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THE PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN

A SOUTHEASTERN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

by

ELIZABETH CHATTMON WHITE

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership practices of high school principals and parental involvement and to examine to what extent those practices differed between principals and how they related to parental involvement. The study revealed major issues surrounding parental involvement such as how principals defined parental involvement, how principals communicated the importance of parental involvement; what parental involvement activities impact student achievement; what common leadership practices influenced parental involvement; and what are some common experiences of high school principals regarding parental involvement.

The methodology employed to conduct this qualitative study was face-to-face audio-taped interviews at the school site where each principal was in the lead role. Principals were asked protocol questions about their leadership practices which they previewed before the scheduled interview meeting. During the interview, principals responded to sub-topic questions which were of a more in-depth nature, to determine the extent to which they employed the practices they said they employed.

The major findings of this study revealed several points about principals' practices and parental involvement. One such finding was that high school principals

differ in their definitions of parental involvement. Another finding was that principals communicate the importance of parental involvement through their practices. Findings further indicated that few to no parental involvement activities have impacted student achievement; that few to no leadership practices influence parental involvement, and that the most common experience shared between high school principals regarding parental involvement is the challenge of strengthening parental involvement.

The implications of this study are because principals are the leaders and tone-setters of the school, they must continue assessing their daily practices and become more creative in their practices aimed at stronger parental involvement, for as of yet, they have not discovered, through their present leadership practices, activities that elicit stronger parental involvement.

INDEX WORDS:     High school, Principals, Parent involvement, Student achievement, Principal practices, Stakeholders, Education, Attitude toward school, Socio-economics status, Ethnicity, School culture, School climate, Reformation, No Child Left Behind

THE PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN A SOUTHEAST URBAN

SCHOOL DISTRICT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PARENTAL

INVOLVEMENT

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2007

# THE PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN A SOUTHEAST URBAN

# SCHOOL DISTRICT ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PARENTAL

# INVOLVEMENT

by

ELIZABETH CHATTMON WHITE

| | |
|---|---|
| Major Professor: | Linda M. Arthur |
| Committee: | Abebayehu Tekleselassie |
| | Michael D. Richardson |

Electronic Version Approved:
May 2007

DEDICATION

To Joseph, my husband and best friend, whose outlook on life has been a source of

motivation and a towering resource of strength for me.

To Tommy, my pride, my joy, my legacy, my reason for taking this journey.

To Mama and Ma, for speaking volumes to me without uttering the words.

You are the wind beneath my wings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I shall pass through this world but once; if therefore, there be any kindness
I can show or any good thing I can do; let me do it now; for, I shall not
pass this way again (Mahatma Gandhi).

I believe the end of a thing is better than the beginning thereof. For it is only with

endings can we have the full scope of the possibilities of new beginnings, realizing and

conceding that endurance carries its own reward.

My loving Heavenly Father, I thank you.

I have accumulated many debts along this journey.  I must extend a heartfelt

sentiment to my committee members: Dr. Linda M. Arthur, whose conversations have

always been filled with an energy which has, in and of itself, been encouraging and

uplifting, this, coupled with an abiding voice of guidance; Dr. Abebayehu Tekleselassie

whose insightful comments and thought provoking suggestions served as beacons of light

in a sometimes otherwise bleak process; and Dr. Michael Richardson for his professional

vision and belief in this project, even early on.

A special sentiment must be expressed to Dr. Michael Richardson, Dr. Meta

Harris, and Dr. James Burnham for helping me to examine the seed of parental

involvement in class in order to decipher my genuine interest, for allowing me to harvest

that seed which had taken root in the early days of my teaching career, and for helping

me to see it reach fruition in this dissertation form.

A debt of gratitude must also be extended to the Board of Education for allowing

me to conduct this study within the district and to the principals, who participated in the

study.

I further owe a debt of gratitude to professional colleagues who made immeasurable contributions along the way as I moved toward the completion of this journey: Dr. Tony- Adams Aberime, Dr. Delores Cummings, and Principal Ola Lewis, (ret.). You have been golden friends.

I must also extend a heartfelt sentiment to a team of supporters at Oklahoma State University. The contributions that Dr. William M. Decker, Dr. Edward Walkiewicz, Dr. Jeffrey Walker, Dr. Elizabeth Grubgeld, and Dr. Edward Jones provided, mark a time during which was fueled an inextinguishable passion to attain this goal. The experiences of that time are indelibly etched in my storehouse of fond memories.

Additionally, an expression of gratitude must also be extended to Dr. Sonya Shepherd, another very supportive person, whose professional talents went into the final product of this study. Along the way, her suggestions and insights chronicling her own journey went an immeasurable distance toward helping me to see the light at the end of an otherwise lonely, dark and winding process.

And finally, my family has been a fort on whose post I frequently found solace. To each of you, my love.

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INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

> An observation…If educators take the position that a student is incapable
> of learning until all needs are met, we may doom the student never to
> learn…because poverty will persist, divorce will persist, sickness and
> human tragedy will persist. Ideally, a student comes to our classrooms
> well-fed, warmly-dressed, and securely-loved. But this is not an ideal
> world; these are not prerequisites to learning. To believe that they are,
> contributes to the "lowered expectations syndrome" that depresses student
> achievement. In actuality, academic achievement could be the only
> tangible success in an otherwise defeating existence, as well as the only
> way out of that existence. Our job as educators is to do everything in our
> power to ensure academic achievement in our students (Robert R.
> Spillane, Superintendent, Fairfax County Virginia).

The issue of improving parental involvement at the secondary school level continues

to be a primary concern for stakeholders. School leaders head the list as being among

those who are conscientiously searching to find effective strategies that influence parental

involvement. Popular topics of discussion surrounding this dilemma range from teacher

quality and accountability to inadequate local, state and federal funding for implementing

effective strategies that will lead to and foster greater parental involvement. According to

Cotton and Wikelund (1989), communities and schools alike are concerned about the

quality of teaching and other high-quality teaching services that suffer from inadequate

funding. President George W. Bush's 1991 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) school

reformation initiative carries with it implications of phenomenal benefits. Yet, as far as

education is concerned, such a reformation, likewise, carries with it, a plethora of

conditions. One such condition of an extremely nebulous nature, but at the same time,

one which carries with it immeasurable gains, is parental involvement. Researchers

continue to reveal the fact that one significant aspect of student performance can be

linked to parental involvement. Acknowledging the inestimable psychological effects that parental involvement has on student performance, Pelco, Ries, Jacobson, and Melka (2002) revealed that school psychologists recognized and advocated family-school partnership activities and were willing to devote their time to improving the relationship between families and schools.

In the interest of school reformations, some researchers examined the relationship administrative practices might have had on parental involvement. With the primary objective being the success of the student, finding a definitive resolution to engaging parents is still a great challenge, but a challenge that is worth undertaking because parental involvement can be linked to student success. Researchers (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Hickman, 1988; Raffaela & Knoff, 1999) further agreed that parental involvement is still largely an untapped resource in the struggle to provide state-of-the-art instruction with diminishing funds, to instill pride and interest in school, to increase student achievement and to enhance a sense of community and commitment in students.

Significantly, Cotton and Wikelund noted further that there is a tendency for parents to back off of the level of involvement once the student reaches secondary school level. Based on the discoveries of this study, this researcher found that there is a myriad of factors such as demographics, parent and school collaboration, parental and community attitude about school, student attitude about school, as well as administrative influence and accountability, which can impact  parental involvement and affect student achievement.

Parental Involvement and Demographics

Ogbu (2003), who traced the historical and the national trends of the academic

achievement gap between Black and White students because, based on certain

achievement analyses, Black students in the Shaker Heights, Ohio school district

performed more poorly than their White counterparts in that same district, found several

factors relating to the complexities of those findings. One such discovery he made had to

do with the influence that a student's community had on the performance of the student

in school, the influence which the student acquired as he/ she was growing up. He

identified this influence as collective identity.

Ogbu (2003) identified that collective identity is important to understanding the

cultural and language differences that might impede the rate of progress of minorities as

opposed to that of their White counterparts. He purported that African-Americans bring

to the public school a cultural and language frame of reference as properties of the

minority group in the capacity of, or "qua the minority group." He defined collective

identity as the sense of who the student is, the sense that the student feels that he/she

belongs; and he argues that collective identity is a product of the group's history and

experiences, that it gives individual members a sense of self-worth. This, Ogbu contends,

for Blacks, is associated with affective dissonance in the domains of curriculum,

language and relationships with teachers and the school system. This discord represented

between their beliefs and their actions regarding school, causes the students to conduct

their relationships with teachers and other school authorities with attitudes of indifference

or "not caring." Their performance is affected by their perceptions.

This collective identity is synonymous with what Ogbu earlier saw as community forces. He proffered that community forces, the educational beliefs and behaviors the children learn about the community, together with societal and school factors, determine more or less, the performance of the student. Additionally, and most salient to this discussion, Ogbu further pointed out that these community forces also affect the educational strategies of the parents in dealing with the educational system and in working with their children. What belies the argument posed by Ogbu is that a student's environment or community can unfortunately contribute to apathetic attitudes about education and can have a greater impact on a student's formal education than do the teachers and the school, unless education is stressed as a prevailing expectation by the occupants of that community.

Desimone (1999) found that demographics such as age, gender and race, which are not factors indicative of a person's education, can impact a parent's involvement capability and affect a student's education. Specifically, the researcher examined the relationship between particular types of parental involvement and student achievement and how the degree of that relationship differed according to students' race-ethnicity and family income level. The author concluded that more information was needed about what types of parental involvement effectively promote student achievement in diverse family and community contexts for children placed at risk of educational failure, as well as for disadvantaged students.

Coots (1998) focused on the adaptations a family makes when faced with the developmental delays a child might display. Four categories of factors were examined in an attempt to test whether the factors related to amount and type of involvement for

families of children with developmental delays. The study clarified the characteristics of participatory and non-participatory school activities for family, child and school.

Crozier (1999) explored some of the constraints such as class factors, gender relations, ethnicity and power relationships which interfere with parents' ability to get more involved in their children's education. Teachers have a particular set of expectations regarding parents' roles and behaviors, and are critical and accusing when parents fail to match that expectation model. The conclusion was that teachers must continue to employ a range of strategies for engaging parents in a proactive partnership, if a more inclusive, participatory role for parents in the education of their children is to be formed.

Similarly, Cullingford and Morrison (1999) also suggested that there is a desire for a closer relationship between parents and teachers. These researchers concluded that many difficulties still remain when it comes to parental involvement in schools and schools' approaches to parents. Indeed, socio-economics, often seem to have a tremendous impact on student achievement and is often associated with the level of parental involvement. Yet, Cotton and Wikelund (1989) suggested that educators must understand that parents differ in their willingness, capability, and availability to participate in their child's school activities despite the impeding factors that may be interfering with their involvement with the school and the child's education.

Likewise, Pena (1994) examined ideas and attitudes about education among low-income, minority parents. Results showed implications of parents' interaction patterns with schools. The researcher cites Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) as reporting that minimal opportunities and indifferent attitudes are factors that negatively

impact their level of parental involvement. The results of this study also revealed that parents cited language barriers, educational jargon, along with culture, and limited educational background as being factors which fueled their fear and mistrust of school personnel. The results of this study also suggested that a student's socioeconomic status impacts his or her education. The authors, like Cotton and Wikelund also concluded that an attitude of collaboration on the part of the school staff may be helpful in deconstructing age-old scripts that limit interaction.

Similarly, an attitude of collaboration on the part of school staff describes the desires of another group of parents. Pryor (1995) assumed a slightly different approach to examining the home-school relationship. He focused on a parent's wish to have more voice in the operation of schools and the importance of leadership which would foster enhanced family-school partnerships. So, as regards this population of parents, clarifying the relationship between high school principals' practices and their relationship to parental involvement would perhaps suggest the solution being a stronger connection between the home and the school and perhaps indicate effective strategies for giving parents a stronger voice in the operation of school.

Eccles and Harold (1993) revealed that, curiously, both parents and schools recognize that parents are not as involved in the educational experience of the child as either would like them to be. The issue which belies parental involvement at all grade levels is what is adequate parental involvement and should parental involvement diminish as the student moves from the elementary, to the middle and ultimately to the secondary school level. Marie App (1991) in Families and Involvement: An Educator's Resource for Family Involvement, presented involvement tips for parental involvement at the elementary and

middle school levels which can also be utilized at the secondary school level. As concerns the relationship between principals' practices and parental involvement, researchers continued to investigate the perception that parents seem to take a less participatory position once a student reaches the secondary school grade level.

Home and School Collaboration

Many researchers focused on the relationship between home and school and how schools can form and foster more collaborative relations between school and family. Raffaele and Knoff (1999) revealed that home-school collaboration can be improved for families that have been historically disenfranchised from the educational system by focusing on an ecological perspective and organizational change. They made further recommendations about how school personnel can create effective home-school collaborations.

In a similar study by Jayanthi & Sawyer (1995) these researchers offered recommendations for improving communication between home and school regarding homework assigned in mainstream classes between teachers, parents and special education teachers.

When Ogbu (2003) investigated what educational strategies parents employed, that is, what parents did or did not do about their children's education at school and at home, how parents went about implementing their educational aspirations for their children, he found several reasons why Black parents' school involvement was limited. Ogbu, found that one primary factor which limited the level of involvement parents demonstrated was working too many hours with little or no time left to participate in school activities. Another factor was that Black parents felt alienated form the White-controlled school

system; this led to those parents having a mistrust for the White-controlled system. Ogbu, further found that another reason was the parents' understanding of who should educate their children, that is, their cultural model of school teaching and learning; and finally, the parents' lack of knowledge of the differences between class levels and the relationship those various class levels had to their children's post high school education plans. These common issues had, on some level, to do with parents' disengagement of their children's education.

Ogbu, moreover, found that parents did not know enough about the significance between Advanced Placement and Honors classes on one hand, and college preparatory and perhaps Technical programs on the other. Many of these parents missed opportunities to learn about these programs when they did not attend school meetings, did not participate in school programs, did not attend parent-teacher conferences or did not do volunteer work at school, crucial areas in which schools expect parental involvement to be manifest.

Of major concern to the effort toward establishing collaborative home-school relationships was the teacher work/responsibility context as it relates to parent involvement. Bauch and Goldring (2000) examined how the organizational context of teachers' work influence the opportunities schools of choice provide for parental involvement. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to report their findings, researchers found that a communal organization of teacher work life has a strong influence on facilitating parental involvement.

Parental Involvement and Student Attitudes and Behavior

Romi and Freund (1999) suggested a connection between parental involvement and students' attitudes and behaviors. The researchers were interested in factors that influenced students' disruptive behavior as part of school discipline. The results of the study showed a connection between parent involvement and its impact on student attitude and social behavior. The researchers concluded that there is a need for increased parental involvement in the school's discipline-related policies.

As for the relationship between attitudes and behavior that affect the classroom learning environment, Scott and Hannafin (2000) suggested that teachers hold beliefs about classroom learning environments that are similar to reformed classrooms, unlike parents. The researchers focused on the common occurrence of violence in student behavior in school. When querying principals about the perceived effectiveness of crime and criminal justice education on crime prevention, researchers Bartsch and Cheurprakobet (2002) found that education in criminology would be helpful in reducing crime and that education would help promote good citizenship. The underlying concept in their strategies to deter and eventually prevent crime was to utilize parental involvement to aid in encouraging and in enforcing school policies designed to affect this outcome by helping with student attitude and behavior.

Principals' Practices and Parental Involvement

The issue of parental involvement is one of national concern since, as indicated, national, state, and local agencies have begun researching and publishing data to help develop positive solutions suitable to all stakeholders. A factor which many studies

examined relating to enhancing high school parental involvement is the impact that school leadership has on parental involvement.

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), revealed the characteristics of effective leadership. The researchers found that leadership involves knowing what, when, how, and why it is necessary to implement and enforce a particular practice, and that effective leaders intuitively know that school leadership makes a difference. The study indicated that instructional leadership was one of several defining characteristics of successful schools. These researchers synthesized research through meta-analysis on student characteristics and teacher and school practices associated with school effectiveness. Twenty-one key leadership responsibilities associated with student achievement and parent/community involvement were identified and, ranked among one of the top five of eleven school and teacher practices and student factors that influence student achievement.

The Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (1999) publication defined the role of the principal in promoting positive results between parent involvement and student academic success. The Combined Elementary Task Forces of the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC) identified eight areas of principal practices that would encourage parental involvement. The areas ranged from facilitating parent involvement programs that are flexible and relevant to the feedback from all participants, to anticipating problems and facilitating early prevention of problems and proactively addressing other concerns such as teachers' involving parents and addressing the concerns of bureaucracy that might be intimidating to the parents. This study, compared to the Waters, Marzano, McNulty (2003) study, likewise, suggested that it is the

responsibility of the principal, as the school's leader, to ensure that parents feel

comfortable enough to participate in the functions of the school.

Attempts to address the need to show the relationship between high school principal

practices and parental involvement were also manifested in such efforts as those of the

Harvard Graduate School. The Harvard Graduate School of Education (2005) published

information on how the National Association of Secondary School Principals honors high

schools that are successful despite their high poverty and high minority student

populations. The editors identified those schools as "breakthrough" high schools. The

individual "breakthrough" school profiles included descriptions of parent and community

involvement plans and activities. The publication issued the results of enhanced student

academic performance which resulted from an improvement in the relationship between

home and school.

This matter of how high school principals can influence high school parental

involvement has met with great concern. In attempts to answer the problem of principals'

practices that are related to and that influence parental involvement, the Indiana

Department of Education presented in School-Parent-Community Partnerships Resource

Book (2001), criteria for stakeholders in education. This source advocated the

cooperation of all schools in creating an atmosphere of collaboration, mutual acceptance

and a commonality of goals as defining standards and quality indicators connecting

school leadership practices and home collaboration as an aspect of parental involvement.

Similarly, Paul Warren (2005) compiled a report which comments on how the

relationship between home and school leadership practices not only impact students' high

school experience, but how the relationship has far-reaching effects that help students

succeed in their post-graduation goals. The researcher, contrarily, reaffirmed that though states mandated school reformations in changing the culture of high schools and greater parental involvement, state departments could not create a desire within school officials to engage parents in meaningful ways.

With little specific mention of their concern and focus on parental involvement, many principals' practices respond to the manifest need to get parents more involved in their students' educational experience by implementing participatory strategies that answer different levels and challenges that parents might have. Barton and Hamilton (2000) presented evidence that families should have different literacy and other knowledge and skill resources available to support children's academic learning as a way of addressing the varying degrees of parental involvement, and thus improve the relationship between home and school. These researchers saw these resources as establishing the connection between home and school. They suggested that such resources were the basis on which schools might design an approach to helping families support their children's learning, though this may mean that many schools would need to run workshops for parents and/or caregivers about school programs.

Jeri LaBahn (1995) in "Education and Parent Involvement in Secondary Schools: Problems, Solutions and Effects," submitted that there must be a dedicated commitment on the part of the principal if the solution calls for there to be improved collaboration between the parent and the school. The researcher further suggested that the success of any program directly relates to the support and encouragement of the principal, that ultimate responsibility for creating harmony between the school and the home rests largely with the principal.

In contrast to the many researchers that advocated the positive impact of high school principal practices on high school parental involvement, some researchers' findings revealed how involving parents in their students' educational career can still be a challenge and an obstacle. According to Cullingford and Morrison (1999) there still existed many profound impediments between educators and parents and even in circumstances when practices are obviously designed to break down barriers, parents still resisted becoming more actively involved in their child's school activities. Feeling the pressure to continue actively trying to increase parental involvement, and building on the knowledge of the need for heightened parental involvement, school principals' can employ practices that range from establishing an open-door policy of welcoming parents and can still meet with reluctant parents who still experience a sense of intimidation by the school officials and so they still resist the school's professional policy of welcoming parents.

The nature of parental involvement allows for parent involvement to be examined in terms of levels or types. Given its nature, research continues to show that the level of parental involvement diminishes as students move from the early and middle grades and reach the secondary school level. Yet, researchers Eccles and Harold (1993), discussed how parent involvement is both important and achievable in the secondary school years.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

The relationship between high school principals' practices and parental involvement continues to be a source of study for stakeholders in education as the nation continually strives to resolve the issue of home - school collaboration. Parental involvement in a student's high school education is an important part of the student's successful

educational experience. Research overwhelmingly indicates that parental involvement, though a nebulous concept, affects student achievement, and the level at which parents are involved varies. The way school leaders aim at increasing greater parental involvement likewise varies from school to school and district to district with each at the same time, sharing in the common goal of how to increase parental involvement.  This research study examined high school principals' practices and the connection or impact the leader's practices have on strong parental involvement.

Many factors contribute to the reasons why parents do not participate as much as even they themselves would like, and at the level which would better ensure student academic success. Evidence continues to suggest that the success of the student lags when the parent only minimally or remotely shares in the student's educational experience. While school administrators struggle to find the definitive answer to greater student success, state departments of education, school districts and school personnel, including school leaders, have become more focused on their part in helping effectively prepare students to succeed. Part of one such school reform initiative, involving a balanced leadership framework, recognizes that effective leaders know which policies, practices, resources and incentives to implement in order to strengthen the relationship between parents and school, and to connect parents with knowledge, skills, and resources they need to feel comfortable participating in their student's high school experience.

High school principals find it still more difficult to actually gain greater parental involvement because parents serve up many reasons why they do not participate. School officials are finding the challenge great also because some students do not require the same level of parental involvement as do other students in order to be academically

successful. There is a group of parents who think that visiting the school is adequate parental involvement. Other parents feel that questioning about homework assignments is adequate parental involvement. Still there is a group of parents who feel that they must visit the school and take part in most or all of the activities that the school offers in order to feel engaged. This population tends to be rather small in comparison to the population of parents who believe that once the student reaches high school, he or she should need little parental involvement in a child's high school experience.

Research highlighting the relationship between high principal leadership practices and parental involvement has been fairly limited. Many studies on this issue tend to examine leadership/administrative practices of principals on the elementary and middle schools levels. These discussions tend to indicate that parents are more comfortable participating in their student's educational experience at this level more that when the student reaches the high school or secondary school level. What is not known about this issue is this; (a) what is the relationship between high school leadership practices and parental involvement and (b) if there is a relationship, which practices best influence that relationship.

There is the need to study the relationship between high school principals' practices and parental involvement so that high school principals can be better informed of the degree to which their practices can influence this academic phenomenon. High school principals are being charged with a task that involves creatively meeting a challenge of new millennium principals' practices that would better encourage parents to participate in their high school student's educational career. There are practices that schools presently employ that relate to parental involvement, but still parental involvement is minimal.

Accordingly, so far, the efforts being made to enhance parental involvement have only served to lead to one salient question: What is the relationship between high school principal practices and parental involvement?

## Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following over-arching question: To what extent do the perceptions of high school principals differ on their leadership practices and parental involvement? The following related questions were also addressed in his study:

(1) How do southeastern urban high school principals define parental involvement?

(2) How do southeastern urban high school principals communicate their perspective and the importance of parental involvement?

(3) What parental involvement activities do principals perceive as impacting student achievement?

(4) What are the common leadership practices that southeastern urban high school principals perceive influence parental involvement?

(5) What are common experiences of southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement?

## Conceptual Framework

The researcher examined the perceptions and experiences of southeastern urban high school principals on their leadership practices and parental involvement. She investigated practices currently being employed by high school principals in urban schools in a southeast city in Georgia where parental involvement lagged.

Importance of the Study

   This study is significant because the researcher provides evidence about the possible

relationship between high school principal practices and parental involvement. Because

the federal and state governments are mandating school districts to improve the nation's

report card and to enhance student academic achievement, principals are left to devise

plans for trying to ensure the success of all of their students; they are left in a position of

constantly assessing their leadership practices. Some scholars discuss practices that

school leaders implement ideally to motivate parents in terms of improving the degree to

which parents participate in the educational experience of their student. The study is

important (a) for the educational administrative profession; (b) for the improvement of

the educational organization; (c) for the benefit of high school students; and (d) for the

benefit of society in that it will provide insight into the relationship between parental

involvement and high school principal practices.

   The study is important to the researcher in that as a public school educator and

administrator, she is provided insight into practices that significantly relate to and foster

effective parental involvement, by aligning the evidence surrounding the daily functions

of the successful organization which systematically experiences strong parental

involvement, to the conditions and routines of the organization whose parental

involvement lags.

   The study is unique in that it focuses specifically on the practices of high school

principals and examines the relationship that those practices have to parental

involvement. The study of the relationship between high school principals' practices and

parental involvement is further significant because there continues to exist a disjuncture

between home-school communications. The researcher wishes to identify principals'

practices that can strengthen the relationship between the high school and parental

involvement.

Procedure

Research Design -- The researcher designed qualitative structured interview questions

to determine the relationship between high school principals' practices and parental

involvement.

Population/Participants -- Since there are varying degrees of parental involvement, it

is important to identify specific criteria which establishes a relationship between high

school principals' practices and parental involvement. For this study, high school

principals in an urban southeastern Georgia city were chosen. These high schools had

some common ideas and experiences regarding parental involvement with there being

one exception among the participants.

Data Collection -- The study involved only high school principals in public high

schools who serve students in grades 9 through 12 of similar ages and behavior patterns.

A fourteen item interview was conducted following a brief letter of consent identifying

the purpose of the project and requesting demographic information of these participants.

The questions investigated select aspects of their work practices as they relate to parental

involvement:

1. Their philosophy of parental involvement

2. Customer service/open-door policy

3. Teachers involved with enhancing parental participation

4. How they communicate their definition of parent involvement

5. The involvement of parents who meet regularly to address school-wide issues

The interviews lasted approximately 30 – 45 minutes in length. Other demographic questions queried principals about their gender; the size of their student population and the ethnicity breakdown of their student population.

Data Analysis -- An appropriate narrative analysis of the findings was used to discuss the data. The interview was conducted by the researcher at each individual school site. There was no pilot, and no pre-assessment. Demographic items were mailed prior to the principal investigator's visit along with consent letters and these were collected at the adjournment of the interview. All questions were of a qualitative nature, and responses were of a narrative nature and content. Collected data pertained to principals' everyday practices, and experiences.

<p align="center">Limitations and Delimitations</p>

Limitations -- The study was limited only to high school principals in a southeastern urban public school district. Some schools were on the state's Needs-Improvement list and some had met passing stare-standards. The study was limited only to principals employed in high schools who serve students in grades nine through twelve.

Delimitation -- The delimitation of this study is that the study was conducted in an urban southeastern public school system with high school principals only. The findings indicate only the responses or practices of the participants of this study.

<p align="center">Definitions</p>

Achievement -- refers to the overall successful educational performance of the student.

Climate – The prevailing atmospheric influence or environmental conditions characterizing a school.

Culture – School culture refers to the collective programming of the mind in a school that distinguishes the members of one school from another. It includes values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meanings of parents, students, teachers, and others, conceived as a group or community. Culture governs what is of worth for this group and how its members should think, feel, and behave. The criteria of culture include a school's customs and traditions, historical accounts, stated and unstated understandings, habits, norms, expectations, common meanings and shared assumptions.

Parental Involvement—The participation of parents, the people who are raising the child and supporting his or her education; the guardian or child governance advocate in every situation, in every facet, of the child's education. Parental Involvement aligns student activity at school with parental knowledge at home, thus allowing for student academic success through a close-knit relationship of the school-parent channel, by allowing parents to monitor behavior, while providing a sense of accountability to the student, the parent, and the teacher in the areas of communicating, educating, volunteering, decision-making and collaborating.

Practices this term refers to the behavioral patterns that are commonly used in the day-to-day functions of the organization, the "modus operandi" that is typically in use.

## Summary

Parental involvement continues to remain at the forefront of education reform issues. Efforts to enhance parental involvement have assumed an indigenous feel to the day-to-day functions of the school organization. School principals must answer to the call as

today's new millennium leadership representative, while policymakers, state departments, school boards, principals themselves and teachers practice accountability measures focused toward trying to ensure greater parental involvement and increased student achievement. Specifically, each school has its own individualized strategies for trying to encourage parental involvement, but generally, the need for stronger parental involvement still prevails with the principal being expected to discover the resolution.

Much of the research on principals' practices has focused on middle and primary school principals. There is a gap in the literature on principals' practices and their relationship to parental involvement at the high school level. Because this study examined the perceptions of high school principals' about their practices and parental involvement, it is limited in its scope of how student academic performance is impacted by those administrative practices that enhance academic success. Yet, evidence confirms that as the leader of the organization, principals do influence student performance and therefore, must govern with an eye toward the improvement of student growth. Their leadership practices must be designed to continually invite parental involvement. Most principals are confident in their already established and current practices of trying to influence parental involvement, but are also amenable to practices that will further encourage and foster stronger parental involvement.

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do urban southeastern high school principals define parental involvement?

2. How do urban southeastern high school principals communicate their perspective and the importance of parental involvement?

3. What parental involvement activities do urban southeastern high school principals perceive as impacting student achievement?

4. What are some common leadership practices that urban southeastern high school principals perceive as influencing parental involvement?

5. What are some common experiences of urban southeastern high school principals regarding parental involvement?

Principals were asked to identify ways they try to influence parental involvement as a measure of improving high school student academic success and to issue their own statements about the issue of parental involvement. Clarifying the relationship between high school principals' practices and their relationship to parental involvement would suggest a solution to establishing a stronger connection between the home and the school and perhaps indicate effective strategies for giving parents a stronger voice in the operation of school.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

General Introduction

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success
of all students by collaborating with families and community members,
responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing
community resources (Green,2001; ISLLC Standard 4, p. 49).

The role of the principal as school administrator is more complex today as a result

of social change which can be traced to a diverse American society/culture. Educational

administration literature flourishes with attempts to analyze the issue of student success

and factors that lead to better student achievement. An impressive amount of this

literature charged the principal with being the most influential person responsible for

what happens in the school environment. Donaldson (1991) suggested that the

stakeholders in the school expect their wants to be delivered by the principal, and that

innately, what the principal intends to happen, will happen. Sergiovanni (1995) and

Lambert (2005) also issued the same sentiment in contending that the principal, as the

leader and primary trendsetter of the school, sets the culture of the school and establishes

the way  the everyday business of the school is transacted.

It stands to reason then, that since culture building occurs through the way people use

educational, human and technical skills in handling everyday events or establishing

regular practices (Sergiovanni, 1995), the principal then through his or her daily routine

practices can work to move the school forward or can work to cause the school to become

stagnant in its effectiveness. In other words, leadership, weak or strong, leaves an

unmistakable imprint on an organization and those it serves, since administrative

interactions go along way toward stressing the human element of a leader's commitment

to strong teacher-student, parent-administrator interactions (Lambert 2005; Crow, Hausman, & Scriber, 2002). These authors reasoned that interactional leadership has voluminous effects on motivating inclusiveness in home-school relations and according to Crow et. al., that leadership orientation along with collaborative and democratic leadership are three orientations that form an image of a professional community which can tap into the intrinsic motivation of others and impact a commitment to inclusiveness in the schoolhouse. The principal then, who essentially serves as catalyst for the school clients and stakeholders, is expected to correct any problems his or her school might have.

Authors Beck and Murphy (1993) traced the metaphors associated with the dynamics of the role of the principal in a decade – by – decade analysis of that role. The authors identified the principal as a values broker in the 1920s; according to these scholars, in the 1930s, he was a scientific manager; in the 1940s, he was a democratic leader; in the 1950s, the authors contend that the principal was a theory-guided administrator; in the 1960s, society saw him acting in the capacity of the bureaucratic executive; in the 1970s he was regarded as a humanistic facilitator; in the 1980s, he was regarded as an instructional leader, and the 1990s regarded him as an organizational architect. These metaphors suggested that as the needs of society change, the need of the role of principal changes as well. In his leadership capacity, the principal embodied the vision of the school organization.

Jerry Bruckheimer's (2000) character Julius Campbell made a salient point about leadership and its impact on the attitudes of those in the organization in the Walt Disney video presentation of Remember the Titans, the story of Herman Boone, a black assistant

coach who took the helm as head coach at T. C. Williams High School in Alexandria,

Virginia, in 1971 over Bill Yoast, the incumbent, winning white coach. Campbell and his

football team's white counterpart/captain, Gerry Bertier, represent polarized opposites as

they stand head-to-head in their competitive places to define their respective territories

and thereby define their positions as offensive and defensive leaders. Bertier accused

Campbell of having a "bad attitude" because Bertier felt that Campbell was not giving his

all, as a leader, for the team. Campbell retorted, "Attitude reflects leadership, Captain."

Although often, as Campbell intimates, the ethics of an organization are reflected in the

attitudes, behaviors and performances of its personnel, high school educational leaders

are hard pressed to form attitudes that accurately portray their desires to actualize

heightened parental involvement. Though the Bruckheimer character makes a salient

point concerning the attitude of a leader being reflected in the behavior of his team,

principals make claims of desiring greater parental involvement and of demonstrating

that desire through their daily practices, but parental involvement continues to lag.

   Hallinger and Heck (1998) explored principals' contributions to school effectiveness

from 1980 through 1995; they suggested that there might be some legitimacy to the claim

that principal leadership has an indirect impact on school effectiveness. These researchers

noted that principals portray leadership strategies in the school through a stream of

interactions over time, and that through doing so, they address salient features of the

school such as current and changing states of outcomes and/or commitments. They

focused on substantive findings from empirical studies conducted during the period of

1980 through 1995 to interpret the meaning for the field and critically synthesized the

implications of their literature. Their study employed four areas of leadership as

frameworks affected by principal leadership. The areas included purposes and goals, structure and social networks, people, and organizational culture. The findings of this study which were evidenced by cross-national research, indicated what Bruckheimer's character intimates, that principals' involvement in framing and effecting the school's purposes and goals represent an important dimension of indirect influence on school outcomes – even in the area of parent outcomes, and that, involvement from a variety of stakeholders is characteristic of higher-producing schools. They further noted that parental involvement and expectations at the same time, have a corresponding impact on principals.

Decker and Decker (2003) provided a framework for there to be a partnership between the home, the community, and the school while contending that the role of the principal, as the building-level leader, was vital to the formation of family and community partnerships and partnership activities. These authors suggested that for principals to see themselves as educational entrepreneurs would allow them to negotiate the bureaucracy and to attract and keep resources, but as educational entrepreneurs, they would also be better able to establish and maintain strong community partnerships.

According to Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) educators have long known intuitively that school leadership makes a difference. These researchers used a meta-analysis on student characteristics and teacher and school practices associated with school effectiveness to discuss the dynamics of parental involvement. They described those dynamics as being varied, and they described the dynamics of the leadership role as remaining compulsory. The outcome of this study was that leadership involves knowing what, when, how and why it is necessary to implement and enforce a particular practice.

The researchers revealed twenty-one key leaderships practices associated with student achievement and parental and community involvement. A historical glimpse at parental participation showed that the relationship between the family and school has origins dating back to the Colonial period.

De Carvalho (2001) traced parental involvement back to the Colonial image of the cultural school-initiated origins in which the idea of parental involvement was represented by parents who hired male teachers to teach their children in rural communities. When school education became compulsory for children of urban industrial workers by the end of the 19th century, de Carvalho noted that the appeal to involve parents in their children's education led to new, parallel parental involvement education programs. She considered that the middle classes practiced constant involvement in their children's education throughout the 20th century, according to the Puritan ethos that praises hard work and lends credibility to the rhetoric involving the relationship of socioeconomic success to school success. De Carvalho pointed out that in the 1960s, with the civil rights movement, and with the focus being on social exclusion and school segregation, parent education within compensatory education programs, took the image of middle-class family-school relations as a norm.

De Carvalho (2001) further noted that the 1966 Coleman report stressed the importance of family background characteristics – the economic and educational resources of the home – for the differentiating achievement levels of certain groups.  Her report recognized that the inequality of educational opportunities began 'first in the home,' and at the same time, it also pointed out the inability of the school to surmount the effectiveness of the home. The author cited educational initiatives such as curricular and

instructional reforms, teacher preparation, and professional development along with family/child care and socialization processes as supporting educational achievement and intervening in the realm of family to help correct the "'cultural deficit'" and prevent the school failure of minority and disadvantaged groups as a response to the implication that demographics can impact the level of parental involvement.

Coleman (1987) also took an early look back at the origin of public school education. He traced public school education to the 14th century Winchester image of the English private school. These "elite" boarding schools were primarily supported by endowments and tuition from parents of children attending these schools. He contrasted the image of these "upper class" students and the students who were educated with a private tutor who was an appendage to the family, to the image of the children whose education was more fully lodged with the family. In a general sense, educating children was mainly conducted according to the household's productive activities, and the children learned trades in other nearby households. The author noted that mass state-supported schooling did not begin until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

<div align="center">Parent Participation and Demographics</div>

Ogbu (2003) investigated strategies parents employed to help with their children's education at home. He investigated the strategies parents employed to implement their educational aspirations for their children and found what he identified as "collective identity" which encompasses the cultural and language differences African-Americans bring to the public school. According to Ogbu, this collective identity allows African-American students a sense of belonging, an identity, and is part of the group's history and experiences. Also synonymous with a collective identity, the author asserts that

community forces also have an impact on a child's relationship with school. He claims that the educational beliefs and behaviors the children learn about the community, together with societal and school factors, determine more or less, the performance of the student and the educational strategies of the parents in dealing with the educational system and in working with their children.

Desimone (1999) indicated that the concerns relating to the condition of public education transcends a person's demographics such as age, gender and race. Specifically, the researcher examined the relationship between particular types of parent participation and student achievement and how the degree of that relationship differed according to students' race-ethnicity and family income level. Using the ordinary least-squares regression statistical analysis to interpret his findings, the author concluded that although significant differences existed in the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement according to the student's race-ethnicity and family income, more information was needed about what types of parent involvement effectively promote student achievement in diverse family and community contexts for children placed at risk of educational failure, as well as for disadvantaged students.

Coots (1998) focused on the adaptations a family makes when faced with the developmental delays a child might display. Four categories of factors were examined in an attempt to test the factors related to amount and type of involvement for families of children with developmental delays. The study clarified the relationship between participating in schooling activities and specified family, child and school characteristics of a non-participatory nature. The outcome showed that family resources and beliefs would strongly relate to measures of school-parent involvement.

Crozier (1999) explored some of the constraints such as class factors, gender relations, ethnicity and power relationships which interfere with parents' ability to get more involved in their children's education. The researcher found that teachers had a particular set of expectations of parents' roles and behaviors and were critical and accusing when parents failed to match that model. The conclusion was that teachers must design a more proactive role for involving parents, and must continue to employ a range of strategies for engaging parents in a participative partnership, if a more inclusive, participatory role for parents in the education of their children is to be formed.

Similarly, Cullingford and Morrison (1999) also suggested that on both sides of this issue there is a desire to have a strong connection between parents and teachers. The researchers concluded that many difficulties still remain when it comes to parent involvement in schools and schools' approaches to parents. Indeed, socio-economics, often seemed to have a tremendous impact on student achievement and is often associated with the level of parental involvement. Yet, educators must understand that parents differ in their willingness, capability, and availability to participate in their child's school activities, and that difficulties still remain between the school's attempts to encourage parents and parents' abilities to be involved (Cotton & Wikelund,1989).

Likewise, Pena (1994) examined ideas and attitudes about education among low-income, minority parents. Results showed implications of parents' interaction patterns with schools. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987), reported that minimal opportunities and indifferent attitudes were factors that negatively impacted their level of parental participation.  Pena used interviews, document analysis and observations of parent activities to  show that parents participate in activities that meet their needs; and

results of this study also revealed that parents cited language barriers, educational jargon along with culture and limited educational background as being factors which fueled their fear and mistrust of school personnel. The results of this study suggested that a student's socioeconomic status impacts his or her education. The authors concluded that an attitude of collaboration in which educators considered the factors that influence parental involvement with the school staff may be helpful in deconstructing age-old scripts that limit parental interaction.

Decker and Decker (2003) argued that the benefits of a high level of family involvement would have positive effects on student success. The authors noted that the more extensive the level of parental involvement the greater student achievement is. They further noted, among other benefits of family involvement, that the most accurate predictor of student success is not income or social status, but the degree of support the family demonstrates toward the educational success of the student.

Similarly, an attitude of collaboration on the part of school staff coincided with the desires of another group of parents. Pryor (1995) assumed a slightly different approach to examining the home-school relationship. He focused on parents' wish to have more voice in the operation of schools and the importance of leadership which would foster enhanced family-school partnerships. The results revealed that parents of high school students are interested in their children's education, but they are pressured by time constraints and are unsure how to respond to their children's requests for greater individuality, and so they look to the school for direction.

The theme of parental voice had earlier been examined by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992) as they explored parent-school relations of a group of parents across

various school settings. The researchers approached the concept of parental involvement by suggesting parent efficacy – parents' belief and knowledge that through their own influence, they can have a positive influence on their children's school outcomes - as the means to the end of student success. The authors noted that parent efficacy was only one of several contributors to parents' involvement decisions; they determined that it was a fundamental and important vehicle in explaining variations in involvement decisions. They contended that self-efficacy was more significant than status variable such as parent income, education and employment.

Eccles and Harold (1993) revealed that curiously, both parents and schools recognize that parents are not as involved in the educational experience of the child as either would like them to be. The researchers brought to the forefront of the parental involvement issue, a fundamental concern shared by those on both sides of the issue. That is, the issue which belies parental participation at all grade levels is what is adequate parental involvement and should parental involvement diminish as the student moves from the elementary, to the middle and ultimately to the secondary school level. The researchers found that many barriers affect the level of parents' involvement during the adolescent years, but that there are effective ways of involving parents in a stronger, more committed, collaborative relationship with the school.

Some research offered involvement tips for enhancing stronger parental involvement at the elementary and middle school levels which could also be utilized at the secondary school level. As concerns the relationship between principals' practices and parental involvement, researchers continue to investigate the perception that parents seem to take a less participatory position once a student reaches the secondary school grade level.

Factors which distinguish that relationship would serve to clarify and to improve that relationship (App, 1991).

                              Home and School Collaboration

   All too often there prevailed a debate about who is responsible for the education of children. One canon of thought argued that it is primarily the family's responsibility to oversee the education of the child, while another group contended that overseeing the education of the child is primarily the school's responsibility. Epstein (1992) pointed out that shared responsibility comes when the student succeeds, but if the student fails, each group tends to place blame at the feet of the other. Ultimately however, as the author pointed out, ideally, both home and school have mutual interests and over-lapping influence in developing and maintaining a relationship in order to facilitate student success.

   Coleman (1987) examined the deficiencies that a family would experience in preparing children for the social pressures facing today's generation and the burden of the school to compensate for those deficiencies. He contended that certain changes have evolved in the concept of family, and that because of these changes many challenges have been placed on the school to raise its students/children. He contended that these changes in the family have made an impact on the achievement of the students. He cited Coleman and Hoffer (1987) arguing that without schooling, children from any background learn very little of certain concepts such as mathematics, and that interaction from both family and school is important since the resources devoted by family to the child's education, interact with the resources provided by the school. Significantly, Coleman contended that of whatever the quality of the school, schools are more effective

for children from families with strong involvement backgrounds than for children from families where there is weaker family involvement.

Frequently, researchers examined how to strengthen the home-school connections. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, ands Brissie (1992) focused on how schools can form and foster more collaborative relations between school and family. Raffaele and Knoff (1999) revealed that home-school collaboration can be improved for families that have been historically disenfranchised from the educational system by focusing on an ecological perspective and organizational change. They made further recommendations about how school personnel could create effective home-school collaborations.

Epstein (1987) identified 16 techniques used by teachers to involve parents in learning activities at home with their children, after identifying five main types of parental involvement. Using results from surveys of principals, teachers, parents and students, the author presented a spectrum of what principals should know about parental involvement which ranged from the basic obligations of parenting to include basic obligations of schools, parental involvement at school, parental involvement in learning activities at home and finally, parental involvement as governance and advocacy. In keeping with the theme of successful principalship literature, Epstein concluded that principals can help teachers successfully involve parents by coordinating, managing, supporting, funding, recognizing and rewarding parental involvement and by planning programs to strengthen that involvement.

Sheldon and Van Voorhis (2004) examined whether or not factors which lead to better schools as recommended in the National Network of Partnerships (NNPS) for implementation, lead to better family and community involvement. The NNPS

recommended that schools establish an Action Team for Partnership (ATP) to organize

and initiate the schools' involvement activities using a framework that helps create

partnership for six types of involvement: (1) parenting; (2) communicating; (3)

volunteering; (4) decision making; and (6) collaborating with the community.

Participants in this study included 322 schools located in 23 states in large urban, small

urban, suburban and rural geographic locations in the United States. Sixty-nine percent of

the respondents in this study were elementary schools, 15% were middle schools and

10% were high schools. The remaining percentage was represented by a combination of

elementary and middle grades (5%), or 2% in middle and high school grades. Analyses

of data of bivariate correlation coefficients, means, and standard deviations for the

variables were used to predict partnership program quality and levels of family and

community involvement in children's education. Results of the study showed that in the

development of high quality programs, schools need to be supported within and from the

outside, and that schools must evaluate their partnership activities in order to improve

their involvement efforts. Schools with higher quality programs are likely to have more

parent volunteers at school, more parent representatives on school decision-making

committees, and greater parent-child homework activities would more than likely be

instituted.

   Decker and Decker (2003) provided a seven-strategy framework for there to exist a

partnership between the home, the community and the school. These authors listed (a)

encouraging an increased use of community resources and volunteers to augment the

educational curricula; (b) developing educational partnerships between schools and

public and private service providers, business, industry and civic and service

organizations; (c) using public education facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community; (d) developing an environment that fosters lifelong learning; (e) establishing community-involvement processes in educational planning and decision making; (f) providing a responsive, community-based support system for collective action among all education and community agencies  to address community quality-of – life issues and special needs; and (g) developing a system that facilitates home, school and communication as ensuring collaboration between primary stakeholders as the framework for ensuring stronger home-school partnerships and student success.

As a way of improving the relationship between home and school, the First District Regional Educational Service Agency (2006) sponsored a parent involvement conference in which researchers compiled information from the National Campaign for Public School Improvement to create a checklist for effective parent-school partnerships. The checklist consisted of six standards of parental involvement; it offered specific goals that a parent could use to measure her or his degree of parental involvement. The checklist further identified challenges and results for students, parents and for teachers as they engaged in the standards of parental involvement. It also offered sample best practices for each standard. The standards included (1) volunteering, whose goal is to recruit and organize parent help and support; (2) parenting, whose goal is to help all families establish home environments to support children as students; (3) communicating, whose goal is to design more effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications with all families each year about school programs and their children's progress; (4) learning at home, whose goal is to provide information and ideas about how

to help students at home with homework and other curricular-related activities, decisions, and planning; (5) decision-making, whose goal is to include all parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives; and (6) collaborating with community, whose goal is to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development.

Of major concern to the effort toward establishing collaborative home-school relationships is the teacher work context as it relates to parent involvement. Bauch and Goldring (2000) examined how the organizational context of teachers' work influenced the opportunities schools of choice provide for parent involvement. Since teachers are the core of the life of the school as an organization, and make-up the main body of the organization, the functions of the school as an organization depend on the work-context of the teachers as a body. By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods to report their findings, Bausch and Goldring found that a communal organization of teacher work life has a strong influence on facilitating parental involvement.

Sanders and Harvey (2002) conducted a case study on home-school development and maintenance of effective school-community connections. The researchers identified factors that supported the case school, and in so doing, they identified factors that inform school-community partnership practices at other schools. The results of this study identified four factors central to the school's successful connections with its community partners. These factors were linked to the principal's action as a leader. The factors are: (1) the school's commitment to learning; (2) the principal's support and vision for community involvement: (3) the school's receptivity and openness to community

involvement; and (4) the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential community partners about their level and kind of involvement.

One study examined the nature of the relationship between parents' public school choice and parental empowerment in connection to the level of their parental involvement. The researchers examined the relationship between public school choice and parents' satisfaction with parent empowerment and parental involvement. Participants in this study were four public elementary schools of choice. The first school in this study was a specialty school with a distinct ideological orientation based on enhanced Jewish studies; the second school was a public school of choice based on cooperative work values and teachings; the third was a magnet school for the arts; and the fourth was based on an experimental program with a distinctive educational philosophy. The researchers found marked differences in the nature of school-parent relationships for parents with different levels of education. The results of this study indicated that choice alone does not inherently relieve the relative dissatisfaction that many parents have with schools. The results further showed that parental involvement is highly related to parents' satisfaction with their school of choice (Goldring & Shapira, 1993).

Lambert (2003) promoted the idea of empowering parents as leaders rather than restricting the significance of the parent involvement role to a participatory level. The author believed that allowing parents to co-lead with other stakeholders with respect to all the students at school, by empowering them to participate in education practices with others in the community, to advocate education to other parents, the community and policy makers, and by empowering them to assume collective responsibility for the learning of all children, thus taking a more prominent and engaging role in the education

of their children, would be to advance the objective of educating children for all stakeholders.

Jeri LaBahn (1995), in "Education and Parent Involvement in Secondary Schools: Problems, Solutions and Effects," submitted that there must be a dedicated commitment on the part of the principal if the solution calls for there to be improved collaboration between the parent and the school. The researcher suggested that the success of any program directly relates to the support and encouragement of the principal, that ultimate responsibility for creating harmony between the school and the home rests largely with the principal.

Parent Involvement and Student Attitudes and Behavior

Some studies suggested that parental involvement also impacts student attitude and behavior. One such study suggested a strong connection between parental involvement and student attitude and behavior. The researchers were interested in factors that influenced students' disruptive behavior as part of school discipline. The results of the study showed a connection between parental involvement and its impact on student attitude and social behavior (Romi & Freund, 1999).

As for the classroom learning environment, Scott and Hannafin (2000), suggested that teachers hold beliefs about classroom learning environments that are similar to reformed classrooms, unlike parents. The researchers focused on the common occurrence of violence in student behavior in school. When querying principals about the perceived effectiveness of crime and criminal justice education on crime prevention, researchers Bartsch and Cheurprakobet (2002), found that education in criminology would be helpful in reducing crime and that education would help promote good citizenship. The

underlying concept in their strategies to deter and eventually prevent crime was to utilize

parental involvement to aid in encouraging and in enforcing school policies designed to

affect this outcome. Among common topics relating to enhancing high school parental

involvement is school leadership practices.

<div align="center">Principals' Practices and Parental Involvement</div>

This matter of how high school principals can influence high school parental

involvement continues to meet with great concern. National, state, and local agencies

have begun researching and publishing data to help develop positive solutions. In

attempts to answer the problem of principals' practices that related to and influenced

parent involvement, the Indiana Department of Education set forth in School-Parent-

Community Partnerships Resource Book (2001), criteria for stakeholders. This source

advocated the cooperation of all schools in creating an atmosphere of collaboration,

mutual acceptance and a commonality of goals as defining standards and quality

indicators connecting school leadership practices and home collaboration as an aspect of

parental involvement.

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) conducted a study which revealed the

characteristics of effective leadership. The researchers found that leadership involves

knowing what, when, how, and why it is necessary to implement and enforce a particular

practice, and that effective leaders intuitively know that school leadership makes a

difference. The study indicated that instructional leadership was one of several defining

characteristics of successful schools. In the results of this study, the researchers presented

twenty-one key leadership responsibilities associated with student achievement, and

parent and community involvement ranked among one of the top five of eleven school and teacher practices and student factors that influence student achievement.

Attempts to address the need to show the relationship between high school principal practices and parental involvement were demonstrated in such efforts as those of the Harvard Graduate School. The Harvard Graduate School of Education (2005), published information on how the National Association of Secondary School Principals honors high schools that are successful despite their high poverty, high minority student populations. The editors identified those schools as "breakthrough" high schools, again because of the academic achievements of students otherwise identified according to a certain socio-economic level and minority status. The individual "breakthrough" schools' profiles included descriptions of parent and community involvement plans and activities. The publication issued the results of enhanced student academic performance as a result the improved relationship between home and school.

The Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (1999) published and defined the role of the principal in promoting positive results between parent involvement and student academic success. The Combined Elementary Task Forces of the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC) identified eight areas of principal practices that would encourage parental involvement. The areas ranged from facilitating parent involvement programs that are flexible and relevant to the feedback from all participants, to anticipating problems and facilitating early prevention of problems and proactively addressing other concerns such as teachers' involving parents and addressing the concerns of bureaucracy that might be intimidating to the parents. This study compared to the study conducted by Waters and McNulty, likewise, suggested that it is the

responsibility of the school principal to ensure that parents feel comfortable enough to become involved in the functions of the school.

Similarly, Paul Warren of the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) compiled a report Improving High School: A Strategic Approach (2005) which commented on how the relationship between home and school leadership practices not only impact students' high school experience, but how the relationship has far-reaching effects that help students succeed in their post-graduation goals. The researcher, appropriately, reaffirmed that though states mandate school reformations in changing the culture of high schools and greater parental involvement; state departments cannot create a desire within school officials to engage parents in meaningful ways.

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) (2003) designed a study to ascertain the practices in which principals engaged on a day-to-day basis. The five categories of practices were grouped as: instructional leadership, (b) communication, (c) school and community relations, (d) interactions with students and (e) other management issues. The sample for this study was selected from the membership lists of 10 principal associations in NCREL's seven-state region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin), which contained the names of more than 13,000 principals. A stratified random sample of 2,600 principals from urban, rural, suburban and small town schools was selected.

The survey instrument was similar in design to the instruments used by NASSP and NAESP in their recent 10-year studies. The survey instrument was designed for principals to report the daily time spent on the average within the categories of various principal practices. In the category of communication, respondents reported spending the

most time on parent issues and personal documentation. Most principals reported that

they felt "not at all prepared" or "somewhat prepared" for each of the areas dealing with

communication. Among noted issues that took up substantial portions of a principal's

time were issues relating to parents and the community.

The principal's role in relationship to parental involvement is a subject of great

scrutiny for education critics as well. MacNeil and Patin (2005) discussed how the

principal proceeds toward improving parental involvement. These authors indicated that

it is incumbent upon the school to create a collaborative climate by way of effective

communication to improve school and parent relations. They admitted, however, that

there is not set format or "cookie cutter" format for involving parents.

Many authors provided perspectives on how principals can affectively create more

parental involvement. Epstein (1987) presented ways principals could help teachers

successfully involve parents. Stronge (1990) discussed the role of the principal in terms

of that role being instructional leader versus managerial leader for effective schools. He

suggested that the responsibilities for the principal have evolved from principals being

instructional leaders toward principals being productive school managers. Relying on the

publication of the Illinois Administrator's Academy (1986) which published a triad of

responsibilities for the principal, Stronge contended that the principal (1) defines the

mission; (2) manages the curriculum and instruction; and (3) promotes school climate

which coincides with the productive management/principalship role of a well-run school.

Some research focuses on how to help principals develop as successful leaders. Davis,

Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Meyerson (2005) compiled research which outlines

how to support the development of effective leaders who can promote powerful teaching

and learning. The researchers noted that the role of the principal is vital and multi-dimensional in setting the direction for successful schools. These authors contended that one of the attributes of an effective leader is the implementation of effective organizational processes.

Likewise, Gibbs and Slate (2003) investigated leadership practices that might be particular to the secondary school principal. These researchers used the qualitative methodology or meta-ethnography, to identify leadership activities of secondary school principals. They organized the study into seven phases which yielded 13 categories of leadership activities. The categories ranged from setting goals to how to improve staff relations. The researchers conducted a qualitative analysis of 19 case studies of secondary principals. Findings showed that (1) principal visibility and accessibility were important; (2) that principals must develop ways to address the issues of ethnic relations, school violence, student relations, and student health; (3) that principals must consider restructuring alternatives regarding preparing youth for the future since traditional schools from the past may not be sufficient; (4) that principals must provide educational leadership programs that are didactic and experiential, and (5) that principals must continually examine the relationship between principal behaviors and the functions at the school on particular issues so as to be helpful for preparatory program faculty as they make revisions in their existing educational programs.

Hoy, Tarter and Witkoskie (1992) further took issue with principal effectiveness as leadership effectiveness relates to teacher trust and ultimately to student success. The researchers examined the idea that supportive principal behavior is related to the effectiveness of the school in which the principal performs. The participants in this study

were 44 upper middle-class suburban elementary schools in New Jersey, with more than 15 principals who had at least one year's experience. Employing Parson's theoretical approach which states that organizations must satisfy at least four imperative functions to be effective, including accommodating their environments, setting and implementing goals, maintaining cohesion in the school and creating and preserving a unique value system, the researchers employed a correlational analysis to interpret the data.

The results of the study indicated that there are two schools of thought regarding principal leadership effectiveness. One school described the effective leader as one who maintains an orderly learning environment, one who stresses teaching basics with appropriate evaluations, and one who is actively involved in the life of the school. On the other hand, the other school of thought purports that a principal's effectiveness has more to do with the instructional organization and school climate, and that the leadership of the principal is only indirectly related to school effectiveness.

With little specific mention of their concern and focus on parental involvement, many principals' practices responded to the observed need to get parents more involved in their students' educational experience by implementing participatory strategies that answer different levels and challenges that parents might have. Some research studies argued for the varying levels of parental involvement. Two literacy researchers presented evidence that families should have different literacy and other knowledge and skill resources available to support children's academic learning as a way of addressing the varying degrees of parental involvement, and thus improve the relationship between home and school.

These researchers saw these resources as establishing the connection between home and school. They suggested that such resources were the basis on which schools might design an approach to helping families support their children's learning, though this may mean that many schools would need to run workshops for parents and/or caregivers about school programs (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

In contrast to the many researchers that advocated the positive impact of educational leadership practices on high school parent involvement, some researchers presented findings that revealed how the challenge of involving parents in their students' educational career can still be a challenge and an obstacle.

According to Cullingford and Morrison (1999), there still existed many profound impediments between educators and parents and even in circumstances when practices are obviously designed to break down barriers, parents still resisted becoming more actively involved in their child's school activities. Feeling the pressure to continue actively trying to increase parental involvement, and building on the knowledge of the need for heightened parental involvement, school leaders have begun to establish an open policy of welcoming parents and are still met with reluctant parents who are often still experiencing a sense of intimidation by the school officials and still resist the school's professional policy of welcoming parents.

Leech and Fulton (2002) investigated principals' five human relationship skills practices from the perspective of 42 middle and high school teachers. The collected data measured five leadership practices: (a) challenging the process, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) enabling others to act, (d) modeling the way, and (e) encouraging the heart. A variety of statistical tools were employed to analyze the data. These tools included

independent sample t-tests and the use of other descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and frequency. The results of this study indicated a promising perspective of the current status of principal leadership practices. The responses ranged from "fairly often" to "almost always" in the five categories. High School principals "usually" or "almost always" practiced "challenging the Process" according to 39% of the teachers reporting. In the practice of "inspiring a shared vision," 39% of the queried teachers reported principals as "usually" or "almost always" demonstrating this practice. Principals "usually" to "almost always" "enabled others to act" according to 44% of the participants, and principals "usually" to "almost always" modeled the way according to 45% of the participants. The least often practice exhibited by principals was "encouraging the way," which was perceived as "occasionally" to "almost never" as reported by over thirty percent of the respondents.

   Leithwood and Riehl (2003) conducted a study in which they presented research-based knowledge about successful school leadership. They cited two functions of leadership as providing direction and exercising influence. Among the practices common to successful leaders, these researchers identified a set of fundamental leadership practices which would be usable in most contexts of high school principal practices. Leithwood's and Riehl's categories of successful principals' practices were "setting directions," "redesigning the organization," and "developing people." They found that school leaders can do a number of things to foster community in school. They stated that there are more definite competencies within each category of practice, and that the conditions and interactions of families varied across families to constitute what is known as a family's educational culture, at the core of which are the assumptions, norms, and

beliefs held by the family about intellectual work in general and about school work in particular. Parent education was a subset of a larger set of activities known as school-family-community relationships. Like Ogbu, the study noted that parental partnerships can develop family/communal educational cultures. The study further established that "when educators involve minority parents as partners in their children's education, parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to children with positive academic consequences" (p. 34).

Brewster and Klump (2005) reported on k-12 principals' information about leadership practices of successful principals that can effect change in schools. The authors pointed out how the responsibilities of principals are continually increasing while more mandates and initiatives are becoming policy. With the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative, principals were being asked to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations/communications experts as well as keepers of other policy mandates and initiatives. The two components of leadership that demanded most of the principals' time are instructional and transformational leadership models. Under the instructional leadership model is the task of promoting a positive school learning climate and under the transformational leadership model are setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organization.

Griffith (2000) conducted a study of principal leadership behaviors that are associated with high levels of parent involvement and factors conducive to parent involvement; the researcher examined what principal behaviors are related to consensus among parents concerning perceptions of the school environment, in particular the school's social

environmental characteristics traditionally associated with the level of involvement. His study aimed at determining if the principals' behaviors were associated with higher levels of parent involvement and if principals' behaviors affect the level of involvement differently in schools with higher concentrations of socio-economically-disadvantaged students and non-English speaking students. He employed an analysis of survey data obtained from parents of students from 82 elementary schools and survey data from principals, and school archival data to complete his study.

Results in the Griffith study were recorded according to his proposed questions. The first research question was to examine what principal behaviors are associated with high levels of parent involvement to reveal the relations of various principal roles to parent involvement and to factors traditionally associated with parent involvement. Parents who had higher expectations for their children's educational attainment reported being more involved in all aspects of their children's education and at the same time, being less informed about their children's education than parents who had lower expectations for their children's educational attainment. Results suggested that principal's managerial roles resulted in negative effects on parent involvement and parent perceptions of the school environment, though results were somewhat mixed.

In schools in which parents showed more consensus, parents reported more involvement and positive perceptions of the school environment. Few interaction effects were observed, but results suggested the gamesman role was more effective than other roles in developing positive and consensual perceptions among parents regarding being informed about their children's education and being empowered by the school, in addition to volunteering to help in the school. Study results were consistent with

propositions in the educational administration literature that principal behavior influences parent involvement and the results further identified specific principal roles associated with parent involvement and factors associated with parent involvement.

Wasserstein-Warner and Klein (2000) conducted a study in which they explored the relationship between the principal and his/her staff and sought an explanation for success or failure of principals in building cognitive perceptions and meanings of the relations of their practices to parental involvement. Participants included the principal and administrative staff in the building. The authors used the ethnographic method with unstructured and semi-structured interviews and observation data to identify key factors and relationships, patterns and processes to note changes in the perceptions of the importance of human factors and the understanding of the specific context of the interaction of many cultural variables. The results showed that the principal's ability to change perceptions results from knowing how to deal with the interaction between a transformative, open-ended long process and a time-cognitive orientation.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

As principal, affective leadership is essential. As governance council of the organization, a principal's practices are expected to demonstrate the principal's desire to answer the hopes, the dreams and the purposes of the clients, the students, of the organization. The role of principal leadership continues to come under great scrutiny because of the ever-changing needs and the face of our American society. Along with the diverse culture which makes up today's society, exudes distinct demands for a particular new-millennium type leadership that can willingly address the needs of the diverse cultures represented in his or her school's student population. One aspect of the many

demands placed on the office of the principal as school administrator, is cultivating a climate which will improve parental involvement.

The call is made for a new-millennium administrator who sees herself or himself as a catalyst for individuals, for an organization, a community, a district and a state; as one who addresses the expectations of many. One who can and will address the needs of today's student and parents, one who assesses the need for stronger parental involvement in the educational lives of the clients at his/her school organization.

With increasing education reform initiatives, principals are pressured to be more accountable for the goings-on in their schools and for building collaborative relationships between the school and the community. As the organizational architect, he or she is responsible for the success of the students, for the level of instruction of the teacher, as the liaison that establishes a positive rapport with the community, as the representative who advances the needs of the school community and as the leader who effectively addresses the need of parental involvement.

Table 1

*Review of Literature Matrix: Parent Participation and Demographics*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hallinger & Heck (1998) | Principals' behaviors that impact school effectiveness | Empirical studies | Principals' involvement in framing and effecting the school's purposes and goals represent an important dimension of indirect influence on school outcomes |
| Hoy, Tarter & Witkoskie, (1992) | Teacher trust and principal effectiveness | Correlational analysis | Supportive leadership was related to faculty trust in colleagues and to effectiveness |

Table 2

*Review of Literature Matrix: Parent Participation and Demographics*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Desimone, L. (1999) | The effects of race and income on student achievement | Ordinary least-squares regression | Significant differences existed in the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement according to the student's race-ethnicity and family income |
| Coots, J. (1998) | Parental participation and family resources | A longitudinal study | Family resources and beliefs would strongly relate to measures of schooling participation |
| Crozier (1999) | Factors that interfere with parents ability to get involved | interviews | Teachers must design a more proactive role for involving and encouraging parents to participate in their child's school education |
| Cullingford & Morrison (1999) | Parent-school relationships | Qualitative, ethnographic research | Difficulties still remain between the school's attempts to encourage parents and parents abilities to be involved |
| Eccles & Harold (1993) | Parental involvement during early adolescent years | A compilation of findings from other studies | Many barriers affect the level of parents' involvement during the adolescent years, but there are effective ways of involving parents in a collaborative relationship with the school |

Table 2 (continued)

*Review of Literature Matrix: Parent Participation and Demographics*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pena, D. (2000) | Factors that influence parental participation | Interviews, document analysis and observations of parent activities | Parents participate in activities that meet their needs; considering the factors that influence parents can lead to increased parental involvement |
| Pryor, (1995) | Family-school relations | Questionnaires, focus groups, telephone interviews, case studies | Parents of high school students are interested in their children's education, but are pressured by time constraints and are unsure of how to respond to their children's requests for greater individuality and look to the schools for direction. Parents, youths and teachers need to strengthen their relationships to assure a satisfactory educational experience takes place. |

Table 3

*Review of Literature Matrix: Home-School Collaboration*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bauch & Goldring (2000) | The context of teacher work and parent involvement | Field methods and multiple data sources, questionnaire | Schools that have administrative support for teachers have fewer difficulties in maintaining communication with parents |
| Epstein, J. (1987) | Principals helping teachers involve parents | Surveys | Principals can help teachers successfully involve parents by coordinating, managing, supporting, funding, recognizing and rewarding parental involvement |
| Goldring & Shapira (1993) | Public school choice and parental involvement | Questionnaire | Choice in and of itself does not relieve dissatisfaction parents have with schools, but parental involvement is highly related to parents satisfaction with their school of choice |

Table 3 (continued)

*Review of Literature Matrix: Home-School Collaboration*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, (1992) | Parent-school relationship | Questionnaires with demographic information | Principals can help teachers successfully involve parents by coordinating, managing, supporting, funding, recognizing and rewarding parental involvement |
| Raffaele & Knoff (1999) | Collaboration between home and school | A review of parental involvement research | There is much school personnel can do to improve home-school collaboration with the families of the children they serve |
| Sanders & Harvey (2002) | Home-school-community connections | Interviews, field observations | Identified 4 factors central to the school's successful connections with its community partners, which are linked to the principals actions as leader: (1) the school's commitment to learning (2) principal's support and vision for community involvement (3) the school's receptivity and openness to community involvement (4) the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential community partners about their level and kind of involvement |

Table 3 (continued)

*Review of Literature Matrix: Home-School Collaboration*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sheldon & Van Voorhis (2004) | The relationship of partnership programs to family involvement | Surveys | Important aspects of partnership programs identified and suggests that quality partnership programs are related to higher levels of parental involvement |

Table 4

*Review of Literature Matrix: Parent Participation and Student Attitudes and Behavior*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Romi & Freund (1999) | Students' disruptive behavior | Standardized questionnaire | There is increased need of involvement of both students and parents in discipline-related issues in school |

Table 5

*Review of literature Matrix: Principal Practices and Parental Participation*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Davis, Darling Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson (2005) | Developing successful principals | Case analysis, interviews and surveys | Reveals elements of successful principals; effective program designs; how to develop high quality leadership; and policy and reforms involved in effective leadership programs |
| Gibbs & Slate (2003 | Leadership activities of secondary school principals | Noblit and Hare's (1988) meta-ethnographic design analysis | Principal visibility and accessibility are important; principals must develop the skills and strategies necessary to address ethnic relations, school violence, student relations and student health issues at their schools; principals must pursue restructuring alternatives that will prepare adolescents beyond the traditional classroom; principal must provide leadership preparation programs that will provide didactic and experiential opportunities for students; principals must investigate their own leadership behaviors and activities on specific school issues |
| Griffith (2000) | Principal leadership behaviors associated with high levels of parental involvement | Survey data from parents and principals | Principal behaviors influence parental involvement |

Table 5 (continued)

*Review of literature Matrix: Principal Practices and Parental Participation*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Leech & Fulton (2002) | Principals human relationship practices | Independent sample t-tests & other descriptive statistics to measure leadership practices on Kouzes and Posner's Inventory Observer | principals are exhibiting impressive performances in (a) challenging the process; (b) inspiring a vision (c) enabling others to act (d) modeling the way and (e) encouraging the heart |
| Leithwood & Riehl (2003) | What we already know about successful leadership | Presentation of research-based quantitative research studies that reflected methodological | Presentation of research-based quantitative research studies that reflected methodological |
| Wasserstein-Warner & Klein (2000) | Principals' cognitive strategies for changes of perspective in school innovation | Ethnographic method using unstructured and semi-structured interviews and formal and informal observations at the school site | The principal's ability to change perspective results partly from knowing how to deal with the interaction between a transformative open-ended long process and a time-cognitive orientation |
| Waters, Marzano & McNulty (2003) | balanced leadership | meta-analysis on student characteristics and teacher and school practices associated with school effectiveness | leadership involves knowing what, when, how and why it is necessary to implement and enforce a particular practice; twenty-one key leadership responsibilities associated with student achievement and parent and community involvement |

Table 5 (continued)

*Review of literature Matrix: Principal Practices and Parental Participation*

| Author | Topic of Research | Methodology | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Principals leadership practices | Scientific-based studies, meta-analyses and research synthesis of those studies | Principals must establish a collaborative support system in schools to facilitate the successes of the approach |

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

General Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of urban southeastern high school principals on their leadership practices and parental involvement; to examine the common leadership practices of those high school principals regarding parental involvement, and to examine how those leadership practices differ from school to school.

As a microcosm of its society, the types of societal attitudes, behaviors and changes are reflected in the school as an organization. The level of priority a high school principal, as a leader, exercises toward an issue can be traced to his desire to address the troublesome issues his organization faces. In this age of educational reform and initiatives, the dynamic of principals' practices continue to undergo scrutiny as a part of the effort to enhance student performance and success. Such referendums as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative which includes school accountability measures is among a range of such endeavors. The federal and state government officials, state and local departments of education, administrators, teachers, and parents are struggling to find answers to solve the issue. One dynamic of the quagmire involving parental involvement and student success which researchers and scholars continue to examine in order to address the issue is principal practices and their relationship to parental involvement.

Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following over-arching question: To what extent do the perceptions of high school principals differ on their leadership practices and parental involvement? The following related questions were also addressed in his study:

(1) How do southeastern urban high school principals define parental

involvement?

(2) How do southeastern urban high school principals communicate their

perspective and the importance of parental involvement?

(3) What parental involvement activities do principals perceive as impacting

student achievement?

(4) What are the common leadership practices that southeastern urban

high school principals perceive influence parental involvement?

(5) What are common experiences of southeastern urban high school principals

regarding parental involvement?

## Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research design. The researcher used a structured

verbal questionnaire to elicit individual-specific responses about the perceptions of the

principals on their everyday practices and why principals think what they think about

their practices and parental involvement. The researcher conducted face-to-face

interviews which included the collection of demographic information from the

interviewees. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a one-time natural setting.

Known information of these participants was that each high school principal was new in

his and her principalship with 1 to 3 years of experience in the school as principal.

## Population

The population for this study was high school principals who have at least one to three

years of experience in this profession as a school leader. These respondents were high

school principals employed in an urban southeastern Georgia school district. The

population consisted of principals from high schools and two Academy schools. This population was identified because of the observed need for stronger parental involvement on the secondary school level. These administrators were willing to participate because the study addressed questions that are being asked by all stakeholders regarding parental involvement and because of the potential benefits to all stakeholders the results might reveal.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

The instrumentation consisted of face-face interview questions. In these interview sessions, fourteen protocol overarching questions were asked and more probing sub questions were posed in order to determine principals' accuracy about their practices. Each question meant the same thing to all respondents. The same questions were asked of all respondents. All questions were questions that high school principals could answer; and the questions were questions the principals were willing to answer given the confidentiality clause provided to each interviewee, the anonymity of responses guaranteed to each respondent, and the data collection procedures. The instrument consisted of 14 protocol questions about practices principals employed and three demographic questions. The recorded interviews were professionally transcribed and the transcriptions were carefully reviewed by the researcher. There were two sets of data. One set involved the recordings and the transcriptions, and compiling or sorting; the second set involved the synthesizing and analyzing phase. Each interview session lasted approximately forty-five minutes.

Respondents' answers measured their practices and were audio-taped. The interview instrument was valid because it addressed typical practices school principals employed

and because it addressed probing sub-topic questions about the daily practices that the respondents stated that they employed. No questions allowed for a "yes," "no" response. One final follow-up question was asked of respondents: to identify the one question that the researcher should have asked but did not ask, and then for the respondent to answer that question for the researcher.

Demographic questions included such items as the dominant to least represented ethnic group of the student population at the school, the principal's gender, and the size of the school. The interview items in the instrument were designed so that the principal could share a particular activity and so that respondents could easily answer a given question.

<div align="center">Data Collection Procedure</div>

There was no treatment or manipulation of participants in this study. Data was collected after all in-depth interviews had been conducted. Prior to conducting the interviews, the principal researcher gained permission and approval of her topic from her chair and committee. She then requested approval and/or permission to conduct the study with the principals from her school board of education. Afterwards, she requested the signature from her chair before seeking IRB approval status. After the IRB gave permission to the researcher to conduct the study, she then contacted the principals to set up and schedule interview times.

Each high school principal from the public high schools in this southeastern urban public school system and the principal from the academy was provided a copy of the fourteen protocol questions and the demographic questions, along with a copy of the approval letter from the IRB and a cover letter of consent explaining the purpose of the

study and the letter of permission from the superintendent's office granting the researcher permission to conduct the study. The scheduled interviews began in the latter part of June, 2006. The principals completed the demographic questions, and the researcher collected the demographic questions from the schools at the time of each interview.

## Response Rate

The anticipated response rate for this study was 100%. Fraenkal and Wallen (2003) suggested that by using a purposive population, the researcher would ensure a population most suited to the intent of the study. This population was a more feasible means of gaining the solicited information.

## Data Analysis

A narrative analysis was used to analyze and synthesize the data collected, revealing what each respondent thought about his or her leadership practices.

## Summary

The study on principals' practices that influence parental involvement was researched by employing a qualitative approach. Open-ended questions were used to measure respondents' practices which could lead to information that would better help educators gain knowledge about how to increase and foster parental involvement. A narrative analytical discussion was employed to interpret and to answer the overarching question: What are the perceptions of urban southeastern high school principals regarding their leadership practices and parental involvement.

*Table 6: Qualitative Item Analysis*

| Item | Research | Interview Question | Research Question |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Parental involvement | Raffaele & Knoff, 1999 | 1 | 2 |
| 2. Parent contact | Raffaele & Knoff, 1999 | 2 | 2 |
| 3. Teachers & parent involvement | Pena, 2000 | 3 | 3 |
| 4. Engaging inactive parents | Pena, 2000 | 4 | 2 |
| 5. Maintaining parental involvement | Hallinger & Heck, 1998 | 5 | 5 |
| 6. Parent-teacher organization | Hallinger & Heck, 1998 | 6 | 1 |
| 7. Overly-involved Parents | Pena, 2000, Fulton, 2002 | 7 | 3 |
| 8. Parent knowledge of school activities | Epstein, 1987 | 8 | 2 |
| 9. A diverse parent population | Hallinger & Heck, 1998 Desimone, 1999 | 9 | 1 |
| 10. Parent involvement initiatives | Cotton & Wikelund, 1998 | 10 | 2 |
| 11. Families monitoring leadership practices | Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003 | 11 | 2 |
| 12. Program evaluation | Hallinger & Heck, 1998 | 12 | 1 |
| 13. Parent involvement & student achievement | Raffaele & Knoff, 1999 | 13 | 1 |
| 14. Principal practices | | | |
| 15. Gender | | | |
| 16. Ethnicity of student population | Desimone, 1999 | 15 | 3 |
| 17. Size of student Population | Hallinger & Heck, 1998 | 16 | 3 |

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA

General Introduction

>In many ways the school principal is the most influential individual in any school. . . . It is his leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and the morale of teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. . . . If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching; if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success.
>
>(Sergiovanni, 1995)

Parental involvement continues to lead the agenda on the table of public school issues. Across local, state and federal lines, stakeholders continue to center their focus on how to heighten student achievement by eliciting a very important dimension of the team – parental involvement. The canon of parent involvement literature and research continues to issue forth declarations of the importance of parental involvement. Some discussions on this critical, but nebulous, issue look at how parental involvement decreases after students reach the high school mark in their educational experiences, while concurrently conceding to additional factors such as social-economic, cultural and even family attitudes about school that are considered impeding factors.

The influence of public high school principals in their leadership role as the catalyst of the high school has come into the discussion surrounding parental involvement. Under close scrutiny is the impact the principal has on the success of the school, but under increasingly intense scrutiny, are his/her leadership practices that can impact parental involvement and student achievement. School leaders, as well as federal, state and local educators ideally, want stronger parental involvement, and parents ideally want

to be more effectively involved; however, neither group is certain about what constitutes adequate parental involvement, or how much is needed to ensure the likelihood of a student's success nor why some students experience success with less parental involvement and others require more and may still struggle. The salient point on which all parties agree is that parental involvement strongly impacts student achievement. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of urban high school principals on their leadership practices and parental involvement. The data for this study was collected using face-to-face audio-cassette taped interviews with the principals. The findings that follow indicate their responses which were sorted and organized to present the raw data about their perceptions of their practices and parental involvement.

## Definition

Parental Involvement—The participation of parents, the people who are raising the child and supporting his or her education; the guardian or child governance advocate in every situation, in every facet, of the child's education. Parental Involvement aligns student activity at school with parental knowledge at home, thus allowing for student academic success through a close-knit relationship of the school-parent channel, by allowing parents to monitor behavior, while providing a sense of accountability to the student, the parent as well as the teacher in the areas of communicating, educating, volunteering, decision-making and collaborating.

## Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following over-arching question: To what extent do the perceptions of high school principals differ on their leadership practices and parental involvement? The following related questions were also addressed in his study:

(1) How do southeastern urban high school principals define parental involvement?

(2) How do southeastern urban high school principals communicate their perspectives and the importance of parental involvement?

(3) What parental involvement activities do principals perceive as impacting student achievement?

(4) What are the common leadership practices that southeastern urban high school principals perceive influence parental involvement?

(5) What are common experiences of southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement?

## Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research design. The researcher used a structured verbal questionnaire which included fourteen (14) protocol questions with each protocol question using at least four (4) subtopic questions to elicit principals' responses about their everyday practices and why they think what they think about parental involvement. The researcher conducted face-to-face audio taped interviews with the respondents who answered demographic questions about their schools and their school's student population including the size of that school's student population. The demographic information was gathered at the time of the face-to-face interview. In some cases, respondents previewed the protocol questions, but none had any fore-knowledge of sub-topic questions.

Instrumentation

The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a one-time, on-site, natural school setting at which time this data was collected. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed to avoid any bias on the part of the researcher. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes.

Respondents

The population for this study was high school principals who have at least one to three (1 to 3) years of experience in their career as school principal. These respondents were employed in an urban southeastern Georgia school district. The respondents were principals from traditional high schools and one (1) magnet academy school at which the researcher is presently site administrator, but recused herself from the study and interviewed the previous acting administrator who is still at the site as a teacher. These respondents signed a letter of consent, indicating their willingness to participate in the study which addresses questions about their practices and parental involvement.

Data/Findings

The following data represent the face–to–face interview findings of the principals/respondents about the perceptions of their daily practices and experiences as leaders of the schools and parental involvement. In some cases, principals did not provide responses. Typically, in the case when respondents did not provide a response to an item, it had to do with the principal being new in his/her office as principal with 1 to 2 years of experience at the school. In other cases, specific questions did not pertain to that particular school or that particular principal as an issue he/she needed to address. In those cases, the responses were indicated as such. Otherwise, the report that follows indicates

observations and responses provided by the principals. Two sets of data were collected. The first type involved the recording, transcribing and compiling of responses obtained from the participants. The second type of data involved sorting and synthesizing the responses for analysis.

Because the principal is the nexus at the school, his office is housed in the main office which is the reception office and serves as the initial contact with parents and the general public. The public's perception of the school begins with the tone set by the attitudes and personalities of the office personnel as well as the décor in the main office; it is important to gain a portraiture of the school as a way of drawing a composite sketch of the principal's attitude as it relates to and reflects the daily practices of the principal.

School One is a relatively new structure was built in its present form in 1997; it is nine years of age. As the researcher entered the main office, she spoke with the outer office staff to request to see Principal One; he has been principal here for two years. Two windows provide administrative staff observation capability out into the main foyer area and into the front main entrance point of the school. The decorations in the main office, including the painting and office furniture, are appropriate for the main office of a traditional high school. The office was tastefully organized and the walls which were painted in a warm nuance of peach were hung sketched drawings as if in an art gallery; they helped to create an invitational feel to the school. Two leather straight-back chairs along with two blue floral paisley chairs helped to create the inviting climate in the main office. Arranged beside these were Cherry wood tables on which were placed lamps to give a professional look; the cherry wood furniture also contributed to the professional climate in the reception office. The principal came out of his office and invites me back

for a degree of uninterrupted time. This leader has an approachably warm and personable disposition, suggesting enthusiasm in his role as school principal.

 The climate of the school, suggested a certain air of professional warmth. The area was neatly decorated with appropriate pamphlets on the tables on which were also placed lamps that added to this setting a dimension of pleasantness.

School two is a structure which has been an historically Black institution in this community since its early construction; built in 1949, its age is fifty-seven. In an original attempt of the researcher trying to conduct this interview meeting, the principal's busy schedule did not allow her to meet with the researcher at the initial time scheduled; the principal has been at this school for two years. The researcher was asked to reschedule a week later. Also, the researcher was informed by the central research and statistics office that that office had received complaints that this July time frame was already not a good time to conduct the interviews, that many principals were making the same complaint. Proceeding with the knowledge of the likelihood of some degree of hostility from this principal, when the researcher responded that she had had no such complaints from any principal other than the principal at school number two, the interview was again scheduled and conducted.

School number Two is an older structure. In the main foyer area is a table where rests a beautiful spray floral arrangement and along the walls are curios which house trophies and additional accomplishments of students who have attended the school over the years. As the researcher entered the main foyer area, the researcher was greeted by a household technician who was helpful and directed her to the main office area where she was asked to wait since neither the principal nor the office staff were in the building. As the

researcher waited, she observed that the office felt somewhat congested. The paint on the walls felt imposing; the colors did not suggest a calmness or an invitational, receptive feel.  The leather straight back chairs were placed around the room in key places for seating and beside them were cherry wood tables which would have indicated a professional climate, except that the staff did not exemplify personable office skills that would invite a community who might otherwise have reservations about coming to the school, a school whose student population has historically been majority African-American. After waiting twenty minutes, the outer office staff arrived. When the office staff comes in and begins to organize its day, very painstaking greetings are uttered. The outer office reception area is separated from the office staff area by a reception desk where school information can be found. After waiting fifteen additional minutes, the staff shares that the principal will be available shortly. Soon, the principal came out and invited the researcher back. She was impatient because of schedule of the impending day. Her anxiety and irritation were expressed in many of her responses.

School Three is a relatively new structure; in its original structure since 1958, its present structure is six years of age. What is immediately obvious about this school is its security measure of using one central door into the school, though there are three additional doors at the central entrance of the school that might facilitate passage into the building. As the researcher entered the building structure at the front of the school, the main office is five steps into the main foyer at the right of the hall. The office is behind a wall of plexy glass where office staff can observe the comings and the goings through the front of the building. The researcher was greeted by the administrative staff and asked to wait momentarily for the principal. The principal has been at this school for 2 years.

As the researcher walked into the main office, she was greeted warmly by the reception staff. The office is appropriately decorated with the walls being of a neutral shade of warm white. Bookshelves align the walls in the main staff area. Hung on the walls in the administrative staff area is a collage of pictures of African-American historians who were also human rights activists. In the outer office area are placed leather chairs with cherry wood tables which dictate a calm receptive feel to any who enter. At the reception counter area is a student office assistant area where that student can assist the main office staff in the reception process. This reception counter also serves as a separation point for staff and visitors. A climate of professionalism and warmth is suggested in this setting and in the attitudes of the staff.

School Four is a school where there exists a culture of professionalism and unity. The entrance of the school is marked by steps that lead into the main foyer of the school. The main office is located at the left down the hall. The décor in the halls and pictures mounted speak to the focus of the school – the students and their interests. The halls house curios shelving accomplishments of students at this school. In the outer reception office area is the office staff area. The office is decorated to convey a sense of school pride at each level. The school is seventy-one years old; the principal has served as interim for one year and she is presently re-assigned.

The staff is warm and congenial and the outer office area is surrounded by appropriate wall décor of pictures and strategically place leather furniture and cherry wood tables on which rests lamps that add to this professional climate feel. The main office staff announces the researcher's presence and the principal invites the researcher back to her

office. The researcher goes back and is warmly received by the principal, at which time the interview was conducted.

School Five is an older structure constructed since 1958; its age is forty-nine years. An institution in this community, this school has provided an education to several generations in a family who live in this school zone. There are three entrances that can lead into the main office area. The middle entrance serves as the entrance way closest to the reception area. The office staff is housed in the outer office area. Two support secretaries and one business secretary make-up the office staff. The business secretary has a private office. The main office area is primarily where the public is received. A reception counter separates the staff from visitors. The waiting area for visitors in this office area is decorated with leather chairs and cherry wood tables. On the center table is a centerpiece of greenery, and lamps serve as decoration for the end tables. A few pamphlets are placed on the center table, along with a year book.

The office is painted in a warm white paint and each of the three walls display matted pictures of natural images with people at the center of the picture. Behind the secretaries are windows through which streams in sunlight or clouds. The décor in this office suggests that visitors might be received warmly or perhaps not. The staff greets the public and depending on who is speaking to whom, an attitude of unfriendliness might be directed toward visitors. The principal has been at this school for nine months.

The décor and climate of the administrative staff in the administrative office of School Six suggest a friendly professional leader and staff and school. During the walk up to the main entrance way, the researcher noticed the beautiful green shrubs which had not been groomed in a while aligned the walk. As the researcher entered the main foyer from the

main entrance, she had to walk up an inclined ramp to get to the main office area. The secretary was at her desk just across from the main entrance door, and this office personnel greeted the researcher warmly, asking if she could help her and asking her to wait since this principal was already detained in another meeting.

The office was decorated with traditional school décor. Furniture included leather seats and cherry wood furniture. On the walls were hung pictures imaging natural scenes and the walls were painted in a shade of light blue that was inviting. The school's mascot stood in the corner close to the front door. The researcher waited for an hour until the principal completed his unexpected meeting and then invited her back to his office where he excused his support staff and the interview began. The school is forty years old and the principal has been here for one year.

School Seven demonstrates a close-knit faculty and staff team. The front doorway is located five steps from the reception area where the administrative secretary is housed. At the main foyer area is a hallway where pictures were hung demonstrating certain characteristics of students. Across the hall from these pictures is the secretary's office. The counselor's office for the school is located next to the secretary's office. The principal's office is located down the hall, past the secretary's desk in the rear of this administrative area. The secretary's office suggests professionalism and efficacy on the part of the staff. There are landscape images of pictures hung on the walls and a book shelf is home for some of the little characters that would suggest that the staff can identify with the pre-kindergarten as well as the upper classmen students and visitors who are clients there. The furniture in the room is cherry wood desks and storage cabinets. Visitors can sit at a round cherry wood table where are placed two leather chairs for

sitting comfort. This setting was very inviting for those who might visit. The interview was conducted in a classroom conducive to limited distractions. The school has undergone a name change in the past two years, and the interviewee is serving as interim principal. Though a part of another larger school, this unit also stands alone and serves its own students as well. This school was originally constructed in 1958 and is forty-nine years old.

School Eight is an older structure of fifty-one years; it was constructed since 1956. Its present principal begins her second year at the helm. Built along the middle school blueprint plan, the main office area is at the end of a long walk way. Inside the main foyer area is the main office. The climate in this office is one of busyness. The office was decorated with the traditional office furniture of cherry wood tables and straight-back leather chairs and with appropriate wall décor of pictures of natural scenes. Large glass curios align the halls of the main corridor and showcase trophies and plagues which belie the claims of excellence this school proclaims.

Once inside the administrative/main office area which sits behind a full plexy glass wall, the main office staff is separated from the visitor by a reception counter. The counter is arrayed with pamphlets and other handouts. To the extreme right in this office, as the researchers stood at the receptions counter, sits a computer apparently used for sign-in purposes for students. As the researcher entered the main office, this visitor was very matter-of-factly acknowledged by an office staff reception person who shared that the principal was already in a meeting; but that the principal would be informed that the visitor was there to see the principal. After waiting forty-five minutes, the principal came from a side door and invited the researcher back. Relevant to the image of the school

originating with the main office personnel, with primary focus being on the principal, the researcher contacted this principal several times to arrange the interview meeting. However, the principal was unrelenting in her position that the meeting could only be conducted at this time since she had a full schedule up until the specified time. The staff seemed to be very pre-occupied and did not communicate a strong degree of friendliness to visitors on this occasion, although several staff members moved in and around the main office space. The interview began after the principal admitted and apologized that she was not feeling well.

The following chart represents the demographic brake-down of the schools.

*Table 7: Demographic Profile of Respondents' schools*

| School | Gender | Pcfc Isldr | Hspnc | Afr-Amr | Erpn Amr | Other | 1-499 | 500-1000 | 1001-1500 | 1501-2000 |
|--------|--------|-----------|-------|---------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | M | 0% | 1% | 97% | 2% | 0% | ---- | X | ---- | ---- |
| 2 | F | 1% | 1% | 75% | 3% | 20% | ---- | ---- | X | ---- |
| 3 | M | 5% | 0% | 60% | 35% | 0% | ---- | ---- | X | ---- |
| 4 | F | 3% | 3% | 18% | 74% | 2% | ---- | X | ---- | ---- |
| 5 | M | 2% | 15% | 63% | 20% | 0% | ---- | ---- | ---- | X |
| 6 | M | 0% | .5% | 60% | 35% | .5% | ---- | ---- | X | ---- |
| 7 | M | 0% | 1% | 70.9% | 25% | 1.76% | X | ---- | ---- | ---- |
| 8 | F | 4% | 6% | 70% | 18% | 2% | ---- | ---- | ---- | X |

The above chart provides a profile of the gender of each principal of each school. It further provides a profile of the ethnicity of the student body at the school. Further, the chart shows the size of the student population at each school. Like the descriptive narrative preceding it, the profile should support the actual research and enhance the school's descriptive profile. This demographic information was provided by the principals themselves and collected at the time of the interview.

Findings

Multiple themes resulted from this study on high school principals' practices. Those themes can be presented as major topics. First in their definition of parental involvement, principals expressed variations for that term. Overall, principals provided no in-depth responses indicating their clear understanding of parental involvement or what it actually means in terms of expectations of schools and behaviors of parents. Sixty percent of the respondents gave a general answer to the question of defining parental involvement; their responses were as follows; a small percentage of respondents defined parental involvement as "an adult force in the child's life", and "knowing what's going on in the building," "just overseeing, looking to see what the students are doing;" another leader believes parental involvement to be "a parent's active collaboration in the process of learning." One school leader, or ten percent of the respondents, pointed out that parental involvement has to do with a parent who holds a college degree pushing his or her child to go on to college. Another ten percent allowed that "if a parent notices that something is wrong, to inquire by visiting the school or calling to check on that," is parental involvement. An additional ten percent correlates parental involvement with parents knowing that the school wants to hear from them, the parents. However bereft

their attempts to specify expectations in terms of the meaning of parental involvement, the consensus was that the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement was undeniable. Although admittedly, the principals continue to search for avenues of involving parents and for ways of fostering and nurturing a heightened level of parental involvement, responses indicated that parental involvement is still lagging behind the need to tap into this particular resource.

Forty percent of the principals could not recall any activities that had proven motivational to parental involvement. Ten percent of the principals stated that "open forums and an open door policy" had been helpful. An additional twenty percent stated that keeping parents informed had proven to be motivational. The conventional forms of communication such as letters and announcement flyers have not produced the increase in parent support numbers schools were hoping and seeking to have. Organizations such as Parent/Teacher/School Organizations (PTSOs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) also suffering for parental support, have not elicited the level of involvement desired by the organization or the school as a whole. As one principal suggested, "It's a combination [of efforts on my part] and the situation that dictates how the effort on the part of the school will be received by the parents." Finally, ten percent of those queried admitted that that school enjoys the support of involved parents and so strong parental involvement was not a problem at his/her school. At least one of the high school principal employs a parental contract as a means of establishing maintaining and fostering parental involvement and communicating its importance.

The demographic table presents a student body profile of diverse ethnicities. Since respondents indicated their desire to strengthen parental involvement, they were

questioned about their beliefs on involving a diverse parent population. Although ten percent of the respondents misinterpreted the question, the remaining ninety percent admitted that they desired one hundred percent of the parent population at their school to be involved. This finding indicates that on some level, high school principals desire parental involvement and home collaboration as a means of increasing student achievement. Yet, only twenty percent of the respondents indicated that they have culturally diverse theme activities periodically. This finding implies that there is a desire to involve all parents equally, but that principals have not tapped into what motivates parental involvement of non-English speaking students.

Only thirty percent of the respondents revealed that they published a newsletter, which includes announcements of upcoming events, but the newsletter information included is in standard English and does not focus on reaching across cultural language barriers to bridge gaps. At the time of the interview, no respondents provided culturally-friendly information in their newsletter. As indicated in their responses to the question about activities they use to increase parent knowledge of school activities, participants stated that they employ standard activities, such as sending home flyers or letters, using the marquee, or participating in the district-wide opening school day opportunities as ways of increasing parents' knowledge of those specific school activities. Thirty percent of the respondents stated that they use teachers to help bridge the gap that may exit between school and family by allowing those teachers to present relative cultural themes.

As indicated by the responses to the question of their particular parental involvement initiatives, respondents relied primarily on the traditional scheduled activities for involving parents and for informing them of upcoming events and activities at the school.

Respondents pointed out that parents have access to technological resources such as the school website, and ParentConnect as means of staying abreast of activities at their children's school and that Phone Master is a great resource for informing parents of attendance issues. Responses also indicate, on the other hand, that principals are amenable to new ideas about ways for involving parents.

Another pivotal theme on which these southeastern urban high school principals clarified their leadership practices regarding parental involvement was through responses about how they communicated their perspective and the importance of the definition of parental involvement. Of course, as expected, the principals, under separate protocol inquiry, admitted that parental involvement was necessary and expected, and they all admitted that the customary strategies for attempting to involve parents had been those they commonly employed, those such as open-house sessions scheduled by the district, PTAs, previously scheduled progress report updates and letters announcing upcoming events. They reported that those are primary ways they used to continue to contact parents as a means toward strengthening parental involvement. They believe these routine practices communicate their perspective and the importance of parental involvement. Teachers, they reported, are primarily the channels by which this information was distributed to the students and the channels by which the information, through the student, ultimately reached the home.

These participating high school principals reported that another way they communicated their perspective regarding the importance of parental involvement was through their daily interchanges with teachers. Not only were teachers expected to contact parents, but teachers were expected to keep a log of the frequency of their

contact. Responses revealed that teachers were expected to make initial contact with parents for introductory and primarily grade and attendance type issues, but referred the student to the administrator for inappropriate and extreme classroom disruptions relating to deviant student behavior and conduct issues – at which time the administrator would contact the parent as merited by the situation.

Fifty percent of the principals who were interviewed indicated that they verbalized to the teachers as encouragement, their expectation of parental contact as a way of communicating their perspective about the importance of parental. One of the respondents admitted that she/he did not find the lack of parental involvement as a problematic issue since the acceptance process for the child at this school involves the parent contracting to support the child in school. Another principal stated that through "staff development and collaboration" she communicated her/his perspective of parental involvement; one more stated that the mandatory progress report is the vehicle she/he used to communicate the importance of the parental involvement concept. Another participant said that using open-house as a forum to communicate that philosophy would be an option; and another respondent stated that he/she would communicate the standard for strong parental involvement to the teachers by "leading them in such a way as to let them know his/her expectation."

Even given the information on the consensus of either through the verbalized or non-verbalized expectation of communicating the standard for strong parental involvement, there existed variations in what the principals considered to be adequate parental involvement and even more variation in principals' philosophies about motivating teachers to contact parents outside the basic realm of the teachers' duties and

responsibilities requirements as mandated by the state and upheld by the district. This discrepancy might serve as a rationale explaining why some principals expect for teachers to contact parents only minimally as required by district policy and why some teachers do only as much as is absolutely required.

In response to how they maintained strong parental involvement, and though the numbers lag far behind the need, ninety percent of the respondents admitted that using the traditional devices of home-school contact including PTO organizational meetings when appropriate, was the way they maintained parental involvement, and they would continue to use and to reassess those strategies with an eye toward how they could be improved to enhance parental involvement. Again, ten percent or one of the participants stated that she/he did not have a problem with motivating parental involvement because of this school's school/parent/student contract dynamic.

One sub-theme that evolved from how principals communicated the importance of the definition of parental involvement was their philosophy for engaging inactive parents in school activities. One hundred percent of the participants admitted that they sought to engage all parents in the high school educational careers of all students, but for any disengaged parents, they have found no avenue that prompts any greater pro-activity from inactive parents than the customary letter, flyers and district-scheduled open house sessions that active parents engage in without further measures being taken.

Thirty percent of the principals admitted that they have a try, try, and try again attitude which is manifest in their open door policies, and in the use of the PTSA or PTO organizations as a means for trying to continue engaging inactive parents. One percent of the respondents stated that inactive parents was not a common problem for her school,

and the remaining forty percent simply believed that they must continue to target that group of parents through common standard type contact mechanisms; they expect and encourage teachers to continue in their efforts to contact those parents, and they use additional school personnel such as school social workers, guidance counselors and school resource officers as appropriate, to also help engage parents. According to their responses, principals believed their role in engaging inactive parents to be a support role with teachers being the initial and primary contact for the home-school collaboration relationship. In contrast to dealing with inactive parents, however, only one of the participants reported that she/he had what might be considered an overly-involved type parent situation which compelled her/him to assert her/his authority as school leader who must consider the entire student body as opposed to a single student and his/her family. Ninety percent of this population responded that they did not take issue with overly-involved parents, but that they considered their parents as customers who were looking to be provided a service from the schools that would yield a self-sustaining product.

Furthermore, this study revealed which parental involvement activities these participants perceived as impacting student achievement. Though principals believed that parents showed a higher interest in attending involvement activities in which their students were presenting and much less interest in activities in which there was not some form of student presentation, their responses show that there has been no indication that that attendance during those events has had a significant immediate or long range impact on student achievement. Yet, overwhelmingly, principals agree that on the whole, there is a definitive relationship between a student's performance at school and the level of the family's engagement. One of the respondents stated that he/she would use a combination

of activities; another ten percent stated that she/he would use open forums and an open-door policy; another felt that keeping parents informed would help; another stated that a cooperative staff would be a good resource; another suggests using the PTA and other school organizations such as ROTC; another says to use other parents; and twenty percent could not think of any activity they had employed to motivate stronger parental involvement. According to this study, principals have yet to discover parental involvement activities which make a dynamically positive impact on student achievement.

One additional aim of this study was to reveal the common leadership practices that eight southeastern urban high school principals perceived as influencing parental involvement. According to the responses provided by the participants regarding activities that impact student achievement, aside from the traditional policies and events as scheduled and mandated by the district, high school principals are hard-pressed to identify and to implement leadership practices that influence parental involvement.

One final aim of this study was to determine some common experiences of eight southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement. Respondents revealed that through their daily practices they desire a collaborative relationship with the students' families. Participants say they employ practices that communicate their desire to have strong parental involvement, but that the numbers are not representative of that desire. They believe that it is important for the teachers to contact families first and that they should serve in a support role as principal of the school. They believe teachers should be the primary contact person for home and school collaboration. Ninety percent of the interviewed population is struggling to implement ways to improve parental

involvement numbers and maintain involvement that can impact student achievement and believe that it is helpful to use other parents to increase those numbers. However, at the time of this study, most initiatives had fallen short of the intended numbers especially in maintaining a desired level of parental involvement. Furthermore, one hundred percent of interviewees believed that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student achievement.

Although the interviewees evaluated their programs based on those activities that facilitated an increased parental attendance, principals admitted that they are still searching to find activities that will improve that attendance. In the case of another protocol question which asked principals about their philosophy for using active parents to draw in inactive or resistant parents by soliciting families' expertise to monitor the effectiveness of leadership practices on family involvement, at the time of this study, none of the participants had adopted this practice.

Summarily, this study revealed several major findings relating to principals' practices and parental involvement. The first major finding this study revealed is that principals' definitions of the meaning of parental involvement vary. Another major finding revealed by this study is that principals communicated their perspective and the importance of parental involvement primarily by emphasizing that involvement through district scheduled activities such as progress grade reporting and report card issue dates. The study also revealed that they communicated the importance of parental involvement by verbally emphasizing parental contact by the teacher and through their leadership performance.

The study further revealed that principals believe that few to no currently used parental involvement activities significantly impact student achievement; and to that end, the study, in turn, revealed that the participants perceive no common leadership practices that influence parental involvement. The study further revealed that the major common experience of these southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement is that they struggle with trying to engage parents and that parental involvement suffers and lags behind attempts to engage parents in their childrens' high school educational experiences.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Principals' practices are gaining increasing scrutiny as a means of effecting parental involvement. High school principals are being charged with the task that involves creatively meeting the challenge of new millennium administrators' ability to encourage parents to actively engage themselves in their high school student's educational career. Principals' leadership practices oftentimes serve as structure, as a nucleus in the lives of students when it comes to expectations in academics in their immediate school surroundings, at times, in lieu of the expressed expectations of the parents. That is, those practices often help students set a certain expectation or help students to establish goals regarding academic achievement for themselves. It follows then, that those practices can also impact parental involvement.

As the leader in charge of the daily governance and routines of the school, the successes or failures of the school and its activities are the responsibilities of the principal. Some activities impact parental involvement more than others do. As the leader, the principal is expected to create the type of school where the parents feel welcome to come and where they feel like an integral part of the school and of their student's school life. However, principals' practices may remain a relatively new avenue for engaging parents as the generations and their social issues change. Principals are still trying to come to terms with this new dimension of leadership where they are expected to motivate and ultimately compel parents to do what former generations of parents have done as a part of the basic responsibility of parenting. The connection between principals'

practices and parental involvement with its many nuances, is still in the dawning stage of meeting with resolution. The instrumentation employed to conduct this study was protocol question followed by sub-topic questions. The face-to-face interviews were designed to investigate the following questions:

## Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following over-arching question: To what extent do the perceptions of high school principals differ on their leadership practices and parental involvement? The following related questions were also addressed in his study:

(1) How do southeastern urban high school principals define parental involvement?

(2) How do southeastern urban high school principals communicate their perspective and the importance of parental involvement?

(3) What parental involvement activities do principals perceive as impacting student achievement?

(4) What are the common leadership practices that southeastern urban high school principals perceive influence parental involvement?

(5) What are common experiences of southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement?

## Analysis of Research Findings

This study revealed several major findings or emergent themes relating to principals' practices and parental involvement. The first major finding this study revealed was that principals' definitions of the meaning of parental involvement vary widely. With respect to this variation in principals' concept of the meaning of parental involvement, findings

indicate that principals desire stronger parental involvement but do not have a strong grasp of what the concept actually means or how to engage those parents. Ninety percent of the participants expressed that parental involvement is an issue in which they would like to effect change.

Another major finding revealed by this study is that principals communicated their perspective and the importance of the definition of parental involvement primarily by emphasizing their desire for that involvement through district-scheduled activities such as progress grade reporting and report card issue dates, open-house opportunities and other school-sanctioned opportunities such as Expos or Mega Fests, occasions when the greater number of parents is involved. It is apparent from the responses that the participants have not developed many parental involvement initiatives themselves. In fact those that have been presented could be categorized as an inadvertent opportunity of trial and error. However, the need for strong parental involvement still permeates the agenda for schools to resolve. It is inferred that although participants claim to want 100% of parental involvement with all ethnicities represented in their student body, again, their involvement initiatives are underdeveloped. This is in contrast to how they responded. They provided few examples of how they involve a diverse parent population. This parental disengagement may be a result of the attitude of the parents regarding school, of the socio-economic status of the students, or because of a parent's prior negative experiences with the school relating to language barriers, or the parent's ability to get to school.

The study also revealed an additional theme regarding how principals communicated the importance of parental involvement. A majority of the principals indicated that they

communicated the importance of strong parental involvement by verbally emphasizing parental contact to the teachers and through their leadership performance. Empirical observations are that this message is not clearly being communicated by the principal, or sufficiently interpreted on the parts of the teachers, since as a veteran classroom teacher with eleven years of high school teaching experience, poignantly, the observation can be made that the primary involvement strategies the teachers see are those mandated by the district itself and emphasized by the principal. This point may further be correlated with the idea that most teachers are expected to contact parents and primarily for reasons such as attendance, grade performance or behavior. This is also supported by the findings that principals did not have a clear understanding of what adequate parental involvement meant or how to motivate teachers to that end. Though principals claim to utilize parent-teacher organizations such as PTSOs or PTAs to help maintain parental involvement, the numbers of parental involvement continue to lag far behind the manifest need for that resource. Apparently from 90% of those queried, the number of PTSO and PTA members is insufficient to meet the demand of engaging a greater number of inactive parents, though principals regarded the idea as worthwhile.

The study further revealed that principals have discovered few to no parental involvement activities that significantly impact student achievement; and to that end, the study, in turn, revealed that the participants perceived that none of their common leadership practices influence parental involvement or stimulate increased parental involvement to make a distinct difference. Respondents stated that they send home informative letters, newsletters and flyers, progress report updates and allow for parental access through the school district's website, the school's web page, ParentConnect and

Phone Master as ways of increasing parental knowledge; still the representative numbers indicate persistent inactivity for the majority of the parents. This parallels with the fact that only one participant admitted that a lack of parental involvement is not a common issue for that school, but illuminates the point that, though principals say they want parental involvement, their process for involving parents extends no farther than the basic duties and responsibilities required by the state and local departments of education. One point of interest, however, stems from the types of activities which have sparked a rise in parental involvement behavior. Responses indicate that when schools offer more student-oriented type activities involving student performance, the parent involvement is greater at that particular function; the number of parents, however, fell short of the number adequately representative of the student population. This number in attendance perhaps notable, as a response to principals' practices, implicates the types of engagement opportunities that actually appeal to parents; but they still do not adequately reflect the numbers indicative of the student population on a consistent basis.

The final major theme revealed by this study has to do with the communality the principals share, that is, the most common experience of these southeastern urban high school principals regarding parental involvement. When asked to state for the researcher the one question she should have asked, but did not, and then answer that question for the researcher, one participant stated that the researcher should have asked, "How do you know your school has made it? You know because teachers from other schools are asking to re-locate to your school." The respondent made no reference to increase student academic success or the need for stronger parental involvement. If students are, indeed, our customers in need of a service and their parents are their governance advocates, it

serves to reason that the school's success should depend on its relationship with those stakeholders, conceding to the point that for some schools, engaging parents may be a secondary issue. However, ninety percent of the participants indicated that they struggle with trying to engage parents and that parental involvement suffers and lags behind attempts to engage parents in their children's high school educational experiences.

Discussion of Research Findings

In relation to the data presented in the review of literature in chapter two, the findings of this study on principals' leadership having a relationship with parental involvement are substantiated in that literature. Findings are convergent with what critics Donaldson (1991), Sergiovanni (1995), Griffith (2000), and Lambert (2005) argue, that as school leader, the principal is the trendsetter and catalyst of the school and is expected to solve its problems. As the literature points out, state departments, local governments, teachers and parents alike expect principals to solve the problems the school faces. They expect principals to be able to form collaborative relations between the community with businesses, the home and the school, a point that authors Crow, Hausman and Scribner (2002) and Decker and Decker (2003) argue. Through the practices the principal demonstrates daily, he is also expected to be able to motivate teachers to engage in parental involvement and ultimately to motivate parents to be involved in their students' high school educational experience. Similarly, responses indicate that principals believe they are employing appropriate practices for involving parents and that any measure is worth the effort. As this study reveals, however, their processes of engaging parents meet only basic system requirements, an idea which has echoes similar to Hallinger and Heck (1998), who contend that principals portray leadership strategies in the school through a

stream of interactions over time, and by doing so, they address salient features of the school, such as current and changing states of outcomes and commitments. Furthermore, on the whole, these principals believe that parents should remain marginalized when it comes to school decision-making and the making of school policy, a point which contradicts that of Eccles and Harold (1993), who asserted that the parents are not as involved as either the school or the parents would like them to be; and Cullingford and Morrison (1999), who argue that parents have a strong desire to be connected with the school; and Pryor (1995), who believe that parents have a strong desire to have more voice in the running of the school.

Responses, moreover, indicate that principals are willing to help motivate parental involvement, but that they want parents to assume their parental role as child governance advocate and involve themselves in school activities. They do not believe that the responsibility should solely rest with the teachers and the school, a point with which Epstein (1992) takes issue, although as part of teachers' duties and responsibilities, they use teachers to help with the parental involvement process. They struggle with involving inactive parents as well as maintaining parental involvement, which suggest that the level of parental involvement they desire at the high school phase of the child's educational experience, wanes. This point coincides with Cotton and Wikelund's (1989), and Ogbu's (2003), arguments that many factors persist between the school's attempts to engage parents and the parents' abilities to be involved; but may call into question Desimone's (1999), contention that such educational concerns transcend a person's age, gender and race. Principals' use of parent-teacher organizations, technological resources, or other informational resources has not proven to enhance parental involvement overall. As

pointed out in the literature, a major part of the responsibility of engaging parental

involvement remains with the leader, who sets the tone for the school, an aspect of the

literature on which Hallinger and Heck (1998), also expounded.

Another similarity that emerged from this study that was presented in the literature

was that schools find that in comparison, parents of high school students have a tendency

to back away from the level of involvement they demonstrate when the student is in

primary and middle school grades. This contention is corroborated by such critics as App

(1991), LaBahn (1995), and Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1992), who offered

ways of maintaining parental involvement and ways of parents having positive influences

on their childrens' school outcomes. This distancing, literature has it, is in part due to the

student's desire to be more independent and, in part, to parent's uncertainty about

precisely how to help with the transition from middle to high school and remain involved.

Still another similarity became apparent which had to do with engaging a diverse parent

population. That is, schools are struggling with how to effectively engage parents whose

first language is not English.

There were no contradictions between the data presented in chapter four and the

literature in chapter two. Reported principals' practices in regards to parental

involvement were similar to data reported in the review of literature. Examples of

reported practices were sending home informational letters and flyers, teacher and

principal phone calls, newsletters, open-house opportunities, and technological resources

such as ParentConnect or the school's web page. However, not all principals reported that

they used newsletters, and so they reportedly relied on the more traditional ways of

contacting parents such as sending home standard business letters announcing upcoming

activities. Except for one participant for whom a lack of strong parental involvement was not a problem, none of the schools have reported initiatives that have elicited strong parental involvement. Principals differed on how they defined parental involvement and on what they thought adequate parental involvement was. What was consistent in their responses was that with the exception of one school leader, no one else has discovered an ideal formula or practice for maximizing or maintaining parental involvement. These findings converge with the findings of Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe and Myerson (2005) who suggested ways of helping principals develop as successful leaders.

Another consistency was that 90% of the principals had no problem with overly-involved parents. In the case where a principal had a parent who was considered overly-involved, she simply reminded the parent that as the leader of the school, it was she who had final say-so in the operations of the school and of the educational well-being of more that 400 other students. These findings were comparable to the data reported in Chapter two.

These findings are commensurate with the comment made by the Bruckheimer character regarding the breadth, and the depth of the capacity of leadership and its potential to affect others. As the results of this study reveal, except for the mandatory, district-wide high school parental involvement opportunities, that principals' practices do not motivate stronger parental involvement, could be an indication that parental attitudes about being involved, are reflected in the types of leadership practices high school principals employ.

Conclusions

Summarily, the nation's report card indicates that there is a desperate need to strengthen the relationship between the home and the school. Educational leadership literature continues to examine each aspect of the primary stakeholders and their functions and contributions to the high school education career of America's future leaders. As a central dynamic of the home-school partnership, principals are commonly undergoing increased scrutiny in their roles as school leaders because the perception is that the principal is expected to answer all dilemmas the school faces. She or he is expected to motivate the behaviors of other stakeholders to do the job he would like for them to do. Parental involvement is defined as follows: the participation of parents, the people who are raising the child and supporting his or her education; the guardian or child governance advocate in every situation, in every facet, of the child's education. Parental involvement aligns student activity at school with parental knowledge at home, thus allowing for student academic success through a close-knit relationship of the school-parent/home channel. This involvement allows parents to monitor behavior, while providing a sense of accountability to the student, the parent as well as the teacher in the areas ofcommunicating, educating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating. The resource of the parent community is one which carries its own needs, and though still largely untapped, creates something of a paradox when one considers that parents expect the very end-product they do not aggressively foster and nurture. This study revealed the following major findings about principals' practices and parental involvement:

- There is no clear cut definition that principals employ to identify parental involvement.

- Principals communicate their perspective of and the importance of parental involvement to teachers through verbal communication and through their support of district- scheduled parent involvement activities.

- Principals perceive that primarily student-performance type opportunities positively impact parental involvement activities.

- Principals have discovered no leadership practices that positively enhance parental involvement.

- The most common experience these respondents share regarding parental involvement is the need to continue their solicitation of this resource based on the present state of lagging engagement on the part of parents.

Many factors affect a parent's ability to participate in his or her child's high school education. Among some of the factors, as Ogbu (2003) pointed out, are parent attitudes toward school, parent work schedules and even their confusion about whose responsibility the education of the child really is. Another major factor is the cultural influence a community might have. This syndrome, as identified by Ogbu, is a "collective identity" which refers to attitudes parents, as well as students, might share about the importance of education and schools in their community. Although parental involvement may lag behind the need, every dimension of student achievement is affected by that involvement.

## Implications

There are many implications of this study for the field of education administration. The challenges of holding the office of principal in the secondary school are multi-faceted. Engaging parents in their children's education is not least of those problems.

Parental involvement affects almost every dimension of a student's education, and educators, especially at the high school level are bereft of ways effecting that involvement. Finding ways that principals can improve parental involvement is at the forefront agenda for those leaders. Even though the challenge has become a quagmire for stakeholders to extrapolate, the past certainly does not have to be a prelude for the future. This study has revealed several implications practitioners in education, educational organizations and especially high school principals can use. Some implications which can be extrapolated for the larger population from this study were also found.

As far as the parent population is concerned, parents can gain insight as to how they can assist educators in helping their children succeed academically. Parents can also benefit from this study in understanding the types of parental involvement activities that will help foster a strong relationship between them and the school. Businesses and the business community can benefit in the long-term from the type of relationship collaborative home-school relationships can afford to young people in the workforce.

The targeted audience for this study was high school principals in a southeastern urban school district. The first implication of this research is that principals understand first and foremost the phenomenon of parental involvement. They can benefit from knowing that parental involvement may require a strategy of engaging a process for involving parents. They should also understand that allowing parents to be involved in some degree in policy and decision-making also allows them to feel wanted and needed by the school. Further, principals can also glean from this study the importance of communicating the standard for strong parental involvement to teachers and to develop specific ways of attempting to involve inactive parents. It is pertinent that principals consider avenues for

maintaining parental involvement and how parent-teacher organizations can aid in the function of those organizations. Increasing parent knowledge of school activities, involving a diverse parent population and that of involving families to help involve other families are worthwhile initiative.

There are gaps in the literature that have to do with the amount of literature written on high school principals' practices and parental involvement. Much educational administration literature discussion has been dedicated to middle school principals' practices and parental involvement. This study contributes to the literature in that field of educational administration in that it adds to the canon of literature which deals with principal's practices and parental involvement on the high school level by revealing leadership practices that principals may employ. It also provides in-depth and probing questions which assess whether or not principals actually practice what they say. These are implications revealed from this study that can assist high school principals in their search for effective ways of improving the issue of parental involvement in their schools.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

The findings in this study are based only on southeastern urban high school principals' practices. The study exposed predominant practices principals employ to involve parents in the activities of their child's education in high school. The recommendations for this study are twofold. The first recommendation is that principals take an aggressively proactive approach to involving parents. The second recommendation is for further research. Findings indicate that these high school principals do not understand how to elicit strong parental involvement. The recommendations for this study are as follows:

1. The study should be conducted over a larger region (on all levels and outside the

southeast United States).

2. The study should be replicated with further probing some of the issues not investigated in this study such as, the impact of principals' practices on parents who are currently involved in their childrens' education with the school.

3. The study should also examine practices of principals in suburban and inner city school districts.

4. Finally a study should be designed to examine practices of principals whose parents  do not rely on principals' practices to motivate them to involve themselves in their children's educational lives.

## Concluding Thoughts

The researcher has used this study as a channel through which she could explicate her own thoughts about the relationship of school and family to a child's high school education. Educators and parents have the best interest of the student at heart and the relationship those two vital and inextricable entities share should be just that – inextricable. The two are inextricably linked to each other. Yet, each in its place has a vital role that connects only through the child. Our students deserve the full strength of that link, the combined efforts and practices from both entities to enable them to become our leaders of tomorrow and to enable them to carry on that democratic vision of tomorrow's society.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EMAILS GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY AND INTERVIEWS

Good afternoon principals,

Please be advised that Ms. Graham will contact you regarding a survey she will conduct in the near future.  She has been approved by Mrs. Colander-Chavis, Mrs. Clanton and me.  Please give her your support.  Thank you.

Angela (Penny) Stone
Senior Director of Accountability, Research,
Assessment and Statistics
Savannah Chatham County Public Schools
angela.stone@savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us
912-201-5652
912-201-5879(fax)

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**From:** Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2006 8:51 AM
**To:** Angela Stone; Elizabeth Graham; Marcia Clanton
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Penny or Marcia,
Please notify the principals that Mrs. Graham has been granted permission to conduct this research.  Thanks.

Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
Chief Academic Officer
912-201-5582
912-201-4166(fax)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."  Anatole France

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**From:** Angela Stone
**Sent:** Thursday, March 16, 2006 7:37 AM
**To:** Elizabeth Graham; Marcia Clanton
**Cc:** Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Ms. Graham,

Great, proceed and I wish you much success.

Angela (Penny) Stone
Senior Director of Accountability, Research,
Assessment and Statistics
Savannah Chatham County Public Schools
angela.stone@savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us
912-201-5652
912-201-5879(fax)

**From:** Elizabeth Graham
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2006 3:09 PM
**To:** Angela Stone; Marcia Clanton
**Cc:** Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Ms. Stone,
The referenced survey questionnaire, titled "Principal Survey Instrument" is a part of the attachment that I sent to Mrs. Clanton (pp. 3-5). Question 3 should read: In what ways do you provide training for teachers on getting parents involved? Please let me know if you have further concerns.
liz

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**From:** Angela Stone
**Sent:** Tue 3/14/2006 4:45 PM
**To:** Marcia Clanton
**Cc:** Elizabeth Graham; Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Hi Marcia,

I have reviewed the survey and have a couple of concerns:

1. At the top of the open-ended questionnaire, a separate survey was mentioned, where is it and what did it ask differently from the open-ended one included in this package.

2. Question 3 is unclear.

Otherwise, all is fine and she can proceed once we clarify the above.

Angela (Penny) Stone
Senior Director of Accountability, Research,
Assessment and Statistics
Savannah Chatham County Public Schools
angela.stone@savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us
912-201-5652
912-201-5879(fax)

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**From:** Marcia Clanton
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2006 1:26 PM
**To:** Angela Stone
**Subject:** FW: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Dear Penny:

See Mrs. C-C's note.  You've been drafted to do the first review.  Let me know what you think.
Thanks,
Marcia

**From:** Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2006 1:20 PM
**To:** Marcia Clanton
**Subject:** FW: Permission to conduct survey and interview

You may want to have Penny Stone review the info. as well. I've been forwarding request to Penny for review as well. If approved, she emails the principal endorsing the request since it relates to research.
Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
Chief Academic Officer
912-201-5582
912-201-4166(fax)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."
Anatole France

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**From:** Elizabeth Graham
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2006 12:53 PM
**To:** Marcia Clanton
**Cc:** Cecil Cobb; Jacqueline Colander-Chavis; Thomas Lockamy
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Ms. Clanton,
Please find the items attached. If you would still like to meet with me, I will meet with you at your convenience. Thanks so much.
liz

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**From:** Marcia Clanton
**Sent:** Tue 3/14/2006 12:36 PM
**To:** Elizabeth Graham
**Cc:** Cecil Cobb; Jacqueline Colander-Chavis; Thomas Lockamy
**Subject:** FW: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Dear Mrs. Graham:

Please contact me so that we can establish a time for me to receive materials regarding your request. I will be happy to review it.

Thanks,
Marcia Clanton

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**From:** Thomas Lockamy
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2006 11:32 AM
**To:** Elizabeth Graham
**Cc:** Marcia Clanton; Jacqueline Colander-Chavis
**Subject:** RE: Permission to conduct survey and interview

Thanks Ms. Graham for your request. By copy of this e-mail, I am requesting Ms. Marcia Clanton, Executive Director, High Schools, to review the request for approval. Ms. Clanton will respond to you with a copy to me pending the review.

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**From:** Elizabeth Graham
**Sent:** Monday, March 13, 2006 11:01 AM
**To:** Thomas Lockamy
**Cc:** mdrich@georgiasouthern.edu
**Subject:** Permission to conduct survey and interview

Good Morning Dr. Lockamy:

My name is Elizabeth Graham. I met you face-to-face in the 3: 00 p.m. board meeting on Wednesday March 1, 2006. I am the new assistant principal at Groves High School where Mr. Cecil Cobb is the lead principal. I am also a doctoral candidate at Georgia Southern University. My committe is made up of Dr. Michael Richardson (chairman), Dr. James Burnham, and Dr. Abe Tekleselassie. The topic of my dissertation is: "The Relationship Between High School Administrative Practices and Parental Participation."

Please accept this communication as my request for your permission to administer the twenty-four (24) item survey to the principals and at the time of my collecting the survey, to conduct a 30- to 45 minute face-to-face interview with the principals. The information from my research will help us better serve the students and parents here in the Savannah-Chatham County School District.

The Groves phone number is: (912) 9652520. TheGeorgia Southern number where Dr. Richardson can be reached is (912) 681-5307. My home number is (912) 9204832. Thank you and I look forward to your reply. Like you, I too care about our students who are tomorrow's leaders.

Professional Regards,
Elizabeth C. Graham

APPENDIX B

THE PERCEPTIONS OF CHATHAM COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS'

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The Perceptions of Chatham County High School Principals' Leadership Practices and Parental Involvement

This interview is part of the requirements for the completion of the doctorate degree at Georgia Southern University. It is structured to identify principals' practices that have a relationship to parental involvement. Please provide responses based on your practices only. Your responses will be kept confidential and you will not be identified individually in any way in the final report. For the purpose of this study, principals' practices is a phrase which refers to the daily governance and routines the overall leader of the school employs. Thank you for your participation.

Part I.

1. As principal, what is your philosophy for involving parents?
   A. Explain your process for involving parents.
   B. How do you involve them in the making of school policy?
   C. What type school-related policy and decision-making do you involve parents?
   D. Percentage wise, what part do you allow parents in the making of school decisions and policies?
   E. How do you demonstrate an awareness and an appreciation of the personal aspects and challenges of parenting?

2. What is your philosophy about contacting parents?
   A. Do you contact parents of do your teachers contact them?
   B. What are some typical issues have you identified as compelling your contacting parents as opposed to teachers?
   C. For what type issues do you require teachers to contact parents?
   D. How often do you require teachers to contact parents?

3. What is your philosophy of using teachers for parental involvement?
   A. How do you communicate/establish the standard for strong parental involvement to your teachers?
   B. What do you consider adequate parental involvement? (What do you think adequate parental involvement means)?
   C. How do you motivate teachers to contact parents?
   D. How do you reward teachers for contacting parents regularly?

4. What is your philosophy on engaging inactive parents in school activities?
   A. How do you encourage teachers to deal with inactive parents?
   B. What are some ways you have attempted to engage inactive parents?
   C. Which attempts have proven more effective than others?
   D. How do you use other school personnel to engage parents?
   E. What part do you assume in engaging inactive parents?

5. How do you maintain parental involvement?
   A. What is your philosophy on using a parent-advisory committee to help maintain parental involvement?
   B. How often do they meet?
   C. Who sets the parent involvement agenda for that meeting?
   D. What is the make-up of that committee? (Who are its members)?
   E. To what degree do you address or respond to the parent involvement issues the committee presents?

6. Tell me about your parent-teacher organization.
   A. How often do they meet?
   B. How do you use them to help with active or inactive parent involvement issues?
   C. Who makes the agenda for that meeting?

      D.   Who takes the minutes for that meeting?

7.   How do you deal with overly-involved parents?
      A.   Do you consider your parents as customers?
      B.   How do they resemble customers?
      C.   What makes you think that?
      D.   Do you consider your students as customers?
      E.   How do you communicate the customer service point of view to the parents and students?

8.   What activities do you employ to increase parent knowledge of school activities?
      A.   What is an effective technological source that you have used (phonemaster, etc.)?
      B.   Do you employ other persons to make that contact?
      C.   Do you publish a newsletter?
      D.   What are some examples of information you typically include in your newsletter?
      E.   What are the most common methods for informing parents of school activities, if you do not send home newsletters?

9.   What is your philosophy on involving a diverse parent population?
      A.   What are some of your common practices on involving a diverse parent population?
      B.   What are some examples of culturally-friendly information you include in your newsletter?
      C.   What are some examples of practices showing how you bridge cultural and language gaps between the school and the parents?
      D.   How do you use teachers to help bridge the gap between school and family?

10.  What are your parental involvement initiatives?
      A.   How do you monitor and/or assess those initiatives?
      B.   What criteria determine their worth?
      C.   How can they effectively be modified?
      D.   Explain why you will or will not continue to use them?

11.  What is your philosophy on how you solicit families' expertise to monitor the effectiveness of leadership practices on family involvement?
      A.   How do you select these families?
      B.   Who sets the guidelines families use to monitor effective leadership practices?
      C.   How much weight do you place on the findings?
      D.   How do you use this information?

12.  How do you evaluate your program?
      A.   Which practices worked well?
      B.   Which practices did not work well?
      C.   What are some practices you wish to keep?
      D.   Which ones would you like to change?
      E.   What do you think made certain practices in/effective?

13.  Do you perceive that there is a relationship between parental involvement and student achievement?
      A.   How do you define parental involvement?
      B.   What type activities have proven to motivate a stronger impact on parental involvement?
      C.   What type activities have you perceived as fostering and nurturing strong parental involvement?
      D.   What makes your program successful?

14.  Tell me what question I did not ask and should have asked, and then answer it for me.

Part II. Demographics:

Please check the appropriate response.

   14. My gender is:  male _____

              female\_\_\_\_\_

   15. What percentage of the student population at this school is:

              (A)  Pacific Islander _____

              (B)  Hispanic _____

              (C)  African-American_____

              (D)  European-American_____

              (E)  Other_____

16. The size of my school population is:

              (A)  1 – 499  _____

              (B)  500 – 1000 _____

              (C)  1001 – 1500 _____

              (D)   1501 – 2000 _____

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL EMAILS

| Georgia Southern University |  |
|---|---|
| Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs |  |
| **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** |  |
| Phone: 912-681-5465 | Administrative Annex<br>P.O. Box 8005 |
| Fax: 912-681-0719    Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu | Statesboro, GA 30460 |

**To:**     Elizabeth Graham
           145 Dovetail Crossing
           Savannah, GA 31419

**cc:**     Dr. Michael Richardson, Faculty Advisor
           P. O. Box 8131

**From:**   Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
           Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
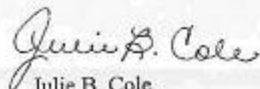           (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:**   June 28, 2006

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H06239**, and titled **"The Perceptions of _____County High School Principals on Leadership Practices and Parental Involvement"**, it appears that your research involves activities that do not require approval by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval.* You may proceed with the proposed research.

Sincerely,

*Julie B. Cole*

Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<u>**COLLEGE OF Education**</u>

<u>**DEPARTMENT OF Educational Leadership**</u>

# INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Elizabeth Graham; I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University conducting a research study titled "The Perceptions of [Name Removed for Confidentiality] County High School Principals on Leadership Practices and Parental Involvement." Principals' practices and parental involvement continue to surface in the administrative leadership canon of literature as stakeholders seek to find ways to improve parental involvement. Investigating some high school principals' leadership practices and parental involvement may assist in improving parental involvement.

The purpose of this research is to assess principals' perceptions of their leadership practices on parental involvement. This letter serves to request your assistance in gathering this information.

Participation in this research will include your responding to three (3) demographic questions and fourteen (14) qualitative interview questions about your everyday leadership practices. The interview using the qualitative questions should last no longer than forty-five minutes of a one-time visit.

There is no identified risk accompanied with this study and only a minimal level of nervous discomfort is expected since the questions deal with your everyday leadership practices. All identities will be kept confidential and responses will be completely anonymous. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.

The benefits of this research will help [Name Removed for Confidentiality] County school district to assess the relationship of its school leaders' practices and parental involvement. The benefits to participants will be that they may be able to determine those practices that are more effective in fostering parental involvement. The benefit to society will be that all stakeholders in education will benefit from improvement in the greater educational success of the students.

Please respond to all questions as they will help in assessing the perceptions of certain practices that impact parental involvement. If you have questions about this study, please contact my advisor, Dr. Michael Richardson, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent.  For questions concerning your rights as a research participant or the IRB approval process, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, you may indicate your interest below. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study; but you must be 18 years of age and a school leader to participate since your responses are about your leadership practices.

Please indicate your consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, by signing your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: The Perceptions of [Name Removed for Confidentiality] county High School Principals on Leadership Practices and Parental Involvement

Principal Investigator:     Elizabeth C. Graham
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                            Savannah, Georgia 31419
                            (912) 9204832
                            lgraham7@aol.com

Faculty Advisor:  Dr. Michael Richardson
                  3117 College of Education Building
                  P.O. Box 8138
                  Georgia Southern University
                  Statesboro, Georgia 30460-8138
                  mdrich@georgiasouthern.edu or
                  md@Mercer.edu

_____          _____

Participant Signature                             Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____          _____

Investigator Signature                            Date