender (Blondal & Adalbjarnardottir, 2009; Bryan, 2005; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

In order for any school initiative to be effective, students must attend school regularly. Chronic absenteeism is a constant struggle because it is largely out of the hands of the school and entirely dependent on families. In a 3-year study of diverse elementary schools, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) employed several simple family involvement methods that resulted in an increase in average daily attendance of the schools involved from 93.08% to 94.16%. While not shockingly high, the increase in attendance was observed by simply working to overcome communication barriers with

diverse parents, providing families with a specific school contact to discuss attendance issues, holding workshops focusing on attendance matters, and offering after school programs. Because absenteeism and truancy are often precursors to school disengagement and dropout, no methods that produce positive results in those areas should be overlooked.

From an academic perspective, Sheldon and Epstein (2005) performed a longitudinal study of elementary and secondary schools that showed a positive correlation between specific family support practices and increased percentages of students scoring proficiently on standardized math tests. In this study 18 diverse schools were analyzed according to the types of involvement activities they offered versus their achievement on standardized math tests. Of the different types of involvement, those that required students and parents to be actively involved in math curriculum activities showed the most significant results. Such results suggest that in challenging subjects like mathematics schools must focus on quality implementation that is specific to the curriculum in order to achieve the greatest gains. Sirvani (2007) found similar results in mathematics achievement by subjecting an experimental control group of Algebra I students to twice a week monitoring sheets. This study showed consistency, active involvement, and subject specific focus, which produced higher achievement in every case for the experimental group. With math scores scrutinized more every year in the United States, schools should not overlook the free resources that they have in the homes of their students.

In a similar study Lee and Bowen (2006) set out to determine which types of parent involvement produced the most significant results. These measures included

involvement in the school, educational discussion between parent and child, help with homework, time management, and educational expectations of parents. Of the five, only parent involvement in the school and parental expectation produced higher academic achievement scores across all groups studied (Euro-American, African-American, and Hispanic-American). Again, even though the other types produced moderate, less consistent results, the deeper levels of involvement are those that show favorable results across the board.

Duchesne and Ratelle (2010) provided a unique perspective on parental involvement by studying its ability to predict student anxiety and depression as well as types of goal adoption from elementary to middle school. He found that students who have more controlling parents have an increased likelihood of anxiety and depression and adoption of performance goals. Consequently, students largely feel pressured to succeed and become conditioned to reach goals simply for external rewards and/or fear of failure. However, students of actively involved parents tend to adopt mastery goals not associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression. As a result these students tend not to show symptoms of anxiety and depression and build their desire to succeed for more intrinsic purposes. This research has several important implications such as offering a guide for how to decrease emotional strain in difficult transition periods for student as well as a means to foster desire for mastery learning over reward-based learning. Ultimately, a mastery goal foundation will be better suited for future academic success.

Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) studied the link between parent involvement and homework, a known benefit to adolescent students. They found that parent training on how to be more involved was significantly related to homework completion and fewer

instances of refusal to do homework, becoming frustrated with homework, complaining about homework, or having poor behavior as a result of homework problems. More specifically, students with trained parents had a higher homework completion rate than 61% of students with nontrained parents and fewer problems with homework than 80% of nontrained parents. These results further prove the need for schools to teach parents how to be involved in a much deeper, more specialized manner to maximize their effects on their children's success.

To examine the long-term effects of parental involvement Barnard (2004) studied over 1,100 inner-city Chicago students on a 10-year journey through school. From a demographics perspective this group would certainly be listed as high risk, with 88% of the sample qualifying for free or reduced price lunch and 94% African American. However, the data from this study showed that higher levels of parental involvement as measured by teacher ratings over the 10-year period were significantly related to lower rates of school dropout, higher rates of high school completion, and more years of school completed. This study proved that early involvement from home not only affects the present but has lasting effects on the future if it is maintained.

Positive relationships between teacher and child have the potential to enhance school and social functioning (Wyrick, 2009). Such relationships have been shown to be critical to academic and social outcomes, produce higher achievement scores, and have positive effects on the emotional adjustments of young children. In a study of 900 third grade students Wyrick and Rudasill (2009) found two important relationships between parent involvement and teacher-child relationships. First, parent involvement was positively related to teacher-child closeness such that higher levels of involvement

predicted a closer relationship between teacher and child. Second, parent involvement was negatively related to teacher-child conflict so that higher levels of involvement predicted lower conflict between teacher and child. Therefore, parent involvement cannot be overlooked in the development of quality teacher-child relationships.

Parent involvement has also been shown to benefit prekindergarten students (Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010). In a study of 13 state funded prekindergarten classrooms, parental involvement proved a good predictor of social skills and problem behaviors. Furthermore, parent involvement was also significantly related to mathematics ability as measured by the Woodcock-Johnson applied problems test. With the growing popularity of prekindergarten programs, parents must understand that involvement in school and the education process cannot start too early.

To illustrate the cross-cultural scope of parent involvement Carranza, You, Chhuon, and Hudley (2009) performed a study testing the effects of perceived parental involvement on academic achievement and aspirations for Mexican-American high school students. Nearly 300 Mexican-American students were involved in this study and it was found that those who reported high expectations for good grades from home showed significant differences in GPA and academic aspirations. Interestingly, involvement factors such as parental help, monitoring, and parent-child communication did not show significant results. The authors suggested that because many of the participants in the study were first or second generation immigrants, they likely do not have the English skills necessary to help with homework or feel comfortable communicating with the school. However, the mere expectation of academic success is enough of a driving force to overcome the difficulties in school communication.

Certain benefits of parent involvement can be linked to specific parenting practices, as noted by Blondal and Adalbjarnardottir (2009). In a longitudinal study, the authors compared student dropout rate to four specific parenting practices, authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful. Authoritative parents are firm but also accepting, warm, and encouraging. Authoritarian parents are demanding and controlling with no sense of warmth. Indulgent parents are warm and responsive but avoid confrontation tending more towards leniency and self-regulation. Neglectful parents are completely absent and not supportive, warm, or demanding. Blondal and Adalbjarnardottir found that students who perceived their parents as authoritative at age 14 were more likely to have completed upper secondary school by age 22 than those from reporting other parenting styles. Furthermore, students who reported having authoritative parents were less likely to dropout of school than those from neglectful homes. This study shows that specific parenting practices can serve as predictors for important factors such as continuing education and dropout rate. Similar results were noted by Simons-Morton and Chen (2009) when their study produced a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and school engagement for students grades 6-9. They explained how authoritative parent involvement provides both direct and indirect effects on student involvement. Direct effects include measures such as achievement and attendance, while indirect effects include discouraging problem-behaving friends, and protection against outside influences like substance abuse. Other parenting practices that have shown to be the most effective at the secondary level are academic socialization and school-based involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Academic socialization refers to communicating high expectations and placing high value on education. This type is so effective because it is

developmentally appropriate and fosters the development of intrinsic motivation. School-based involvement was not shown by Hill and Tyson to have quite as large of an effect on achievement because it often involves more administrative tasks like fund raising and chaperoning. In fact, Viadero (2010) noted a negative impact on student behavior when parents have frequent contact with the school in 12th grade because the parents were generally being called in for problems.

By summarizing over 50 studies Bryan (2005) illustrated another important benefit of parental involvement. She explained how parental involvement increases the educational resilience of children, which is their ability to succeed academically despite certain risk factors in their home life. According to Bryan students can move past these risk factors by the establishment of protective factors such as adult support systems and various enrichment and extracurricular activities. So, even those parents who do not have strong content knowledge or pedagogical skills can simply volunteer their time and support to such programs as a way to build up a child's protective factors. As a result, parents end up benefiting as much as the students by increasing their parenting and leadership skills, becoming more empowered and confident, and building up a network of trust between school, student, and parent.

Parent involvement was shown by Lin, Lin, and Wu (2009) to have a positive effect on inhibiting internet addiction among adolescents. They explain that overuse of the internet results in several negative consequences such as poor school work, expulsion, social isolation, and disruption of daily routines. Furthermore, internet addicts are more likely to have experiences with substance abuse and engaging in risky behavior on the internet. Therefore, it is important that preventative measures for internet addiction be

put into place. In a study of nearly 1,300 adolescents Lin et al. found that family and outdoor activities along in conjunction with participative parent monitoring reduced the tendency for internet addiction.

Another important benefit of parental involvement is the development of stronger communities. In a study of three high schools with extremely different populations Sanders and Lewis (2005) found that strong family support practices provide an immediate, free resource for the school, which often serves as the centerpiece of the community. Also, family support can extend beyond bloodlines by providing additional learning opportunities through work shadowing, internships, mentoring, and tutoring programs. Ultimately, family involvement creates a feeling of support and belonging that encourages students to return to their communities as educated, productive citizens, eager to keep that cycle alive. Other community benefits include a renewed appreciation of the younger generation, increased networking to aid in new projects or expansion of existing projects, and worksite mentoring opportunities for students by community professionals (Vonde et al, 2005). Ultimately, school-community partnerships are a win-win situation with students being exposed to real-life experiences, increasing their academic and social skills, and communities investing in their own and training them to return as productive citizens who will turn around and start the process over again for the next generation.

Examples of Parent Involvement

Due to the obvious benefits and relatively low financial burden, it is appropriate to explore some examples of how parent involvement has been successfully implemented. For instance, one principal has taken matters into his own hands and developed a four-way communication campaign to spark community involvement

(Neely, 2005). To accomplish this, Neely employed individual email, school web site, Connect-ED telephone messaging, and listserv email messaging. Each of these forms of communication allows for an open line of communication to deliver general school information, grade information, and other needs of parents and educators. Another simple way teachers have opened up lines of communication is through class newsletters. These newsletters are especially effective for busy parents who do not have much time to devote to conferences or after school meetings. As for the parents, it gives them a sense of feeling connected to what is happening in their child's classroom, opening up the possibility of content-specific conversations at home (Jensen, 2006).

Epstein and Salinas (2004) described several other, more elaborate partnership activities. For example, to make all families feel welcomed by the school, Madison Junior High in Naperville, Illinois, holds evening discussions for parents to network and discuss parenting strategies, publishes newsletters, and hosts family literacy nights and other activities to create a cohesive community. Roosevelt Elementary School in St. Paul, Minnesota, holds a second cup of coffee program that is a monthly morning meeting to give parents, teachers, and administrators a chance to discuss school matters. To promote student achievement in reading various schools have implemented monthly family reading nights, reading marathons, and read with me programs. To promote writing schools hold writing workshops, create classroom cafés to celebrate literacy, present student portfolios, and create books and videos about life experiences. To promote mathematics schools hold math night programs, integrate community workers for real life estimation projects, engage in highly focused workshops, and assign interactive homework. To help families plan and prepare for life after school in college

or work schools have created career portfolio nights and mother-daughter college preparation programs. To foster more widespread community involvement schools have started programs called try it at lunch, gifts we share, and mercy pals, all with the goal of connecting students with the communities that they live in a variety of ways.

To aid in literacy development of low income African American students Dail and Payne (2010) provided parents with books on tape to share with their children. Furthermore, the same parents also participated in workshops that were designed to discuss the importance of reading and allow for brainstorming on how to use these resources with children at home. By providing these workshops schools empowered parents to implement reading time in a way that best fit into individual family routines. The difference in this approach is that parents were treated like partners with the school rather than the school simply dictating how and when to use their resources.

Another literacy related example of parent involvement used a very unique motioning strategy (Kindervater, 2010). As a literacy coordinator for many years, Kindervater noticed that her kindergarten students understood well the names of letters but were far less familiar with sound-letter relationships and early concepts of print. To combat this she developed a system of kinesthetic motions to illustrate the sounds that letters represent. For instance, to motion the sound represented by the letter t, students would make an "ok" gesture with their pointer finger and thumb before flicking the pointer finger free. Such motions were developed for other common sound-letter relationships as well to maximize student engagement and participation during reading time. The motions became so popular that students began involving their families in the motions at home. Parents reported that shows at night became a ritual, kids jumped off

the bus wanting to perform the motions to their newest poem, and they began to apply motions to environmental print at stores or on billboards. Other parents reported working with their kids to develop new motions and expressed how their kids showed no interest in letters until this activity. Students and parents with speech impediments found the motions useful when communication became too frustrating. Overall, this unique strategy with high family involvement resulted in an 81% scoring at Level 3 or above on the developmental reading assessment (Kindervarter, 2010).

For working families, single-parent households, and ESL students technology can be used to break down barriers. Villano (2008) provided numerous examples of parent involvement using notification systems. One such example comes from the Harlem Success Academy that has partnered with a local cell phone company to send out relevant information via text messages. The text messages alert parents to important school events, meetings, or even tests that students need to be studying for. Results for this program have been overwhelming with the school logging a near 100% attendance rate at school events in 2007. Similarly, Sycamore Junior High School in California employ a technology known as TeleParent to send out informational messages in three different languages because 53% of the school's population consists of ESL students. Using native languages not only gets messages out to parents more effectively but also serves to show parents that the school respects and welcomes their individual culture (Villano, 2008). Panferov (2010) suggested another way to encourage participation for ESL parents is to offer opportunities to volunteer in classrooms or at school events to promote information about their home language, showing a commitment to multiculturalism and building a positive rapport with those families.

Other interesting uses of technology described by Villano (2008) include the use of grade book programs that allow parents to login and browse their child's grades, how frequently they are meeting deadlines, and how special education students are progress according to their individual education plan. To boost attendance Newport Independent Schools in Kentucky use alert systems to notify parents about the whereabouts of their children, which forces parents to take more control over how and when their kids show up for school. This increase in control has helped this system increase its attendance from 93.6% to 95.1% in just 1 year. In terms of effectiveness, Lewin and Luckin (2010) suggested that technologies that are readily accessible and interactive are more effective in developing parent involvement than websites and email. While still a valid use of technology, the latter resources provide more of a "quick win" over a longer lasting relationship.

Advancements in technology have opened the door for large growth in the area of online education. Also known as virtual schooling, online education has some additional challenges not faced in traditional schools. The physical presence of a teacher and classroom in a traditional school helps develop critical success factors such as self-control ability, self-esteem, learning motivation, and time management. However, virtual schools lack this presence and require four specialized parenting practices to achieve success. Liu, Black, Algina, Cavanaugh, and Dawson defined these practices as follows:

1. Parental encouragement – "parents' explicit affective support for engaging students in learning-related activities."
2. Parental modeling – "parents' modeling of pro-social behavior."
3. Parental Reinforcement – "parents reinforcing behaviors that act to develop and maintain student attributes associated with positive learning."
4. Parental instruction – "social interactions between parent and child during involvement activities as parties to engage in shared thinking related to

> learning strategies, processes, outcomes, and engage in educational strategies" (Liu et al., p. 109, 2010).

The absence of face-to-face interaction in virtual schooling places unique implications on these four practices. In other words, parents must fill the void of teacher, peer, motivator, and disciplinarian in order for nontraditional school opportunities to succeed.

Examples of parent involvement can even take on different meanings for different cultural backgrounds. For example, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) performed a study of the involvement practices of Chinese American parents versus European American parents. They found that Chinese American parents were much less involved in school based involvement practices than European American parents but more involved in home based involvement activities. Furthermore, Chinese American parents showed a greater likelihood of teaching to their children at home while European American parents tended to let the school take the lead in instruction. Lastly, Huntsinger and Jose found that Chinese American parents typically do not give as many encouraging comments when performing problem solving activities, believing that children benefit from criticism while European American parents are just the opposite. So even though parent involvement may not always look the same, it still produces the same positive results.

Partnerships between parents and schools are not restricted to the school walls. Hall (2008) described a program called "Safe Space" that was created in a school district in a very low-income and dangerous part of Chicago. The program was designed by a teacher-parent advisory board to allow students a place to go after school to openly discuss their lives outside of school. The concern was that the school day is so heavily focused on academic standards, there was little or no time for students to talk to adults about nonacademic factors affecting their lives. In the Safe Space program open

discussions take place with no hierarchy of voice and on restriction of topics. From these discussions, teachers, parents, and students were able to talk about and understand what each was going through, which developed a more trusting relationship and better results in the classroom. Also, it created a safe environment for students to go to after school, keeping them off of the streets and away from potentially harmful situations.

Principal's Role in Parental Involvement

Although leadership is essential for any program to succeed, teamwork is a term often associated with the development of strong parent involvement in a school. Even though the role of the principal has its limitations and eventually all stakeholders must take on their own active roles, it is often up to the principal to initiate the process. The first step for any principal is to develop an action team for partnerships (ATP) consisting of teachers, parents, the principal, other educators, and community partners (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). ATP members prepare action plans, see that they are connected to the school improvement plan, and monitor progress as the partnership implements the plan. At this point, the principal's job will be to help guide the ATP to ensure that the goals of the partnership are progressing adequately.

In addition to ATP duties, Epstein and Jansorn suggested the following 10 additional actions, which have been observed by principals in successful partnership situations:

1. Use the bully pulpit of the principal's office to let all people involved know that your school is a partnership school and will act accordingly.
2. Let all students know – frequently – how important their families are to the school and to student progress.
3. Allocate or budget funds for planned activities of school, family, and community partnerships.
4. Talk about the ATP's mission and importance at the first faculty meeting and the support it will be given.

5. Recognize teachers' contributions to the partnership and help them become more effective in their communications.
6. Publicize scheduled activities and encourage participation by all.
7. Guide the ATP to make periodic reports on partnership plans and accomplishments to school council, faculty, local media, and other community groups.
8. Work with community groups and leaders to locate resources to enrich curriculum.
9. Recognize and thank ATP members, volunteers, community partners, and others for their contributions.
10. Work with district administrators and other principals to arrange professional development, share ideas, and improve school, family, and community partnerships (Epstein & Jansorn, p. 22, 2004).

Given the complexity of the principal's role in family partnerships, it is unlikely that such a program would ever be successful without their involvement. By taking on dual roles as both leader and active participants, the principal can ensure the success of such partnerships.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Parent Involvement

Teachers' attitudes towards parent involvement are largely influenced by the governance of the school (Addi-Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009). School governance typically falls into one of the following four categories:

1. Parent empowerment: Parent committees participate in deciding the school's vision, logo, or student scholarships, they participate in home activities such as homework or test schedules, and they attempt to think of ideas on how to solve problems in the school. Essentially, this type of school sees parents involved in all aspects except the actual teaching.
2. Professional: Type of school where teachers have complete autonomy in the classroom and participate in all pedagogical decisions. Parents, on the other hand, are only invited to participate in social activities that do not directly relate to instruction.
3. Partnership: Teachers are involved in everything from deciding goals, to school operation, to school vision. Teachers are also encouraged to get involved in issue related to school administration with a transparent, open door policy. Parents also work in collaboration to help solve the problems of the school. All stakeholders work together towards school improvement under this type of system.

4. Bureaucratic: Teachers are free to make decisions on learning activities but must report all activities to administration. Parents in this system are only involved as a formality and have no real decision making power (Bauch & Goldring, p. 20, 1998).

Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009) found that teachers' least favored school governance type was the one that empowered parents more and teachers less. This system, according to the teachers studied, created an imbalance of power, undermined their work, and was the cause of excessive conflict. In the professional and bureaucratic modes of governance, teachers were more ambivalent because they knew that parent involvement was important but did not have as much opportunity to collaborate with them. The most positive attitudes towards parent involvement were from teachers in the partnership style of school. Balance is the key to this system because both teachers and parents feel empowered and able to share their opinions and make contributions to the school. This establishes mutual respect that is needed to foster positive relationships.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare the perception scores and action scores of teachers in a northeast Tennessee school system in terms of parent involvement. Also, this study examined the relationship between perception scores and action scores of administrators and teachers across the district. Lastly, this study determined if significant differences existed in the perception scores and action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers. This chapter describes the research methodology used to make these determinations and is broken down into the following sections: population, data collection, research methodology, research questions and null hypotheses, and data analysis.

Population

The population for this study was all 437 teachers and 24 building level administrators in the school district studied. District level administrators and support staff were not included because they typically do not have as much day-to-day interaction with students and parents. Of the 461 people surveyed, 316 responded (298 teachers and 18 administrators). Of the 316 respondents, 11.4% have been in education for 0-3 years, 29.1% for 4-10 years, 30.4% for 11-20 years, and 29.1% for 20 or more years. There were 131 respondents from the elementary level (41.5%), 88 from the middle school level (27.8%), and 97 from the high school level (30.7%). Ages ranges of the participants consisted of 16.5% in the 21-30 range, 29.1% in the 31-40 range, 28.2% in the 41-50 range, and 26.3% over the age of 50. Finally, the 82 males and 234 females

reported the following highest degree levels: 1.6% held a doctorate degree, 9.2% a specialist degree, 61.1% a master's degree, and 28.2% a bachelor's degree. These demographic data were summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Study Population

Category	N	Percent
Role in Education		
Teacher	298	94.3
Administrator	18	5.7
Length of Service		
0-3 years	36	11.4
4-10 years	92	29.1
11-20 years	96	30.4
20+	92	29.1
Grade Level Served		
Elementary	131	41.5
Middle	88	27.8
High	97	30.7
Age Ranges		
21-30 years	52	16.5
31-40	92	29.1
41-50	89	28.2
51+	83	26.3

Table 1 (continued)

Category	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	82	25.9
Female	234	74.1
Degree Type		
Bachelors	89	28.2
Masters	193	61.1
Specialist	29	9.2
Doctorate	5	1.6

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through questionnaires that included questions about demographics, perceptions towards parent involvement, and number of times engaged in specific parent involvement practices (Appendix A). Each participant was given two scores based on their responses to the questionnaire items. The first score was the sum of items 7 – 14 that indicated the participant's perceived importance of parent involvement. This value was called the perception score. The second score was the sum of items 15 – 23 and represented the participant's actions regarding parent involvement practices. This value was referred to as the action score. These scores were used to analyze data and answer the research questions.

Permission to distribute questionnaires to the 11 schools in the district was obtained by a signed agreement from the Director of Schools after meeting to discuss the project and its potential implications (Appendix B). Questionnaires were distributed in at all 11 schools during scheduled faculty meeting times with permission from the building principal. Participants were debriefed on the study and confidentiality precautions beforehand and given the option to not fill out a questionnaire (Appendix C). Four of the schools were visited in person while designees distributed the questionnaire at the remaining seven.

Research Methodology

All necessary paperwork and permission from the Institutional Review Board were obtained prior to collection of data. Because no names were collected and all participants were consenting adults, no significant ethical concerns existed. For analysis of data the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was purchased and used. Before any data were entered into SPSS, all nonusable questionnaires were discarded. This included any questionnaires that were incomplete, had multiple answers to single questions, or were not clearly marked. The remaining questionnaires were used to gather descriptive details about the population (gender, years of experience, degree type, and current grade level) as well as their perception and action scores.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

During this study, the following research questions and null hypotheses were posed:

1. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group?

- Ho1 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group.

2. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary, middle, and high school levels?
    - $Ho2_1$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary school level.
    - $Ho2_2$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the middle school level.
    - $Ho2_3$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the high school level.
3. Is there a significant difference in the perception scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?
    - Ho3 – No significant difference exists between the perception scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.
4. Is there a significant difference in the action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?
    - Ho4 – No significant difference exists between the action scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

5. Is there a significant difference in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide?
    - Ho5 – No significant difference exists in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide.
6. Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide?
    - Ho6 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide.

Data Analysis

For research question 1, participants were placed into either a high perception group (perception score 72 – 80) or a low perception group (perception score 27 – 71). These two groups were determined by placing participants who fell at or above the median perception score of 72 into the high group and those who fell below the median perception score of 72 into the low group. Next, an independent-samples *t* test was conducted on the action scores of each group to test for significant differences. The same procedure was employed for research question 2 for elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively. Results from these tests were tabulated and graphed for easier communication.

For research questions 3 and 4, perception scores and action scores were entered into SPSS for elementary, middle, and high school teachers (coded as groups 1, 2, and 3 respectively). A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the three groups to test for significant differences in terms of perceptions and actions. A post-hoc LSD procedure was used in research question 3 to determine which specific group(s)

accounted for any differences shown in the ANOVA. A post-hoc Tukey procedure was used in research question 4 to determine which specific group(s) accounted for any differences shown in the ANOVA. These data were tabulated and graphed for easier communication.

For research questions 5 and 6, single-sample *t* tests were conducted to compare the perception scores and action scores of teachers and administrators district wide. For each test, administrators' perception scores and action scores were averaged and used as the test value. These tests values were then compared to the perception scores and actions scores of teachers. These data were tabulated and graphed for easier communication.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter contains data analyses as they relate to the six research questions posed in chapters 1 and 3. The purpose of this study was to compare the perception scores and action scores of teachers in a Northeast Tennessee school system in terms of parent involvement. This study also examined the relationship between perception scores and action scores of administrators and teachers across the district. Lastly, this study determined if significant differences existed in the perception scores and action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Data were gathered from 298 teachers and 18 building level administrators. Table 1 summarized the demographic data of the population studied.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group?

- Ho1 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean action score for teachers differs for the high perception group and low perception group. The action score was the test variable while the grouping variable was the low perception group or the high perception group. The test was significant, $t(296) = 3.047$, $p < 0.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Teachers in the low perception group

(M = 49.448, SD = 21.357) had action scores that were significantly less than teachers in the high perception group (M = 56.897, SD = 20.827). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was –12.260 to –2.638. The η^2 index was 0.030, which indicated a small effect size. Figure 1 shows the distributions for the two groups.

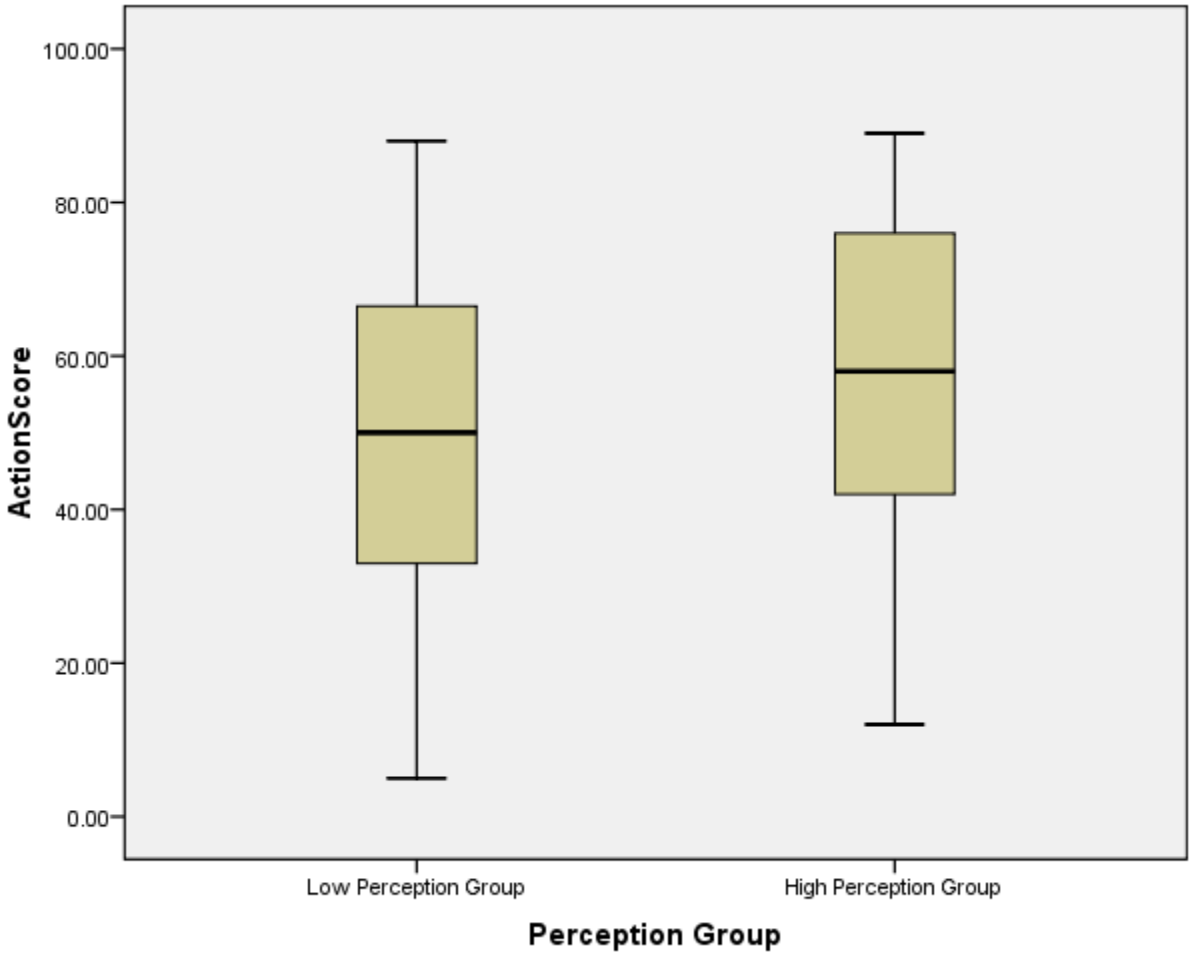


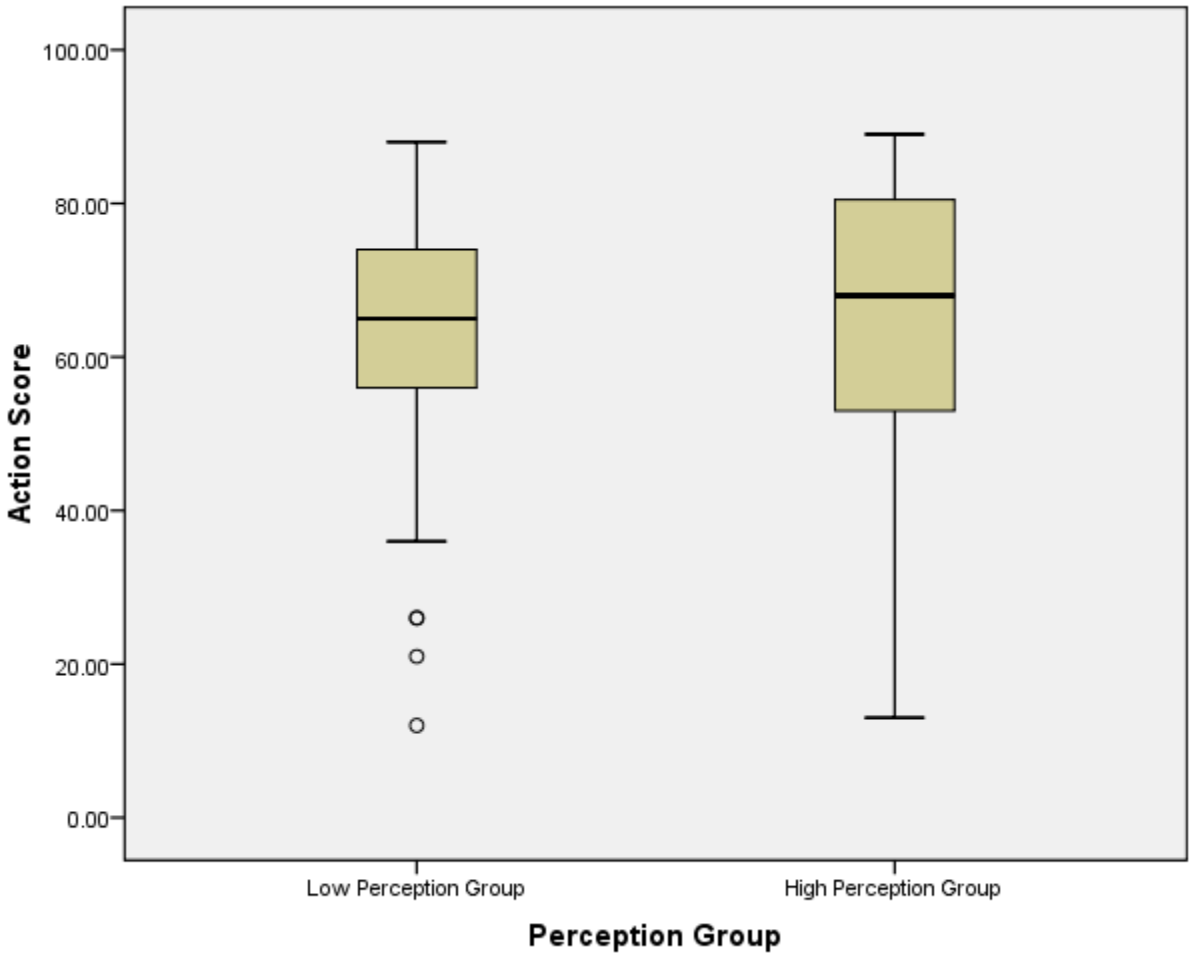
Figure 1. Distribution of Action Scores for the Low Perception Group and the High Perception Group

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary, middle, and high school levels?

- $Ho2_1$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary school level.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean action score for elementary school teachers differs for the high perception group and low perception group. The action score was the test variable while the grouping variable was the low perception group or the high perception group. The test was not significant, $t(124) = 0.324$, $p = 0.746$, n.s. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Elementary school teachers in the low perception group ($M = 62.309$, $SD = 17.382$) had action scores that were not significantly different from elementary school teachers in the high perception group ($M = 63.423$, $SD = 20.373$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was –7.914 to 5.687. The η^2 index was less than 0.01, which indicated a small effect size. Figure 2 shows the distributions for the two groups.



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 2. Distribution of Action Scores for the Low Perception Group and the High Perception Group at the Elementary School Level

- $Ho2_2$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the middle school level.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean action score for middle school teachers differs for the high perception group and low perception group. The action score was the test variable while the grouping variable was the low perception group or the high perception group. The test was not significant,

$t(80) = 1.664$, $p = 0.100$, n.s. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Middle school teachers in the low perception group (M = 49.758, SD = 21.468) had action scores that were not significantly different from middle school teachers in the high perception group (M = 57.306, SD = 19.220). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was –16.578 to 1.481. The η^2 index was 0.033, which indicated a small effect size. Figure 3 shows the distributions for the two groups.

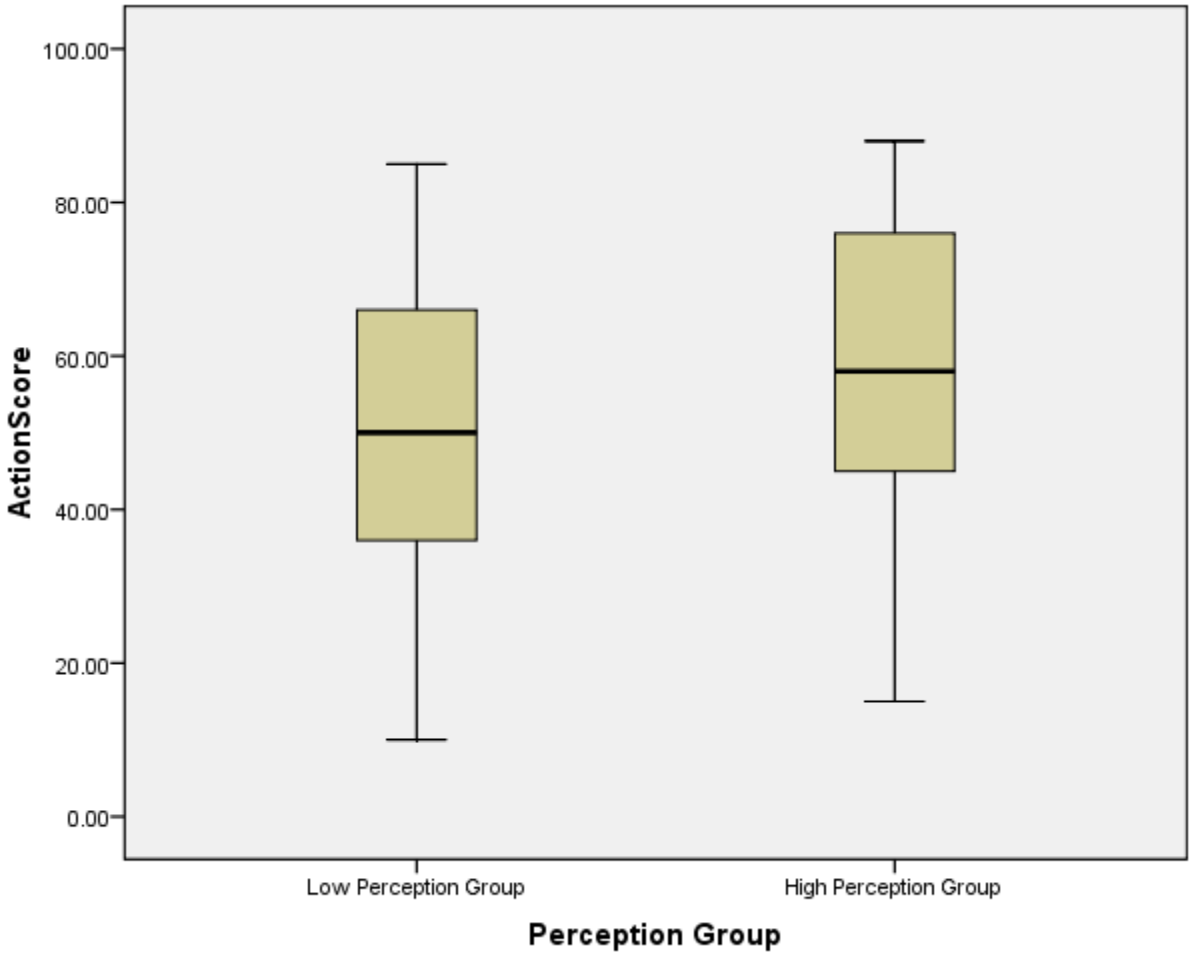


Figure 3. Distribution of Action Scores for the Low Perception Group and the High Perception Group at the Middle School Level

- $Ho2_3$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the high school level.

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean action score for high school teachers differs for the high perception group and low perception group. The action score was the test variable while the grouping variable was the low perception group or the high perception group. The test was not significant, $t(88) = 1.815$, $p = 0.073$, n.s. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. High school teachers the in the low perception group ($M = 36.400$, $SD = 16.801$) had action scores that were not significantly different from high school teachers in the high perception group ($M = 43.086$, $SD = 17.409$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was –6.686 to 3.684. The η^2 index was 0.036, which indicated a small effect size. Figure 4 shows the distributions for the two groups.

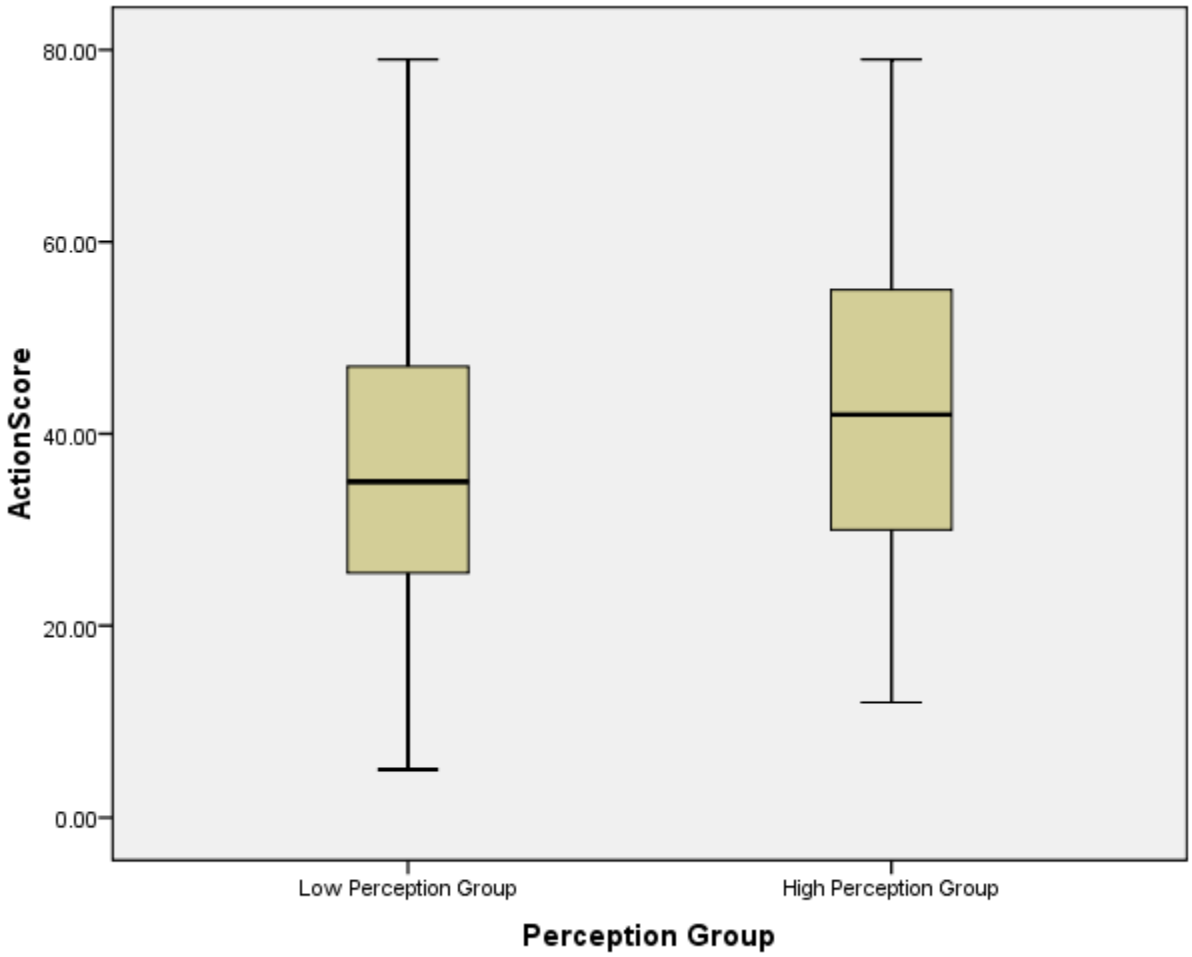


Figure 4. Distribution of Action Scores for the Low Perception Group and the High Perception Group at the High School Level

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference in the perception scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

- Ho3 – No significant difference exists between the perception scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between grade level taught and perception scores. The factor variable, grade level taught, included three groups: elementary, middle, and high school. The dependent

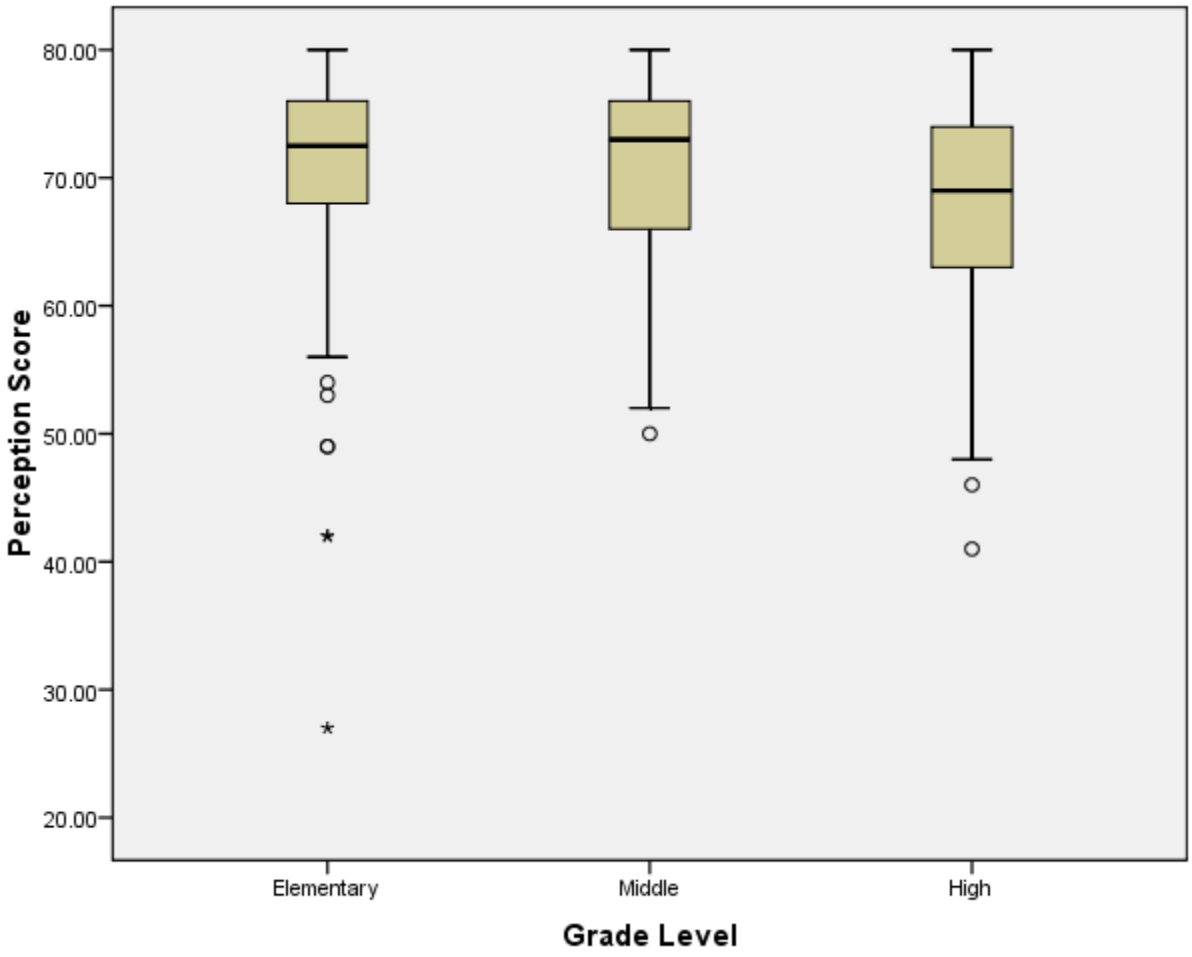
variable was the perception score determined by questionnaire responses. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 295) = 3.157$, $p = 0.044$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The strength of the relationship between school level taught and perception scores as assessed by η^2 was medium at 0.021.

Because the overall *F* test was significant, post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among the means of the three groups. An LSD procedure was selected for the multiple comparisons because equal variances were assumed. There was a significant difference in the means between the elementary school group and the high school group ($p = 0.028$) and the middle school group and the high school group ($p = 0.030$). However, there was not a significant difference between the elementary school group and the middle school group ($p = 0.839$). It appears that the elementary and middle schools groups have similar perceptions while the high school group differs significantly. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences as well as the means and standard deviations for the three grade level groups are reported in Table 2. Figure 5 shows the distributions for the three groups.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations with 95% Confidence Intervals of Pairwise Differences of Perception Scores by Grade Level

School Level Taught	N	M	SD	Elementary	Middle
Elementary	126	70.52	8.68		
Middle	82	70.76	7.22	-2.48 to 2.02	
High	90	68.07	7.89	0.27 to 4.65	0.27 to 5.11



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

* = an observation more than 3 times the interquartile range

Figure 5. Distribution of Perception Scores for Teachers at the Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference in the action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

- Ho4 – No significant difference exists between the action scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

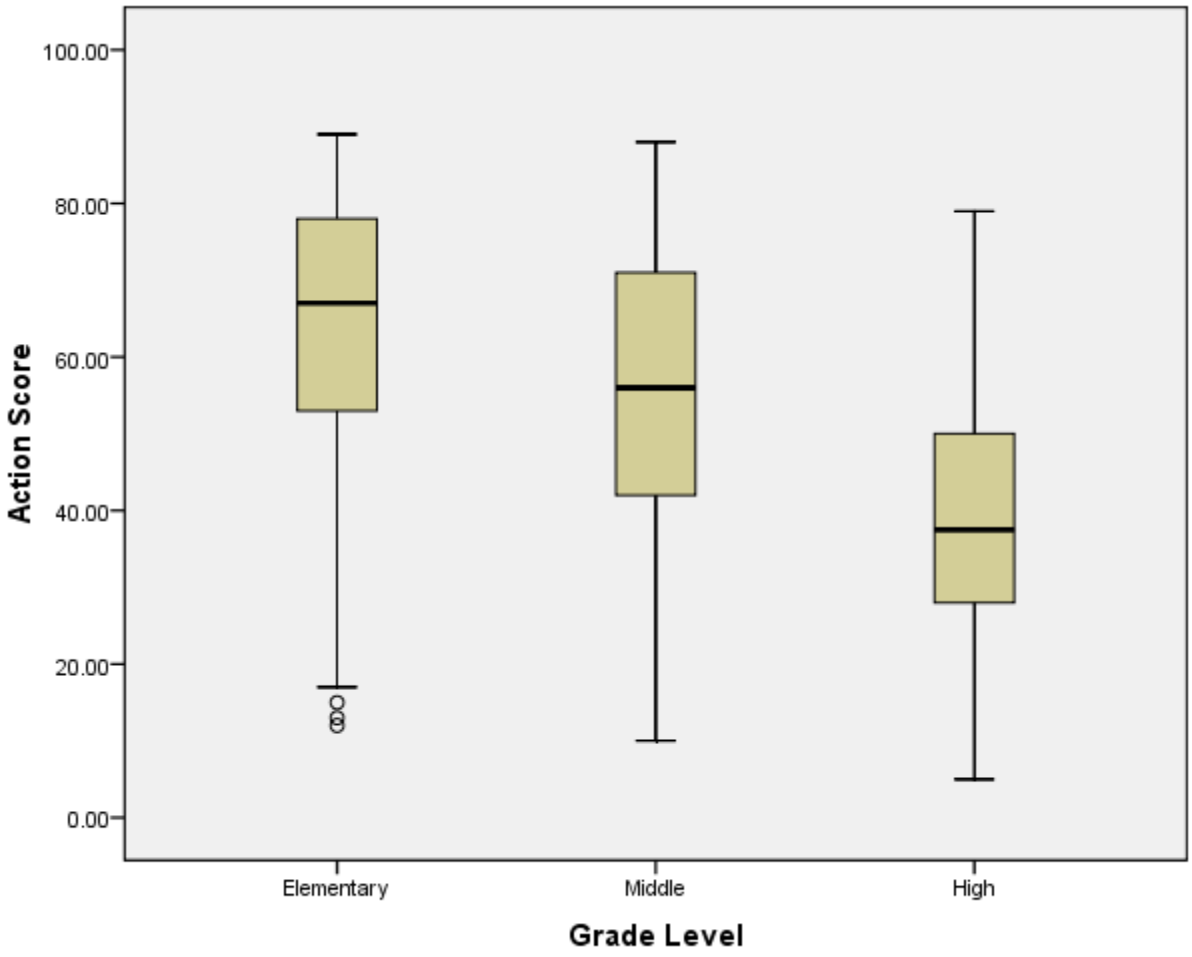
A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between grade level taught and action scores. The factor variable, grade level taught, included three groups: elementary, middle, and high school. The dependent variable was the action score determined by questionnaire responses. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 295) = 42.191$, $p < 0.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The strength of the relationship between grade level taught and action scores as assessed by η^2 was large at 0.222.

Because the overall *F* test was significant, post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted to evaluate pairwise difference among the means of the three groups. A Tukey procedure was selected for the multiple comparisons because equal variances were assumed. There was a significant difference in the means between the elementary school group and the middle school group ($p < 0.01$), the middle school group and the high school group ($p < 0.01$), and the elementary school group and the high school group ($p < 0.01$). It appears that the actions of teachers tend to decrease significantly from elementary to middle to high school. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences as well as the means and standard deviations for the three grade level groups are reported in Table 3. Figure 6 shows the distributions for the three groups.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations with 95% Confidence Intervals of Pairwise Differences of Action Scores by Grade Level

School Level Taught	N	M	SD	Elementary	Middle
Elementary	126	62.94	19.06		
Middle	82	54.27	20.37	2.35 to 14.99	
High	90	39.00	17.26	17.79 to 30.09	8.47 to 22.07



o = an observation between 1.5 times to 3.0 times the interquartile range

Figure 6. Distribution of Action Scores for Teachers at the Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels

Research Question 5

Is there a significant difference in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide?

- Ho5 – No significant difference exists in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide.

A single-sample *t* test was conducted on the perception scores of teachers to evaluate whether their mean was significantly different from 72, the mean perception

score for administrators. The sample mean of 69.846 (*SD* = 8.124) was significantly different from 72, $t(297) = 4.578$, $p < 0.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The 95% confidence interval for the perception score mean ranged from -3.081 to -1.228. The effect size η^2 of 0.065 indicates a medium effect. Figure 7 shows the distribution of perception scores. The results support the conclusion that teachers across this school district tend to have a significantly lower perception of parental involvement than administrators across the district.

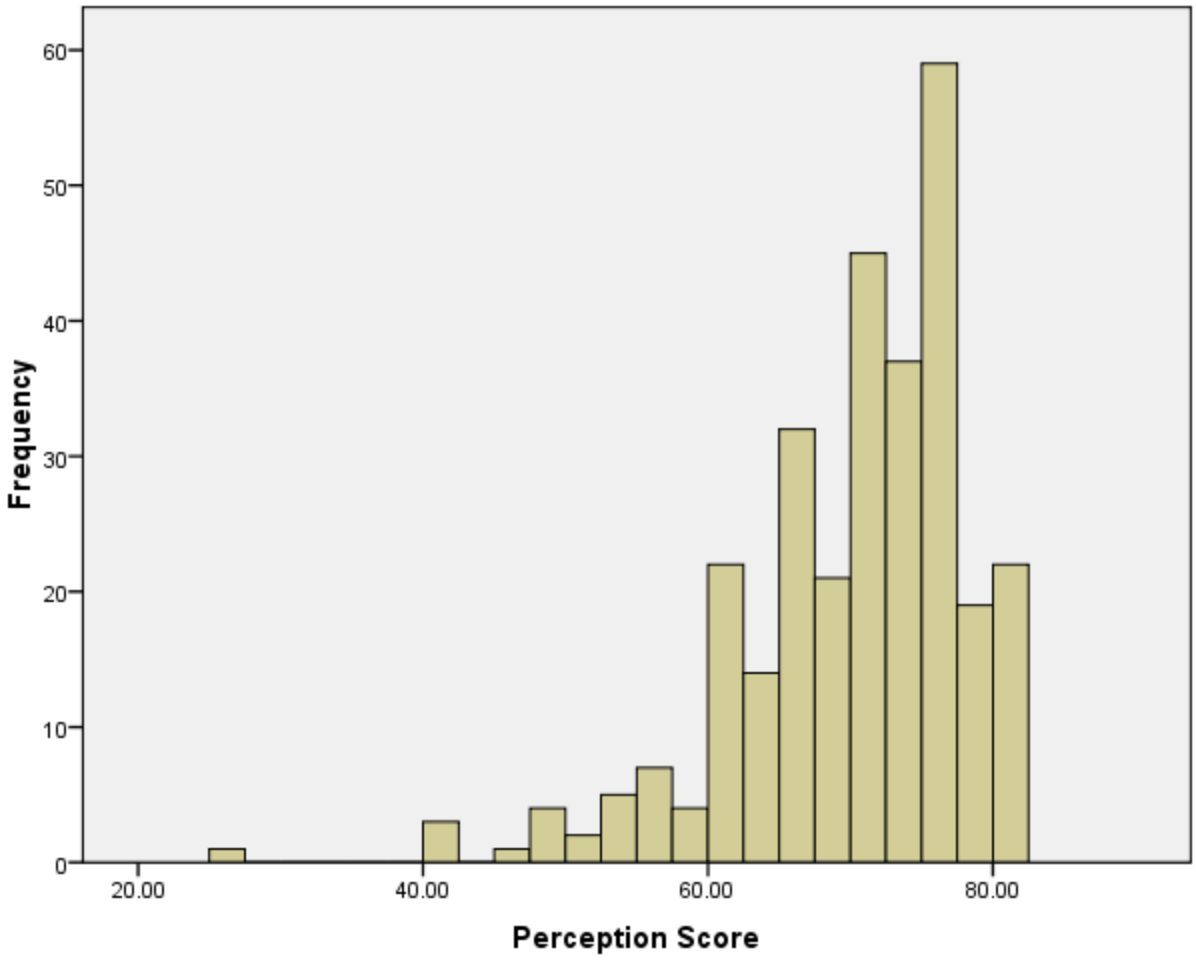


Figure 7. Distribution of Perception Scores for all Teachers

Research Question 6

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide?

- Ho6 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide.

A single-sample *t* test was conducted on the action scores of teachers to evaluate whether their mean was significantly different from 74.125, the mean action score for administrators. The sample mean of 53.322 (SD = 21.375) was significantly different from 74.125, $t(297) = 16.801$, $p < 0.01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The 95% confidence interval for the action score mean ranged from -23.239 to -18.366. The effect size η^2 of 0.487 indicates a large effect. Figure 6 shows the distribution of action scores. The results support the conclusion that teachers across this school district tend to have lower action scores about parental involvement activities than administrators across the district.

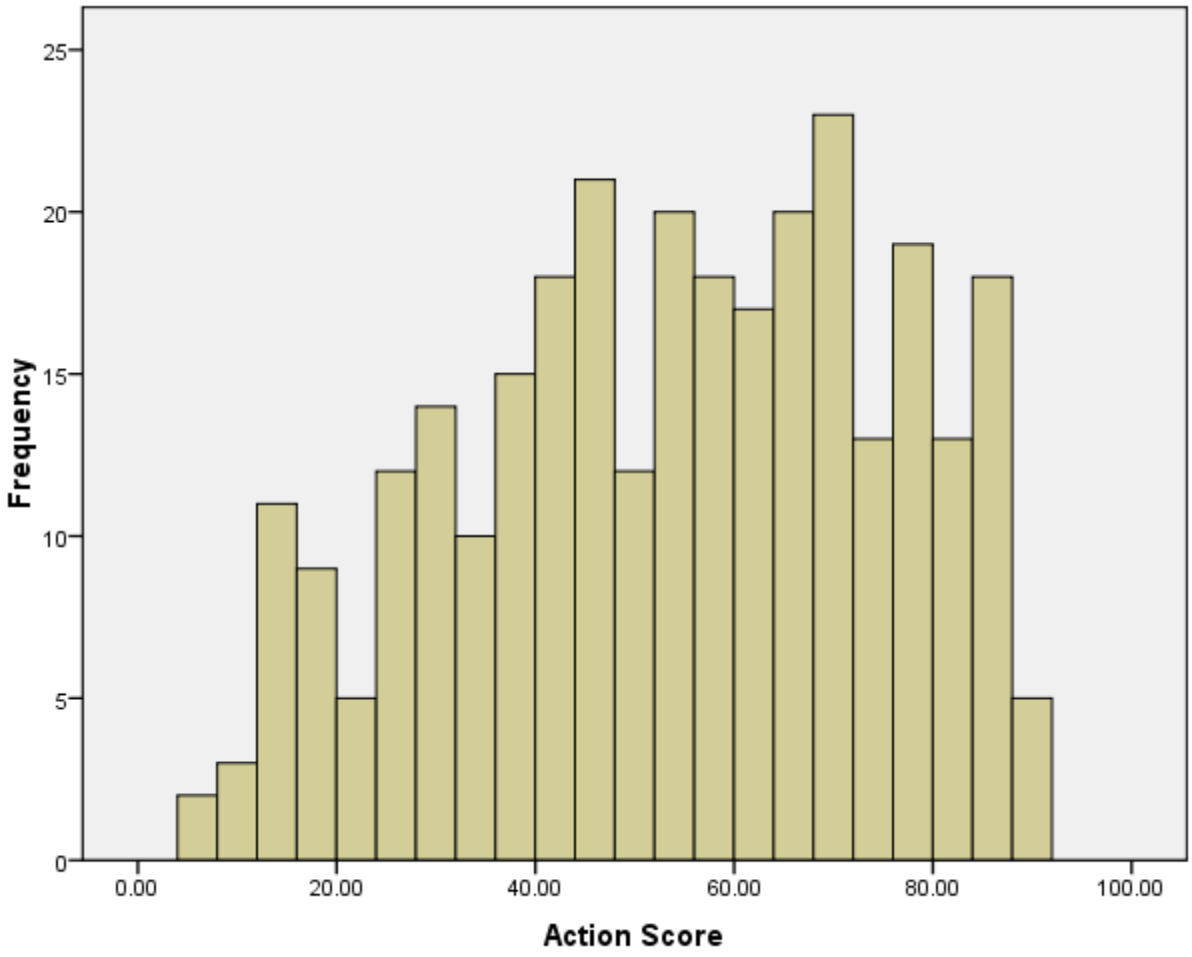


Figure 8. Distribution of Action Scores for all Teachers

Analysis of data described in this chapter revealed several important themes. As a whole, teachers with higher perception scores had higher action scores than teachers with lower perception scores in terms of parent involvement. However, when analyzed by grade level taught, no significant difference was observed in the action scores of the teachers with higher perception scores and teachers with lower perception scores. Significant findings were also noted between the perception scores and action scores of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Across the entire district, administrators tended to have significantly higher perception scores and action scores than teachers in terms of parent involvement. Chapter 5 provides further discussion of these results.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare the perception scores and action scores of teachers in a Northeast Tennessee school system in terms of parent involvement. This study also examined the relationship between perception scores and action scores of administrators and teachers across the district. Lastly, this study determined if significant differences existed in the perception scores and action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Data were gathered from 298 teachers and 18 building level administrators using a questionnaire method.

Parent involvement has always been an area of interest for me as it is one of the least expensive yet most effective ways to improve the behavior, academic performance, and motivation of students. Therefore, the overarching goal of this study was to examine one school district to analyze teachers' and administrators' perception scores and action scores in terms of parent involvement.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group?

- Ho1 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group.

Common logic would suggest that teachers who believe highly in parental invovlement would also exhibit higher action scores than teachers without these beliefs

and vice versa. This reseach question explored whether or not that logic held true for teachers in this particular school district. After performing an independent-samples *t* test on the actions of the high perception group and the low perception group, it was determined that the low perception group did have action scores that were significantly lower than the high perception group. This indicates that teachers are influenced by their perceptions and act according to how strongly they feel about parent involvement.

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary, middle, and high school levels?

- $Ho2_1$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the elementary school level.
- $Ho2_2$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the middle school level.
- $Ho2_3$ – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers in the high perception group and teachers in the low perception group at the high school level.

To broaden the scope of research question 1, the same analysis was conducted to see if teachers showed similar results at their respective grade levels. Interestingly, none of the grade levels had significant differences in action scores between teachers in the low perception group and the high perception group. This means that teachers tend to

act about the same within their grade levels regardless of their perceptions. Also, these results suggest that the significant differences noted in research question 1 were likely caused by between group differences rather in within group differences.

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference in the perception scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

- Ho3 – No significant difference exists between the perception scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

This research question produced very interesting results. The overall one-way ANOVA produced a significant result so a post hoc LSD procedure was used to test for pairwise differences between the three groups. Significant differences were observed in the mean perception scores between the elementary and high school groups and the middle and high school groups. However, no significance was found in the mean perception scores between the elementary and middle school groups. It was fully expected that the action scores of high school teachers would be significantly different from the other groups but it was surprising that the perception scores were significantly different as well. These results suggest that the disconnect between school and home is a much deeper cultural issue among high school teachers, actually ingrained in their personal beliefs.

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference in the action scores between elementary, middle, and high school teachers?

- Ho4 – No significant difference exists between the action scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Typically, parent involvement actions taper off as students move from elementary to middle to high school. Several factors cause this shift including children becoming more independent and a more difficult and specialized curriculum that many parents cannot help with. This research question explored this phenomenon to see if it held true in this particular school district. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test for differences between the action scores of teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels. This test was significant indicating that teachers in separate grade levels do in fact act differently in terms of parental involvement. A post-hoc Tukey procedure indicated significant differences between each pair of groups. More specifically, elementary school teachers (M = 62.94) had significantly higher action scores than middle school teachers (M = 54.27) who had significantly higher action scores than high school teachers (M = 39.00). Although these results were expected, the actual mean action scores for groups were much more spread out than was anticipated, especially at the high school level.

Research Question 5

Is there a significant difference in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide?

- Ho5 – No significant difference exists in the perception scores of teachers and the perception scores of administrators district wide.

As leaders at the building and district levels, school administrators have the ability to set the tone for various school strategies including parent involvement. To

explore the relationship between the attitudes of building level administrators and teachers across the district, a single-sample *t* test was conducted. Using the mean perception score of all teachers as the test variable (M = 69.846) and the mean perception score of administrators as the test value (M = 72.00), a significant result was obtained. This means that, across the district, teachers tended to have a significantly lower perception of parental involvement than building level administrators.

Research Question 6

Is there a significant difference in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide?

- Ho6 – No significant difference exists in the action scores of teachers and the action scores of administrators district wide.

In a similar fashion to research question 5, the relationship between the action scores of building level administrators and teachers across the district was analyzed. Using the mean action score of all teachers as the test variable (M = 53.322) and the mean action score of administrators as the test value (M = 74.125), a significant difference was obtained from the single-sample *t* test. This means that across the district teachers tended to have significantly lower action scores in terms of parental involvement than building level administrators. Such results are not surprising because administrators often serve as liaisons between school and home.

Recommendations for Practice

The perception scores and action scores of teachers and administrators included in this study were not intended to represent the perception scores and action scores of all teachers and administrators. However, several interesting conclusions found in this study

may be used as a starting point to increase awareness of parent involvement beliefs and practices among school staff members in other locations. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for practice are offered.

1. This study suggested that teachers as a whole indicate that they act according to their perceptions when it comes to parent involvement. District leaders need to recognize this so that they may explore effective ways to increase the perceptions of teachers in important areas and the actions of those teachers will likely follow.
2. Students still need support from their parents as they get older (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). However, a significant gap exists in the parent involvement actions of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. School leaders should consider offering increased professional development in the area of parent involvement and how it can work specifically at the secondary level.
3. Building level administrators in this study tended to have significantly higher perception scores in terms of parent involvement than teachers. Administrators also had higher action scores along those lines as well. Within a school administrators should foster more opportunities for parent involvement with school-wide initiatives or programs designed to show its benefits.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research in this area should be focused on the following areas.

1. The population for this study was one small, rural district and should be expanded to include larger, more diverse populations. Then, generalizations will become more appropriate and trends may become more obvious.
2. It would be of interest to disaggregate these analyses down to the individual school level. Such analyses could offer important information about staff division and collaboration and where professional development should be focused.
3. The school district used in this research has a reputation of being a high performing district in the state of Tennessee. It could be important to see the difference in perception scores and action scores of a low performing district for comparison. Furthermore, this type of analysis could open the possibility of exploring student performance against teacher perception scores and action scores.
4. A research study in which parent perceptions and actions are compared to teacher perceptions and actions would be particularly useful. This could potentially uncover any gaps between the feelings of home and school and help each group understand how to better support the other.

Conclusion

Research is clear that parent involvement has a significant influence on student achievement (Barnard, 2004; Fan, 2001), increases the likelihood of children attending college (Cabrera & Steven, 2000; Horn, 1998), decreases behavioral problems (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and produces lower instances of high school dropout and truancy

(McNeal, 1999). Therefore, it would be to the advantage of all school personnel to understand where they are in terms of parent involvement. This study explored this topic on a small school district in northeast Tennessee. Some significant differences were observed between the action scores of teachers with high perception scores and teachers with low perception scores, teachers at different grade levels, and teachers and administrators across the district. From these results, recommendations were made with the purpose of helping school districts better understand the challenges they face as they attempt to best serve their students and communities.

REFERENCES

Addi-Raccah, A., & Ainhoren, R. (2009). School governance and teachers' attitudes to parents' involvement in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 805-813.

Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26*(1), 39-62.

Barrera, J. M., & Warner, L. (2006). Involving families in school events. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 42*(2), 72-75.

Bauch, P. A., & Goldring, E. B. (1998). Parent-teacher participation in the context of school governance. *Peabody Journal of Education, 73*(1), 15-35.

Becher, R. (1986). Parents and schools. ED269137. ERIC Digest. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.* http://www.eric.ed.gov.ezproxy-etsu.edu:2048/PDFS/ED269137.pdf

Becker, H. J., & Epstein, J. L. (1982). Teacher practices of parent involvement: Problems and possibilities. *Elementary School Journal, 83*, 103-113.

Blondal, K.S., & Adalbjarnardottir, S. (2009). Parenting practices and school dropout: A longitudinal study. *Adolescence, 44*, 729-749.

Brandon, R. R., Higgins, K., Pierce, T., Tandy, R., & Sileo, N. (2010). An exploration of the alienation experience by African American parents from their children's educational environment. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*, 208-222.

Brannon, D. (2007). Addressing the decline of parent involvement in middle school. *Principal, 87*(2), 62-63.

Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 219-227.

Cabrera, A. F., & Steven, M. (2000). Overcoming the tasks on the path to college for America's disadvantaged. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 27*(1), 31-43.

Carranza, F. D., You, S., Chhuon, V., & Hudley, C. (2009). Mexican American adolescents' achievement and aspirations: The role of perceived parental educational involvement, acculturation, and self-esteem. *Adolescence, 44*(Summer 2009), 313-333.

Chavkin, N. F. (2000). Family and community involvement policies: Teachers can lead the way. *The Clearing House, 73*, 287-290.

Chavkin, N. F., & Williams, D. L. (1988). Critical issues in teacher training for parent involvement. *Educational Horizons, 66*(1), 87-89.

Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor African American children succeed or fail*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Cucchiara, M. B., & Horvat, E. M. (2009). Perils and promises: Middle-class parental involvement in urban schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*, 974-1004.

Dail, A. R., & Payne, R. L. (2010). Recasting the role of family involvement in early literacy development: A response to the NELP report. *Educational Researcher, 39*, 330-333.

Dietel, R. (2006). *Get smart: Nine ways to help your child succeed in school*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Duchesne, S., & Ratelle, C. (2010). Parental behaviors and adolescents' achievement goals at the beginning of middle school: Emotional problems as potential mediators. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*, 497-507.

Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*, 289-305.

Epstein, J. L., & Jansorn, N. R. (2004). School, family, and community partnerships link the plan. *The Education Digest, 69*(6), 19-23.

Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 12-18.

Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2006). Prospects for change: Preparing educators for school, family, and community partnerships. *Peabody Journal of Education, 82*(2), 81-120.

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research, 95*, 308-318.

Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 70*(1), 27-61.

Flanigan, C. B. (2007). Preparing preservice teachers to partner with parents and communities: An analysis of college of education faculty focus groups. *The School Community Journal, 17*(2), 89-109.

Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., & Willems, P. P. (2003). Examining the underutilization of parent involvement in the schools. *School Community Journal, 13*(1), 85-99.

Hall, H. R. (2008). Student-parent-teacher partnerships: Creating safe classrooms and communities. *Democracy and Education, 18*(1), 46-49.

Harer, J. B. (2009). Parental involvement in selection: Mandated or our choice? *Library Media Connection, 28*(3), 18-19.

Hill, N. E., & Craft, S. A. (2003). Parent-school involvement and school performance: Mediated pathways among socioeconomically comparable African American and Euro-American families. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(1), 74-83.

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology, 45*, 740-763.

Hoang, T. N. (2007). The relations between parenting and adolescent motivation. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 3*(2), 1-17.

Horn, J. G. (1998). Stakeholders' evaluation of rural/small schools. *Rural Educator, 20*(1), 5-11.

Huntsinger, C.S., & Jose, P.E. (2009). Parental involvement in children's schooling: Different meanings in different cultures. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 24*(2009), 398-410.

Jensen, D. A. (2006). Using newsletters to create home-school connections. *The Reading Teacher, 60*, 186-190.

Johnsen, S. (2007). NCLB rules for parental involvement. *Gifted Child Today, 30*(1), 6.

Kindervater, T. (2010). Models of parent involvement. *The Reading Teacher, 63*, 610-612.

King, V., Mitchell, K. S., & Hawkins, D. N. (2010). Adolescents with two nonresident biological parents: Living arrangements, parental involvement, and well-being. *Journal of Family Issues, 31*(1), 3-30.

LaForett, D. R., & Mendez, J. L. (2010). Parent involvement, parental depression, and program satisfaction among low-income parents participating in a two-generation early childhood education program. *Early Education and Development, 21*, 517-535.

Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal, 43*, 193-218.

Lewin, C., & Luckin, R. (2010). Technology to support parental engagement in elementary education: Lessons learned from the UK. *Computers & Eudcation, 54*, 749-758.

Lin, C.-H., Lin, S.-L., & Wu, C.-P. (2009). The effects of parental monitoring and leisure boredom on adolescents' internet addiction. *Adolescence, 44*, 993-1004.

Liu, F., Black, E., Algina, J., Cavanaugh, C., & Dawson, K. (2010). The validation of one parental involvement measurement in virtual schooling. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 9*, 105-132.

Martinez-Cosio, M. (2010). Parents' roles in mediating and buffering the implementation of an urban school reform. *Education and Urban Society, 42*, 283-306.

Marzano, R.J. (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research based strategies for every teacher*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Cirriculum Development.

Matson, J. L., Mahan, S., & LoVullo, S. V. (2009). Parent training: A review of methods for children with developmental disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 30*, 961-968.

McNeal, R. B. (1999). Family Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. *Social Forces, 78*, 117-144.

Mendez, J. L. (2010). How can parents get involved in preschool? Barriers and engagement in education by ethnic minority parents of children attending head start. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16*(1), 26-36.

Neely, E. (2005). Communication with parents, it works both ways. *Leadership, 34*(5), 24-27.

Nelson, S. W., & Guerra, P. L. (2010). Empowered parents partner with schools to meet student needs. *Journal of Staff Development, 31*(1), 67-68.

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice, 49*, 106-112.

Patall, E. A., Cooper, H., & Robinson, J. C. (2008). Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis. *Review of Educatoinal Rsearch, 78*, 1039-1101.

Pearce, L. R. (2009). Helping children with emotional difficulties: A response to intervention investigation. *The Rural Educator, 30*(2), 34-46.

Powell, D. R., Son, S. H., File, N., & San Juan, R. R. (2010). Parent-school relationships and children's academic and social outcomes in public pre-kindergarten. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 269-292.

Roest, A. M. C., Dubas, J. S., & Gerris, J. R. M. (2010). Value transmissions between parents and children: Gender and developmental phase as transmission belts. *Journal of Adolescence, 33*, 21-31.

Rogers, M.A., Wiener, J., Marton, I., & Tannock, R. (2009). Parental involvement in children's learning: comparing parents of children with and without Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). *Journal of School Psychology, 47*, 167-185.

Ryan, C. S., Casas, J.F., Kelly-Vance, L., Ryalls, B.O., & Nero, C. (2010), Parent involvement and views of school success: The role of parents' Latino and white American cultural orientations. *Psychology in the Schools, 47*, 391-405.

Sanders, M. G., & Lewis, K. C. (2005). Building bridges toward excellence: Community involvement in high schools. *The High School Journal, 88*(3), 1-9.

Semke, C. A., Garbacz, S. A., Kwon, K., Sheridan, S., & Woods, K.E. (2010). Family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors: The role of parenting stress and motivational beliefs. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 293-312.

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2005). Involvement counts: Family and community partnerships and mathematics achievement. *The Journal of Education Research, 98*, 196-206.

Simons-Morton, B., & Chen, R. (2009). Peer and parent influences on school engagement among early adolescents. *Youth & Society, 41*(1), 3-25.

Sirvani, H. (2007). The effect of teacher communication with parents on students' mathematics achievement. *American Secondary Education, 36*(1), 31-46.

Skwarchuk, S. L. (2009). How do parents support preschoolers' numeracy learning experiences at home? *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*, 189-197.

Smetana, J. G., Villalobos, M., Rogge, R. D., & Tasopoulos-Chan, M. (2010). Keeping secrets from parents: Daily variations among poor, urban adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence, 33*, 321-331.

Staples, K. E., & Diliberto, J. A. (2010). Guidelines for successful parent involvement: Working with parents of students with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 42*(6), 58-63.

Sui-Chu, E. H., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *Sociology of Education, 69*, 126-141.

Tennessee Department of Education Report Card Data. (2007). Retrieved on October 5, 2010, from http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:44164456700577-85::NO:::.

Tennessee Department of Education Report Card Data. (2008). Retrieved on October 5, 2010, from http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:44164456700577-85::NO:::.

Tennessee Department of Education Report Card Data. (2009). Retrieved on October 5, 2010, from http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:44164456700577-85::NO:::.

United States Department of Education, Office of the Secretary. (1994). *Strong families, strong schools: Building community partnerships for learning*. Washington DC: Author.

United States Department of Education, Office of the Secretary. Office of Public Affairs. (2003). *No child left behind: A parent's guide*. Washington DC: Author.

Viadero, D. (2009). Parent-school ties should shift in teen years. *Education Digest, 75*(6), 20-22.

Villano, M. (2008). Meet the parents. *T.H.E Journal, 35*(4), 49-53.

Vonde, D. A. S., Maas, P., & McKay, T. (2005). Teaming up to create leaders. *Principal Leadership (High School Ed.), 5*(8), 41-44.

Wherry, J. H. (2009). Shattering barriers to parental involvement. *Principal, 88*(5), 7.

Wilford, S. (2005). Building relationships: Who's on my team?. *Scholastic Early Childhood Today, 20*(2), 9-10.

Wong, M. M. (2008). Perceptions of parental involvement and autonomy support: Their relations with self-regulation, academic performance, substance use and resilience among adolescents. *North American Journal of Psychology, 10*, 497-518.

Wyrick,. A.J., & Rudasill, K. M. (2009). Parent involvement as a predictor of teacher-child relationship quality in third grade. *Early Education and Development, 20*, 845-864.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Parent Involvement Questionnaire

Please circle the response that best represents your feelings towards parent involvement

Demographic Information

1) What is your current role in education?

Teacher Administrator

2) How long have you been a licensed educator?

0-3 years 4-10 years 11-20 years 20+ years

3) What grade level do you currently serve?

Elementary Middle High

4) What is your age?

21-30 years old 31-40 years old 41-50 years old 51+ years old

5) What is your gender?

Male Female

6) What is the highest degree that you have earned?

Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Specialist Degree Doctorate Degree

Rate your feelings regarding the following statements
(0 = strongly disagree, 5 = not sure, 10 = strongly agree)

7) Parent involvement is important for a good school.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8) Parents could learn ways to help their children at home if shown how.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9) Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10) Parent involvement is important for the academic success of my students.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please continue to the next page

11) Parent involvement is important for improving classroom behavior.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12) Students would be more motivated to do well in school if parents were more involved.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13) It is the responsibility of the school to initiate parent involvement.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14) If I were to rate parent involvement on a list of the most important parts of a successful school, it would be in my top three.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

<u>For the following, please indicate how many times you have done each of the following THIS YEAR</u>.

15) Had a face-to-face conference with a parent.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

16) Contacted a parent when a student experienced problems in your class.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

17) Provided specific information on how parents can help their students at home.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

18) Invited a parent to visit/volunteer in my classroom.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

19) Sent home information on what you have been doing in class.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

20) Assigned homework that requires parents to interact with their children.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

21) Contacted a parent when a student did something positive in your class.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

22) Total number of times parents are contacted on average per week (email, phone, etc.)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

23) Invited a parent to attend a school function (open house, athletic event, etc.)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

APPENDIX B

Letter to the Director of Schools

[Name]
Director of Schools
XX Schools
[Address]

December 6, 2010

Dear [Name],

I am writing you to formally request permission to conduct my dissertation research with the teachers and principals of XX Schools. For the past four years I have been working towards my doctor of education degree at East Tennessee State University, which culminates in a dissertation project. I have chosen to do my research in the area of teacher and administrator perceptions and actions towards parent involvement. Parent involvement has been shown in the literature to benefit schools on numerous levels, including student achievement, motivation towards learning, and decreased rates of dropout and absenteeism. Therefore, I feel that this is certainly a worthy project to undertake.

Research would be conducted by a simple, minimally invasive questionnaire that would not take more than ten minutes to complete. A copy of this questionnaire has been enclosed for your review. Participation, of course, is voluntary and teachers may opt out if they so choose. Also, names of schools, participants, and the district will be coded to protect anonymity. It is my hope to deliver questionnaires in person during a faculty meeting or some other common, non-instructional time. Principals would be contacted to get their permission and to arrange times that would cause the least interference to school operations. Furthermore, I would take the utmost care to ensure that work on this project would not interfere with my obligations at XX, as that is my first professional priority.

Finally, my hope is that this project can help the XX School district by allowing us to better understand where we are in terms of parent involvement. I would be happy to share the results with the district, individual schools, or both upon request.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Randy A. Watts

____Approved ____Not Approved Signature_____

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Request Statement

Parent Involvement Questionnaire Request

Dear Fellow Educator,

This is a request for your participation in a research study of educator perceptions and actions regarding parent involvement. My name is Randy Watts and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. As part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree, I am currently working on my dissertation entitled "Perceptions and Actions Regarding Parent Involvement in a Small Northeast Tennessee School District." The purpose of this study is to compare the perceptions of teachers and administrators to their actions in regards to parent involvement. In order to accomplish this, I am asking you to complete a short, non-invasive questionnaire so that I will have the data necessary to complete this project. Participation is *voluntary* but if you choose to participate, feel confident that no identifying information will be asked for on a personal, school, or district level. Once you finish the questionnaire, please return it to the designee in charge who will place it in an envelope to be picked up by the primary researcher. Finally, if you feel more comfortable completing this questionnaire in a more private setting, please feel free to move to a new location. Thank you for your support in this research.

Sincerely,

Randy A. Watts
East Tennessee State University
(XXX)-xxx-xxxx
xxxxxx@goldmail.etsu.edu

VITA

RANDY ADAM WATTS

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: July 1, 1979 Place of Birth: Villa Rica, GA Marital Status: Married
Education:	Villa Rica High School, Villa Rica, Georgia, 1997 Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Berry College, Mount Berry, Georgia, 2001 Master of Arts in Education, Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, 2006 Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2011
Professional Experience:	Chemistry Teacher, Fleming County High School, Flemingsburg, Kentucky, 2003-2006 Chemistry Teacher, Sullivan East High School, Bluff City, Tennessee, 2006-2010 Assistant Principal, John Sevier Middle School, Kingsport, Tennessee, 2010-Present