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A STUDY OF TEACHER PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES  
TOWARD PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE  
OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PRIMARY GRADES

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Teacher Education  
and the  
Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Donna L. Johnson Dobson

August 1991

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Acceptance for the faculty of the graduate  
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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Masters of Arts

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Date

## Abstract

### A STUDY OF TEACHER PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT PRIMARY GRADES

This is a descriptive examination of teacher attitudes and practices of parent involvement in a small urban district in a mostly rural state. Surveys were sent to 416 teachers of grades kindergarten, first, and second. Surveys were also sent to the teachers of alternative kindergarten classrooms and pre-first classrooms. The survey was based upon one from the publication Hopkins Survey of Schools and Family Connections, Questionnaires for Teachers, Parents, and Students, p-81. The survey was self-reporting with anonymity guaranteed. Independent variables included grade level taught, a college level course or school district inservice session taken, and a bachelor's degree or work beyond the bachelor's degree earned. Dependent variables include attitudes toward parent obligations, communication practices, volunteer practices, attitudes toward parent involvement at home, general attitudes toward parent involvement, and parent involvement at my school.

Oneway analyses of variance (ANOVA) were run to examine the variables. When appropriate, multiple range tests were run. The surveys indicated that the

population of teachers in the Omaha Public School District has more similarities than differences when examining the areas of attitudes toward and practices of parent involvement. Surveys showed teachers valued parent involvement. Most agreed on the benefits and value of involving parents. Very few teachers had taken a college course or school district training session in parent involvement.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### Introduction.

There has been a continuing growing interest about how schools can more effectively educate all children, especially children labelled "at-risk." Current literature suggests that one approach to helping more children be successful is to involve parents actively in their child's education. Literature shows a great agreement that this practice of involving families is very important and has proven valuable. There are questions which stand out. Are teachers actively involving parents? Do they agree with the current research? What types of practices do they use?

### Purpose.

The purpose of this study is to provide a description of current teachers' attitudes toward parent involvement and their actual practices of parent involvement in the classroom. The study involves teachers in the Omaha Public School District, grades K-2 and will provide a picture of what types of practices of parent involvement are being used currently. The study will also describe which practices these teachers value and which they do not

appear to support. The results of the study may provide ideas for ways to better educate the children who are labelled "at-risk" of school failure as well as those in the general population. This survey will also provide a description of the characteristics of teachers who actively encourage parent involvement and will describe which teachers tend to value parent involvement.

#### Definition of terms.

Parents are defined as the adult or adults in the family who have the most contact with the school about the child. Parent involvement practices are the ways teachers work to involve parents in their child's education in or out of school. Teacher attitudes refer to how teachers value involving parents and what their beliefs are toward the involvement of parents. Early studies by Joyce Epstein (1982, 1986) have defined five major types of parent involvement. These categories will help define (and examine) the practices being used today.

The basic obligations of families include parenting skills which will provide for the health, safety, and growth of the child. This means generally promoting a positive atmosphere at home. This may also be called the-home-conditions-for-learning.

The basic obligations of schools include the variety of ways educators communicate with families about school programs and their child's progress. This may also be called school-to-home communications. Involvement at school includes parents and volunteers who assist in the school in classrooms and attend activities such as performances. This may be called simply volunteers-at-school. Involvement in learning activities at home refers to teachers asking parents to help at home on learning activities. This may be called involvement in learning activities. Involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy puts parents into a participatory role in which decisions are made. School organizations such as the PTA would be included in this area.

#### Hypotheses.

The following hypotheses were proposed for the examination of parent involvement described in this study.

1. There is a significant difference between kindergarten teachers and those teaching non-kindergarten grades surveyed, in the following four areas:
  - a. attitudes of teachers toward home conditions for learning;

- b. practices of teachers regarding school to home communications;
- c. practices of teachers involving parents at school;
- d. attitudes of teachers toward parent involvement in learning activities at home.

These hypotheses are proposed because kindergarten teachers have had more exposure to the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice which emphasize parent involvement, than have non-kindergarten teachers.

- 2. There is a significant difference between teachers who have had a college level course or school district inservice training in the area of parent involvement and those who have not in the following four areas:
  - a. attitudes of teachers toward home conditions for learning;
  - b. practices of teachers regarding school to home communications;
  - c. practices of teachers involving parents at school;
  - d. attitudes of teachers toward parent involvement in learning activities at home.

These hypotheses are proposed because of an assumption that exposure to a college course or inservice on parent involvement results in increased awareness of both the value of parent involvement and specific involvement strategies.

3. There is a significant difference among teachers in the number of years of teaching in the following four areas:
  - a. attitudes of teachers toward home conditions for learning;
  - b. practices of teachers regarding school to home communications;
  - c. practices of teachers involving parents at school;
  - d. attitudes of teachers toward parent involvement in learning activities at home.
  
4. There is a significant difference between those who have a bachelor's degree and those who have had graduate work beyond a bachelor's degree in the following four areas:
  - a. attitudes of teachers toward home conditions for learning;
  - b. practices of teachers regarding school to home communications;

- c. practices of teachers involving parents at school;
- d. attitudes of teachers toward parent involvement in learning activities at home.

### Limitations.

This study is a description of parent involvement practices by teachers in the Omaha Public School District in grades K-2. This is a small urban district in a mostly rural state. Also, there are few male teachers in the primary grades. Thus, generalizations may not easily be made beyond the specific sample.

Internal validity was addressed by making the survey totally anonymous. Social security numbers were asked for in order to have distinguishing codes. Surveys were sent with preaddressed, return envelopes to be used in the school mail. Teachers were asked to complete this survey individually. Because the survey is self-reporting, one does not have an impartial subject identifying practices observed. However, since this study is anonymous, accurate reporting is encouraged. Responses will reflect attitudes which the teachers report themselves.



External validity was addressed by using all teachers in grades K-2, instead of choosing a random sampling from among the total. There has not been a similar survey sent to these teachers, nor has any pre-survey information been given which might increase sensitivity toward the topic.

Due to a typographical error, questions 14-18 are limited. Variable D should have read 75-100 percent instead of simply 100 percent. The usefulness of this category is limited.

Statistical analysis was done using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) instead of using multiple variate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The MANOVA test is more thorough and in future studies would be a valuable test to use. The decision to use ANOVA presented some problems when comparing the multiple variables; however, it was used in conjunction with Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey, 1977) method for further comparison.

## Chapter Two: The Review of the Related Literature

The current focus on education has included various examinations of how our schools can be improved. Few research based studies of parent involvement in the schools have been performed. Major studies, however, have come from Johns Hopkins University by Joyce L. Epstein and Henry Jay Becker in 1982 and again in 1986. This review examines literature on current parent involvement and participation in the schools. While all students benefit from school improvement, the focus is on those students labelled "at-risk" or "high-risk."

### At-risk Students

At-risk students are often defined as those most likely to fail academically. They are not achieving up to their potential or are not meeting teacher expectations. These students may have been called underachievers (Payne and Payne, 1989). This population has been growing. Each year nearly one million children drop out of the nation's schools, costing more than \$240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetimes. Billions more will be spent on crime control, welfare, health care, and other social services. If education does not deal

with these children, the nation will soon be faced with a permanent and growing underclass (Butler, 1989). Today, one of every five children in the U.S. is poor. Of seven industrialized countries, the U.S. has the highest percentage of severely poor children (Chafel, 1990).

Owen B. Butler (1989) states that long-term studies of children in the Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and Harlem Head Start program in New York City have found that high-quality preschool education reduced by about one-half later dropout behavior, criminal involvement, teen pregnancy, welfare dependency, and remedial education needs. Butler further comments that the Committee for Economic Development, a privately funded group of corporate executive officer whose purpose is to look at social and economic conditions affecting future business, calls for early preventive measures that will bring children to school ready to learn. The Committee for Economic Development also calls for school restructuring which involves school-based management, greater decision-making by teachers, smaller schools and smaller classes, greater parental involvement, and a variety of social support, health care, and extra-curricular programs centered in the schools (Butler, 1989). In the early 1960s, many leading

educators and social scientists expressed hopes that preschool education programs initiated then for the poor children would help break the cycle of poverty in the future (Schweinhart and Welkart, 1985). However, deliberate, organized efforts by the public schools to involve low-income parents in their children's education are little more than 20 years old, although middle and upper classes have long had several means of participation available (McLaughlin and Shields, 1987).

Parental involvement and preschool education are keys to success. Students today are no more innately intelligent or socially and psychologically developed than were students 25 to 50 years ago (Comer, 1986). Educators are in the position ideally to meet the needs of all children which will eventually decrease the "at-risk" population. Many philosophies and suggestions for school improvement exist. Yet, one area of consensus is that major change is needed to include parental involvement and preschool education.

According to Edwards (1989), sweeping changes are needed in our schools. One way is to place learning in a different context. This would involve activity-oriented learning with real problems and phenomena. Second, children must develop higher-level skills and be encouraged to make their own decisions. Third, children must be accepted as they are and given

necessary experiences to encourage autonomy. Fourth, competition must be eliminated in favor of cooperation. According to Chafel (1990), "readiness for school is a cumulative process that begins before a child's birth" (p. 242).

A number of steps can be taken to address the broad developmental needs of children in poverty. The Committee for Economic Development (1987) and Schorr (1988) have suggested steps to be taken to address developmental needs of children in poverty. These steps include improvement of prenatal care and improvement and extension of medical coverage so that poor health and correctable medical defects can be treated. For example, the extension of WIC (Women, Infants and Children) programs is necessary to provide for the hungry and homeless children because less than 50 percent of those in need are currently being served. Furthermore, comprehensive and intensive programs are needed to link families with social and family support services. At-risk students can be nurtured through high-quality preschool intervention programs and low-cost, high-quality child care can be provided (Chafel, 1990).

Students in schools of the future will be drastically different from students today with a greater variety of backgrounds, languages, values, and

abilities than ever before. Challenges for the public schools include poverty, non-English speaking students, and physical and emotional handicaps. Thus, the need to improve the schools' emphasis on the student is more crucial than ever. Hodgkinson (1988) states, "When students are plentiful, we can just pick the best. But when students are scarce we need them all to do well. They are too important to fail" (p. 14).

As suggested by Barbara Foulks and Robert D. Morrow (1989), efforts need to be made to define the at-risk child and establish appropriate intervention programs. At-risk students have tremendous levels of intellectual and academic potential (Pogrow, 1990). One aspect to consider is the role of the home in the student's schooling. Payne and Payne (1990) stated that underachieving students attribute success to luck and failure to lack of ability. In this study, at-risk students tended to give credit to outside forces for their experiences and achievement. Locus of control was said to be an affective variable which can be modified in the interest of the student and learning. Family structures are changing. Connections between family and school must take a developmental course with involvement through all stages (Epstein, 1988).

Several studies on the effects of parent involvement and the progress of at-risk students show a direct relationship to significant increases in student achievement when the parents are involved. Chavkin (1989) claims that parents, teachers, and administrators all want parent involvement. But, this involvement is not viewed multiculturally. Studies indicate that minority parents are as interested in their children's education as are majority parents. Herman and Yeh (1983) agree. Parent involvement in schools is beneficial. The degree of parent interest and participation in school activities is positively related to student achievement. Also, parent involvement in schools, even those in the poorest neighborhoods in the inner cities, is possible, desirable, and beneficial (Hayne, Comer, and Hamilton-Lee, 1989). Young children whose backgrounds place them at-risk of failing or falling far behind will outperform their peers for years if their parents are given training in home teaching (Lazar and Darlington, 1978). The National Governor's Association Task Force on Readiness compiled policy initiatives and actions and translated them into recommendations for ways of helping at-risk students. (Riley, 1986). The benefits are not only for the students. According to the Task Force on Readiness,

parents of at-risk preschoolers can also benefit from training in such parenting skills as reading and talking to their children. Training for parents has a positive impact on children's performances through the elementary grades. Such programs are inexpensive and succeed with parents at all educational levels (Riley, 1986).

Seeley (1989) claims the "Delegation Model" (We pay our taxes so education is left up to the schools.) is keeping public education from reaching its full potential. Both parents and teachers need to be involved. Parental involvement is essential to educational excellence (Seeley, 1989).

#### Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in schools is not new. Our public school system was founded by parents and their communities. Many school systems were run by parents. As schools became "professionalized," parents were eased out (Greenberg, 1989). According to an ongoing study by Jane C. Lindle at the University of Pittsburgh, all families, despite socioeconomic status, have similar preferences about school communication. Parents view "professionalism" as undesirable in a teacher. Having a "personal touch" is the most enhancing factor in school relations. Parents dislike the formality and the time limit of



parent-teacher conferences and want more of a partnership with the teacher. The idea that a "professional" staff member maintains a proper "distance" from parents as an expert is not supported (Smith and Hubbard, 1988).

Henderson (1988) cites findings from the annotated bibliography "The Evidence Grows" (1981) which described 35 studies on the subject of parent involvement. A review of the findings of these 35 studies indicated that parent involvement in almost any form appeared to produce measurable gains in student achievement. The update "The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement" (1987) found 18 new studies for support. Programs designed with a strong component of parent involvement produce students who perform better than those who have taken part in other programs with less parent involvement. Students in schools that maintain frequent contact with their communities outperform those in other schools (Henderson, 1988). Based upon two decades of research, Epstein (1987) states that children have an advantage in school when parents continuously support and encourage school activities.

#### Program Examples

Several states and school districts have implemented plans to increase parental involvement.

The following examples illustrate these attempts to involve parents in their children's education.

Missouri Missouri is the only state in the United States with a statutory mandate to provide parent education and family support services in every school district. All parents with children from birth through age 4 are eligible to participate. The program, Parents As Teachers, was designed to enhance child development and scholastic performance by reaching out to families before a child is born (Hausman, 1989).

Michigan A preprimary Special Education Program was started in 1977 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. This program has grown into an effective early-intervention program for high-risk preschool children. It successfully prepares students for school entrance (50 percent go to regular kindergarten rooms; 35 percent require speech and language programs only; 15 percent require special programs). Methods include home visits, videotapes, and monthly parent meetings (Harper, 1987).

Tennessee The 1986 Tennessee General Assembly appropriated \$1,000,000 to design and implement a statewide parent involvement initiative. The purpose was to enhance or develop various parent involvement models in local school systems in order to demonstrate the benefits of a strong partnership between parents,

students, and the school. Tennessee found that parents were supportive and enthusiastic about all 11 models tried by the state. All of the models increased the amount of time parents worked with the schools and with their children's education (Lueder, 1989).

Minnesota The Early Childhood Family Education Program is the idea of State Senator Gerome Hughes, who believes in lifelong learning and acknowledges that parents are the first and primary teachers of young children. Benefits of the program include the following:

1. Parents become involved in their children's education at an early age.
2. Parents learn school is an accepting place for them as well as their children.
3. Parents learn more effective control techniques.
4. The programs emphasize self esteem, and, thus, children see themselves as successful, competent, and valuable individuals.

(Kristense and Billman, 1987)

Kansas In 1986, the U.S. Department of Education identified Village School in Emporia as an exemplary school. Between 50 percent and 100 percent of all the school's families participate in various outreach programs every year. Every parent is seen as a

participating parent. Methods of involvement include town meetings, surveys, banquets, committee participation, PTO activities, parent volunteers, and Parent Sharing Times (Fredericks, 1989).

Taken together, these several state-wide programs indicate that no one type of parental involvement is always appropriate. District practices such as school workshops, open house, and conferences are not necessarily the best way to achieve the involvement expected or desired. Schools need new methods of sharing information and communicating. Expectations need to change to adapt to today's family situations (Brandt, 1989). Not all parents can be active or involved in the same ways. Encouragement and preparation may be necessary to help parents become aware of what exactly is expected. Teachers must carefully plan how to move parents on the continuum from passive to active participation (Tucker, Cervone, and O'Leary, 1982). The familiar passive rituals of visit-school night and parent conferences accomplish little more than a polite exchange between parents and teachers. Techniques for parent involvement in home-learning activities have greater potential for actively involving parents in important exchanges with the teacher to assist the child's progress in school (Epstein, 1982). However, according to Herman and Yeh

(1983), parent participation in schools by means of volunteer activities, parent meetings, and back to school nights does increase parents' perceptions of their influence on and their rapport with the school. In addition, giving parents some influence and involvement in the school program transfers some responsibility for the instruction program from school to parent.

#### Involvement at Home

Of all types of parent involvement, supervision of learning activities at home may be the most educationally significant (Epstein and Becker, 1982). Parent activities at home can involve many or all children's parents. Single parents and working parents are less likely to interact with the school than a traditional two parent family. However, they are as likely or more likely to spend time with their children at home to assist them in school activities (Epstein, 1988 ed.). In an interview (Brandt, 1989), Joyce Epstein stated that parents want to be more involved in their child's learning, especially at home, and need clear direction from school.

Students need to feel that their parents support the school and their learning. Schools must do more than talk about parent involvement. They need to set up plans to be implemented. This will be especially

important in schools characterized by apathy and conflict. These students must see parents interacting successfully at school. The plan must establish a sense of ownership of the school, trust, and mutual respect. This is especially important for at-risk students (Comer, 1986).

The positive effects of having parents involved in school, however, is dampened by the fact that few parents participate. A study conducted by the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University examined parent involvement in the education of their children. The study included teachers, principals, parents, and students in 16 Maryland Districts. Although nearly 40 percent of the teachers in this study had parents in their classroom at least a few days each month, only a few parents were involved frequently, and some parents never participated (Epstein, 1984). Most parents cannot or do not become involved at school.

#### Teacher's Role

Consideration of parent involvement in the schools must also include the teacher's role. A study in Maryland by Becker and Epstein (1982) showed that 75 percent of the teachers studied agreed that the general idea of parent involvement is a good one. However, 50 percent had serious doubts about the success of

practical efforts to involve parents at home. Many teachers do not know how to initiate and accomplish the programs of parent involvement that would help them most (Becker and Epstein, 1982). Attitudes, training, and experiences of individual teachers have much to do with whether they choose to develop parent-involvement programs. However, attitudes of parents and principals, needs of students, and the assistance the teachers receive from their colleagues at school may also contribute to the development and success of the programs.

Schools are seeing an increase in the number of children arriving from low income, poorly educated families; yet, educators must remember the parents of these children are interested in their child at school. Rules or mandates alone will not necessarily encourage parent involvement. Teachers and administrators must become involved and motivated to try new strategies. Teachers need to be educated about the merits of parent involvement, and administrators need to be educated about enabling teachers to take the initiative (McLaughlin and Shields, 1987). However, according to Greenberg (1989), many teachers have not had training in working with families. The teacher's role is changed when the teacher acts as a manager of parent involvement. The teacher shares a portion of the

teaching responsibility (Epstein and Becker, 1982). Today, also, teachers' schedules are so tight that little time is left for informal interactions with family members (Greenberg, 1989). Even so, school-home communication is positively related to parent participation (Herman and Yeh, 1983).

Teachers who reported the most active parents in the school and in the classroom were especially supportive of techniques that use informal activities at home and that teach parents tutoring and evaluating skills (Becker and Epstein, 1982). If teachers want parents to help and to feel confident they can help, they must organize and conduct workshops for parents in how to assist in reading, math, and other subjects (Epstein, 1986). The teachers' practices, not the education, marital status, or work place of parents, make the difference in whether parents are productive partners with schools in their children's education (Epstein, 1988).

Parents believe more can be done to help them be involved. In a Maryland study (Epstein, 1986), parents felt they would help at home if teachers gave them learning activities to do. Parents of lower elementary grade children felt they should help more than did parents of upper elementary grades (Epstein, 1986). A surprisingly large number of parents were excluded from



even the most basic, traditional school communications. To improve parental involvement, one step would be to begin considering all parents of students, especially the group left out. The parent-teacher relationship is highly competitive (Power, 1985), but families need more than ever the support to care for and educate their children. A good early childhood program responds to this need (Mitchell, 1989). Furthermore, teacher practices are important. According to Epstein (1986), parents' education did not explain their experiences with parent involvement unless teacher practices were taken into account. In classrooms where teachers were leaders in the use of parent involvement, parents with less formal schooling reported more frequent requests to help the child at home than parents with more education.

As a part of a larger study of discipline in selected Chicago inner-schools, teachers were found to be resistant to the involvement of low-income minority parents (Menacker, Hurwitz, and Weldon, 1988). Teacher resistance plays a factor in the lack of involvement. Many urban parents are denied meaningful roles in school policy decisions, according to Jenkins (1981). They are excluded from school life due to racial and class bias. Educators need to rid the schools of the "them" versus "us" attitude and work with parents.

School policy needs to involve parents which will moderate the class bias and racism. Barriers to parent involvement include lack of multicultural perspective, lack of written school policy, and lack of teacher training in the area (Chavkin, 1989). Not all teachers and administrators treat people as equals. Class, race, and class bias are problems (Greenberg, 1989). Tension between parents and teacher/caregivers exists (Galinsky, 1988). Principals agree that many responsibilities traditionally parental are now on teachers. Principals also agree teachers should be provided some rather explicit parent involvement guidelines. However, they disagreed that teachers have enough to do without having to work with parents (Williams and Chavkin, 1986).

Parental feelings that they can help are based primarily on their own education and on their children's grade level. However, despite differences in parents' feelings about their ability to help, many parents do help. In the study conducted in the Maryland elementary schools, only 8 percent of the parents reported they never helped their child with reading and math skills during the school year, whether or not they were asked by the teacher. Over 85 percent of the parents spent 15 minutes or more helping their children with homework activities when asked to do so

by the teacher (Epstein, 1986). Most reported they could help more if the teacher showed them what to do (Epstein, 1986).

According to Greenberg (1989), one should note that teachers are usually not evaluated for their "wonderful" work with parents. However, Epstein (1984) states that only parents' direct experiences with the teacher influenced the parent's understanding of their children's educational program.

### Summary and Conclusion

A review of the literature concludes that parent involvement is an important and valued practice. Benefits are seen in achievement, school climate, and self esteem. The United States is facing an increasing population of at-risk students. By involving parents in the education of these students as well as those not at-risk, schools can meet the challenge to improve.

Some states and school districts have begun implementing policies, but, as of yet, the practice of parent involvement is relatively new. If parental involvement is so vital to the success of students, why are so few parents involved?

The State of Nebraska does not have requirements for parental involvement in the public schools. The Omaha Public Schools encourage parent-teacher

cooperation and communication but have not established a required program of participation. (A Familyness series is available but is apart from the educational program as an information service.) Open House night is scheduled each year along with two mandatory parent-teacher conference periods.

There have been few research studies in the area of parent involvement completed, although literature indicates that parental involvement can have a very important effect on students. Further investigation will include identifying the parental practices that are evident in the Omaha Public Schools at this time and how teachers value parental involvement in the classroom.

### The Statement of the Problem

The research proposes to examine current parent involvement techniques used in the Omaha Public School District and to identify teacher beliefs toward parent involvement in the primary grades.

### The Subproblems

1. To identify what parent involvement practices are used in Kindergarten, First, and Second grades.
2. To identify beliefs held by teachers in Kindergarten, First, and Second grades.
3. To analyze and interpret the data so as to discover whether teacher parent involvement practices and beliefs were related to teacher demographics.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

### Introduction.

This chapter will describe the methodology and procedures used. The survey methodology was chosen. This enabled a greater number of subjects to be included in the study, as well as providing the least expensive method of implementation. The survey method used provided an anonymous participation by the subjects and thus encouraged accurate self-reporting. The study is descriptive, not experimental, with the purpose being to give a picture of what is currently occurring in classrooms, not to change anything.

### Subjects.

The Omaha Public School District is a small urban district in a mostly rural state. The district serves a wide variety of socioeconomic groups and is the largest school district in the city. The district includes 56 elementary and 16 secondary schools.

A decision was made to be exhaustive in selection of subjects to survey in order to provide the most complete description possible. Surveys were sent to 416 teachers of kindergarten, first, and second grades. Surveys were also sent to the teachers of alternative

kindergarten classrooms and pre-first classrooms because of the decision to include all teachers of kindergarten through second grade. Although early childhood education generally focuses on birth through third grade, the survey was stopped at second grade. It did not include preschool, preschool handicapped or special education classes. This limitation kept the sampling somewhat smaller in order to examine parent involvement starting in kindergarten and the changes in involvement seen through the grades following kindergarten.

Subjects were selected from the current Omaha Public Schools Personnel Directory in kindergarten through second grade. The basic criteria for being included was grade taught and being listed in the directory.

#### Research Design and Method.

The survey used (see Appendix A) was based upon one developed by Joyce L. Epstein and Henry Jay Becker from Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, in Baltimore, Maryland. This survey came from the publication Hopkins Survey of Schools and Family Connections, Questionnaires for Teachers, Parents, and Students, P-81. The 1987 form

was chosen because it was the most current. This survey had also been used in an urban school district.

This survey was designed to be self-reporting because of the number of subjects. There were 416 teachers available to survey and a self-report provided the most complete information. Teachers who were surveyed reported their own practices as well as their beliefs toward parent involvement. Accurate reporting was encouraged through the guarantee of anonymity.

Surveys were distributed with a letter of explanation (see Appendix B) on March 22, 1991, through the school mail. Included in the packet was a pre-addressed envelope to be returned anonymously. There was no way to record which teachers did or did not participate. The surveys were to be returned by April 19, 1991, through the school mail. (The school district had approved doing the survey as well as using the school mail.) Surveys were to be completed on a computer scoring sheet with a number 2 pencil.

### Variables.

Independent variables included the grade level taught, a college level course or school district inservice session taken in parent involvement, number of years taught, and a bachelor's degree only or work beyond the bachelor's degree. Dependent variables included four out of the five major categories of



parent involvement as defined by Joyce Epstein. These four were the following: basic obligations of families, basic obligations of schools, involvement at school, and involvement in learning activities at home.

(Involvement in decision making and governance was not part of this study, as the focus is on teacher practices and beliefs.) In this study the variables will be referred to as the following, respectively:

Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA),  
Communication Practices (CP), Volunteer Practices (VP),  
and Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA).  
Two additional variables of interest were also examined. These were General Attitudes toward Parent Involvement (GAPI) and (teachers' opinions about) Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS).

Items from the Hopkins Survey of Schools and Family Connections, Questionnaires for Teachers, Parents, and Students, P-81 were clustered in order to analyze and compare data. Questions 31-47 were not used for the purpose of these cluster variables because they did not fit the categories established. They were a combination of attitudes about practices rather than either a description of only attitudes or only practices. After the surveys were returned, this area appeared to be unclear and, thus, was not included in

the clusters. Following is a summary of items which were clustered to form these variables:

- I. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA): questions #48,49,51,52, and #57-59.
- II. Communication Practices (CP): questions #14-18.
- III. Volunteer Practices (VP): questions #19-27.
- IV. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA): questions #50, #53-56.
- V. General attitudes toward parent involvement (GAPI): questions #1, #2, and #4-12.
- VI. Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS): questions #3,#13,#60-62, and #64-67.

The clusters were derived by taking the arithmetic mean of the relevant items, except for Volunteer Practices and Parent Involvement in My School. Volunteer Practices questions #19-25 were on a two point scale and questions #26-27 were on a five point scale, and, thus, the arithmetic sum was used. The cluster Parent Involvement at My School combined questions #64-67 to get a mean for comparison purposes and added to questions #3, #13, and #60-62.

#### Definition of independent variables.

The following is a list of the independent variables used. Grade level was organized as two

levels: kindergarten, alternative kindergarten or prefirst (referred to as kindergarten) as the first level and first grade or second grade as the second level.

Special preparation was also organized as two levels: having had a college course in parent involvement or having had an inservice provided by the school district on parent involvement as the first level and having no special course or preparation on parent involvement as the second level. Number of years taught was organized into the following groups: Group 1- teachers with 1-3 years of experience, Group 2- teachers with 4-7 years of experience, Group 3- teachers with 8-11 years of experience, Group 4- teachers with 12-16 years of experience, Group 5- teachers with 17+ years of experience.

Degree information was organized into two levels: those who have a bachelor's degree only and those who have a bachelor's degree and additional graduate level work.

#### Null Hypotheses:

For each of the following, the level of significance for rejecting the null hypotheses will be set at  $p \leq .05$ .

1. Grade Level. There is no significant difference between kindergarten teachers (k) and those teaching non-kindergarten (non-k) grades surveyed, in the following areas:

a. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA).

The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} > 0$$

b. Communication Practices (CP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} > 0$$

c. Volunteer Practices (VP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} > 0$$

d. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_k - \bar{X}_{\text{non-k}} > 0$$

2. Preparation Level. There is no significant difference between teachers who have had a college level course or school district inservice training in

the area of parent involvement (prep=1) and those who have not (prep=0) in the following four areas:

a. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA).

The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 > 0$$

b. Communication Practices (CP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 > 0$$

c. Volunteer Practices (VP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 > 0$$

d. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 \leq 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_0 > 0$$

3. Years Taught. There is no significant difference among the following groups of teachers in the four areas below: Group 1- teachers with 1-3 years of experience; Group 2- teachers with 4-7 years of experience; Group 3- teachers with 8-11 years of experience; Group 4- teachers with 12-16 years of

experience; Group 5- teachers with 17+ years of experience.

- a. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2 = \bar{X}_3 = \bar{X}_4 = \bar{X}_5$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2 \neq \bar{X}_3 \neq \bar{X}_4 \neq \bar{X}_5$$

- b. Communication Practices (CP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2 = \bar{X}_3 = \bar{X}_4 = \bar{X}_5$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2 \neq \bar{X}_3 \neq \bar{X}_4 \neq \bar{X}_5$$

- c. Volunteer Practices (VP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2 = \bar{X}_3 = \bar{X}_4 = \bar{X}_5$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2 \neq \bar{X}_3 \neq \bar{X}_4 \neq \bar{X}_5$$

- d. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement (PHIA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2 = \bar{X}_3 = \bar{X}_4 = \bar{X}_5$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2 \neq \bar{X}_3 \neq \bar{X}_4 \neq \bar{X}_5$$

4. Degree Level. There is no significant difference between those who have a bachelor's degree (DEGL=1) and those who have had graduate work beyond a bachelor's degree (DEGL=2) in the following four areas:

a. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations

(POA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 = 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 \neq 0$$

b. Communication Practices (CP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 = 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 \neq 0$$

c. Volunteer Practices (VP). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 = 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 \neq 0$$

d. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA). The null and alternative hypotheses are:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 = 0$$

$$H_1: \bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2 \neq 0$$

Instrumentation.

This instrument was adapted from Joyce Epstein and Henry Jay Becker's 1987 model from Johns Hopkins University. The original survey was previously used as validation for Joyce Epstein's typology of the 5 types of school and family connections. Page 3 of the 1987 survey was eliminated in order to shorten the survey to

encourage a greater return rate. This page included questions which asked for the teachers' opinions about specific ways of involving families at their grade level. Including this page would ask teachers to make assumptions beyond their classroom. Eliminating this page provided a more accurate description of current practices and attitudes than having teachers make judgments regarding other classrooms in the school. The focus of the current study was mainly on teacher practices and attitudes toward parent involvement in the teacher's own classroom. The other questions provided a sufficient description of teacher attitudes and values toward parent involvement to provide a complete picture. The type and layout was also adjusted to utilize a computer scoring sheet. The survey had 74 questions and was completely voluntary.

#### Procedures for Data Collection.

A letter of explanation (see Appendix B) asking for participation was attached to the survey. Each packet had one survey, one computer answer sheet, and one addressed return envelope. Permission was granted for the packets to be sent through the school mail to every teacher in grades kindergarten, first, and second. The surveys asked for social security numbers on the computer answer sheet to use as unique



follow up, and, thus, there can be no longitudinal study completed. There were 74 questions, and the survey was two and one-half pages long. It was divided into the following sections:

- A. Teacher opinion about parent involvement
- B. Ways teachers contacted families
- C. Ways teachers involve parents in the school building
- D. Frequency and number of volunteers in class
- E. Parent involvement activities teachers value
- F. Teachers' attitudes of what activities parents should do
- G. Teacher estimations of the types of parents involved
- H. General demographic information

#### Data Analysis.

Survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS-X user guide 3rd ed., Chicago: SPSS, Inc., 1988) on the U.N.O. VAX mainframe computer. The SPSS-X programs FREQUENCIES and ONEWAY were used for data analysis.

## Chapter Four

Description of the Sample.

The following is a description of the 258 surveys returned, out of 416 sent out. The kindergarten group, (kindergarten, alternative kindergarten, and pre-first combined), returned 28 percent of the surveys. First grade returned 40 percent and second grade returned 31 percent of the surveys.

There is a fairly even spread of teachers over years taught, with those having taught 17+ years being the largest group at 38 percent. The age of teachers responding was also fairly evenly distributed, with the largest group in the 45+ age group. Ninety-five percent of respondents were female.

Eighty percent of those surveyed had not had a college course in parent involvement, and 85 percent had not taken an Omaha Public School District inservice or training in parent involvement. This definitely is an area to be noted.

Most of the teachers surveyed, 42 percent, held a bachelor's degree, thus being at the beginning of the salary schedule in the number of hours. Those who have work beyond the bachelor's degree were at 58 percent.

### Analyses of Variance.

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were run to examine the six dependent variables: Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA), Communication Practices (CP), Volunteer Practices (VP), Attitudes Toward Parental Involvement at Home (PHIA), General Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement (GAPI), and Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS). Where appropriate, multiple range tests were run using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference method (Tukey, 1977) to test all possible pairwise comparisons of means at the .05 level of significance. For each of the ANOVA's or range tests the statistic was computed on the valid number of cases for that variable within the group. On the variables listed above, missing data on any item making up the variable resulted in that subject being dropped from the analysis. Therefore, the number of subjects per analysis varied by the pattern of missing data on the surveys.

Results of the ANOVA's showed no significant differences by grade level in POA, CP, VP, PHIA, GAPI, and PIMS (see Tables I through VI). Thus, the null hypotheses were accepted (see Table VII for valid n's per grade level for each variable).

TABLE I  
ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA)  
by Grade Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0868	.8825	.3472
Within	229	.0977		
Total	230			

TABLE II

ANOVA: Communication Practice (CP) by Grade Level

---

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0763	.2566	.6129
Within	222	.2974		
Total	223			

---

TABLE III  
ANOVA: Volunteer Practices (VP) by Grade Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	26.6048	2.8343	.0938
Within	199	9.3866		
Total	200			

TABLE IV  
ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA)  
by Grade Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0002	.0021	.9637
Within	243	.0996		
Total	244			

TABLE V  
ANOVA: General Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement (GAPI)  
by Grade Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0003	.0012	.9726
Within	217	.2901		
Total	218			



TABLE VI  
ANOVA: Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS)  
by Grade Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	4.5889	.6938	.4058
Within	208	6.6138		
Total	209			

TABLE VII  
Dependent Variables by Grade Level

	Kindergarten* (n <sub>1</sub> =69)		Non-kindergarten* (n <sub>2</sub> =176)	
<u>Variable</u>	$\bar{x}$	valid n **	$\bar{x}$	valid n **
POA	3.7582	65	3.7151	166
CP	2.5548	62	2.5136	162
VP	15.8627	51	15.0267	150
PHIA	3.7884	69	3.7864	176
GAPI	3.0777	62	3.0805	157
PIMS	11.2417	60	10.9144	150

\*Kindergarten is kindergarten, pre-first grade, and alternative kindergarten.  
 Non-kindergarten is first and second grade.

\*\*Valid n is the number of valid cases (with no missing survey information on either the variable or grade level).

There were no significant differences by the number of years taught in POA, VP, PHIA, or GAPI (see Tables VIII through XIII). For these categories the null hypotheses were accepted. However, there was a significant difference in CP ( $F=3.5286$ ,  $p=.0081$ ). The Tukey HSD test showed that the difference was between Group 2 (4-7 years of teaching experience) and Group 4 (12-16 years of teaching experience) with Group 4 being higher. There was also a significant difference in PIMS ( $F=3.2778$ ,  $p=.0124$ ). The Tukey HSD test showed that the difference was between Group 2 (4-7 years) and Group 5 (17 or more years) with Group 5 being higher. Both of these group differences, while statistically significant, do not appear to have much practical meaning. For these two, the null hypotheses were rejected, thus accepting the alternative hypotheses (see Table XIV for valid n's per level of years taught for each variable).

ANOVA's on the six dependent variables by level of preparation were run as well. However, due to a computer program error, the analyses were dropped from the report of results.

There were no significant differences on POA, VP, PHIA, or GAPI (see Tables XV through XX) by degree level, again accepting the null hypotheses. Degree

TABLE VIII  
ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA)  
by Years Taught

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	.1064	1.0360	.3893
Within	235	.1027		
Total	239			

TABLE IX  
ANOVA: Communication Practices (CP) by Years Taught

---

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	.9923	3.5286	.0081
Within	228	.2812		
Total	232			

---

TABLE X  
ANOVA: Volunteer Practices (VP) by Years Taught

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	14.8924	1.6080	.1735
Within	206	9.2611		
Total	210			

TABLE XI  
ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA)  
by Years Taught

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	.0534	.5273	.7158
Within	250	.1012		
Total	254			

TABLE XII  
ANOVA: General Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement (GAPI)  
by Years Taught

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	.2310	.8299	.5074
Within	222	.2783		
Total	226			



TABLE XIII  
ANOVA: Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS)  
by Years Taught

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	4	21.6031	3.2778	.0124
Within	216	6.5907		
Total	220			

TABLE XIV

Dependent Variables Means by Years Taught

Variable	1-3		4-7		8-11		12-16		17+	
	$\bar{x}$	n*	$\bar{x}$	n*	$\bar{x}$	n*	$\bar{x}$	n*	$\bar{x}$	n*
POA	3.6952	30	3.6639	51	3.7106	39	3.7857	26	3.7857	94
CP	2.3533	30	2.3736	53	2.5842	38	2.7417	24	2.6091	88
VP	14.7826	23	15.4130	46	16.4839	31	15.0000	25	15.0116	86
PHIA	3.7765	34	3.734	55	3.7744	39	3.8143	28	3.8061	99
GAPI	3.2110	28	3.1164	50	3.0199	32	3.0979	26	3.0270	91
PIMS	10.5655	28	10.4167	48	10.6970	33	10.2424	22	11.7389	90

\*Valid n is the number of valid cases (with no missing survey information on either the variable or number of years taught).

TABLE XV  
ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA)  
by Degree Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0000	.0004	.9850
Within	240	.1027		
Total	241			

TABLE XVI

ANOVA: Communication Practices (CP) by Degree Level

---

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	1.4341	4.9885	.0265
Within	233	.2875		
Total	234			

---

TABLE XVII

ANOVA: Volunteer Practices (VP) by Degree Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.9768	.1040	.7473
Within	210	9.3886		
Total	211			

TABLE XVIII

ANOVA: Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA)  
by Degree Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.0135	.1344	.7143
Within	255	.1004		
Total	256			

TABLE XIX  
ANOVA: General attitudes toward Parent Involvement (GAPI)  
by Degree Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	.2830	.9947	.3197
Within	227	.2845		
Total	228			

TABLE XX  
ANOVA: Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS)  
by Degree Level

S.V.	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Between	1	29.1287	4.3245	.0387
Within	220	6.7357		
Total	221			



level was defined as either bachelor's degree only or bachelor's plus graduate credit. There was a significant difference in the area of CP ( $F=4.9885$ ,  $p=.0265$ ) and also in the area of PIMS ( $F=4.3245$ ,  $p=.0389$ ). In CP and PIMS the null hypotheses were rejected, thus accepting the alternative hypotheses (see Table XXI for valid  $n$ 's per degree level for each variable).

Overall, any differences observed on the variables of interest were not great. The  $F$  ratios in the one-way ANOVA'S indicated that the population of teachers in the Omaha Public Schools is more uniform than it is different. In general, the sample can be described as reflecting one population due to the relatively high degree of similarity on the six dependent variables shown among the various subgroups formed from the teacher demographic information. The following section will present these similarities.

#### Frequencies.

A second analysis of the data was performed by examining response frequency tables for each of the survey items for each of the dependent variables. The following discussion will examine each area and the responses to each question by the population as a whole.

TABLE XXI  
Dependent Variables by Degree Level

<u>Variable</u>	Degree Level			
	DEGL = 1		DEGL = 2	
	$\bar{x}$	valid n*	$\bar{x}$	valid n*
POA	3.7271	100	3.7264	142
CP	2.4420	100	2.6000	135
VP	15.3605	86	15.2222	126
PHIA	3.7759	108	3.7906	149
GAPI	3.1125	97	3.0413	132
PIMS	10.5634	92	11.2987	130

I. Attitudes Toward Parent Obligations (POA):  
questions 48,49,51,52,and 57-59.

Ninety-eight percent of the teachers in the sample agreed that parents should send students to school ready to learn. Furthermore, 99 percent agreed that parents should teach children to behave well. Ninety-four percent agreed that parents should encourage their children to volunteer in class. Most, 97 percent, agreed that parents should know what children are expected to learn each year. Ninety-seven percent agreed that parents should talk to teachers about problems the children are facing at home. Ninety-eight percent agreed that parents should attend assemblies and other special events at school, while 94 percent agreed that parents should take children to places and events in the community.

Obviously, the teachers in this sample were in high agreement about what obligations parents have toward their child's learning.

II. Communication Practices (CP): questions  
14-18.

Because of the ambiguity of the wording, this section was impossible to determine if the responses were according to the percent of parents contacted or

percent of the time parents were contacted in this manner. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers surveyed contacted parents by memo or letter 50-100 percent. Half, 53 percent, contacted parents by phone 50-100 percent. Fifty-two percent contacted parents informally at school 50-100 percent. Eighty-three percent met parents for a formal conference 50-100 percent. (This may be a result of a district-wide policy requiring that parent-teacher conferences be held in all schools.) Most, 95 percent, conducted home visits less than 25 percent.

It appears that most teachers used contact by memo or letter and formal conferences as the most frequent means of contact. Home visits are the least used means of contact for teachers.

### III. Volunteer Practices (VP): questions 19-27.

The following refers to ways in which teachers use volunteers in their own classrooms. First, 53 percent of teachers surveyed did not have parents work in the classroom, yet 46 percent did. Second, 61 percent did not have parents listen to children read, while 37 percent did. Then, 67 percent did not have parents read to students. Ninety percent did not have parents

grade papers. Furthermore, 56 percent did not have parents tutor students, yet, 43 percent did.

Eighty-seven percent did have parents go on field trips or help at parties; however, 58 percent did not have parents give talks on careers or hobbies.

Teachers seemed to agree most on their use of the practice of parental attendance on field trips or parties. For the other classroom volunteer practices, teachers were fairly evenly divided on their use versus non-use of these practices.

#### IV. Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement at Home (PHIA): questions 50, and 53-56.

Ninety-seven percent of the teachers agreed that parents should set up a quiet place and time for studying at home, while 97 percent also agreed that parents should monitor their children's homework. Ninety-nine percent agreed that parents should talk to children about what they are learning in school. Teachers surveyed also agreed, 98 percent, that parents should help children practice spelling, vocabulary, or other skills at home. Ninety-eight percent agreed that parents should ask teachers for specific ideas on how to help their children at home.

In this area, teachers in this sample clearly believed it is very important for parents to be involved with their children's learning activities at home. There was very little disagreement on these questions.

V. General Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement (GAPI): questions 1,2, and 4-12.

Eighty-four percent agreed that parent involvement is important for good school climate. Eighty-three percent believed that some parents already know how to help their children on school work at home, with 82 percent having agreed that every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school. Eighty-six percent supported the idea that all parents could learn ways to assist their children on schoolwork at home, if shown how. Eighty-seven percent noted that parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students. Recognition or compensation for time spent on parent involvement activities had 77 percent agreement. Some, 42 percent, noted that parents at their school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels, while 56 percent disagreed. Fifty-seven percent disagreed with the statement that teachers cannot take the time to involve parents in very useful

ways with 32 percent having agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 64 percent felt that teachers need in-service training to understand and implement effective parent involvement practices. Eighty-six percent agreed that parent involvement is important for student success in learning and staying in school. Finally, 51 percent agreed that at the grade level taught, family and school connections are important on topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and drop out prevention.

Responses to these questions indicated a generally positive attitude toward parent involvement. Parent involvement was seen as important and teachers believed that many families have the ability to help their children at home. Responses also showed that teachers think parent involvement can increase teachers' effectiveness. Most also agreed that parent involvement is important for student success and keeping students in school.

Teachers in the sample were about evenly split in their endorsement of the statement that parents want to be more involved than they currently are. The sample was also fairly evenly divided on the idea that teachers do not have the time to effectively utilize parents in the classroom, with the majority disagreeing with this statement.

VI. Parent Involvement at My School (PIMS):

questions 3,13,60,61,62, and 64-67.

An active and effective parent-teacher organization was acknowledged in 63 percent of the responses. Seventy-one percent noted that, compared to other schools, their school had the best climate for teachers, students, and parents. Sixty-nine percent felt that most parents at their school showed some or a lot of positive involvement.

Questions 61,62 and 64-67 involved judgments about the types of parents involved in the school. Sixty-two percent indicated some or a lot of positive involvement from working parents; 37 percent indicated some or a lot of positive involvement from less educated parents; 54 percent indicated some or a lot of positive involvement from single parents; 57 percent saw some or a lot of positive involvement from young parents; 48 percent indicated some or a lot of positive involvement from transfer parents; 44 percent indicated some or a lot of positive involvement from other adults the child lives with. Except for the judgment about less educated parents, the sample showed a fairly even split on most of the questions on this variable.



## Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications.

This study indicated that, as a whole, the population of teachers in the Omaha Public School District has more similarities than differences when examining the areas of attitudes toward and practices of parent involvement. The surveys showed teachers value parent involvement. The majority of teachers agreed upon the benefits and values of involving parents. However, there was some discrepancy when deciding whether parents want to be involved more than they actually are now.

A very high agreement was shown by teachers on the obligations parents have for establishing home conditions conducive to learning. The agreement was 94 percent and above. This high agreement suggests that teachers, in general, expect particular home involvement practices of parents. When examining the obligations of schools and communications, the amount of agreement is not as easily interpreted. A variety of methods is used to contact parents, and these methods are used to varying degrees. The most common type of contact for teachers in meeting with their parents is the formal parent-teacher conference. In the Omaha Public Schools, this is a district wide occurrence, required twice a year. Home visits are rarely used.

Volunteers in the building are used in a variety of ways and to a varying extent. The survey indicated that 53 percent of teachers did not have parents work in the classroom. The responses, however, do not indicate whether the lack of parental involvement in the classroom is because of the teacher's policy against parents in the classroom or because of parents volunteering.

Teachers also highly value parents being involved in learning activities at home. Agreement ranged between 97-99 percent in support of the need for parents to be involved at home.

In the area of general attitudes toward parent involvement, the majority of opinions were in support of parent involvement. The only question which resulted in a somewhat low frequency of support was in the area of whether teachers believed parents at their school wanted to be more involved than they currently are. Approximately 56 percent said parents did not want to be more involved.

Parent Involvement at My School also showed that 63-69 percent of the teachers thought that their school had a positive type of involvement.

Although teachers' attitudes are highly supportive of parent involvement practices and the value of parents being involved in their children's education, there are actually

very few who have had any preparation for this practice. The survey showed that 80 percent had no college course in parent involvement and 85 percent had no school district inservice in this area. This would indicate a definite need for further work to be done in order to help teachers grow in this area. This study suggests that positive attitudes and support toward parent involvement exists among these Omaha Public School District teachers. With further training the variety of types and the frequency of practices would very likely increase. This would appear to be an area with a great potential for growth.

Most teachers (80 percent) agreed that it was important for teachers to have the opportunity to work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials. This practice would be an opportunity for the school district to provide inservice training as well as an opportunity to provide teachers with time to actually work together in planning for parent involvement. Sixty percent of those surveyed agreed that teachers do need in-service training to understand and implement effective parent involvement practices. These opportunities provided by the school district would also show that the district values parent involvement and the time necessary to develop it.

A majority of teachers also felt that teachers should receive recognition or compensation for time spent on parent involvement activities. This is another way the school district could show support of the importance of parent involvement.

This study was done in an urban school district, in a mostly rural state. Although the study is limited in its usefulness in comparing results, it will be most useful to this school district in future planning.

#### Further Study.

This survey involved only teachers in grades kindergarten through second. Further study may involve all grade levels within the schools. Since the population of teachers in grades kindergarten through second was more uniform than different, including intermediate grade level teachers might complete the whole picture. Among a wider sample there may be more variety in attitudes toward practices of parent involvement.

This survey focused on teacher attitudes and practices of parent involvement and was self-administered. A more in-depth view might be attained by also surveying parents on

their views of parent involvement and the practices they see. The two views could then be compared.

By recording school demographics, further study might investigate differences between schools with different socioeconomic backgrounds.

In further study, the preparation level should be analyzed with more accurate preparation level data. This area warrants further analysis.

Additional analysis of this data would be more thorough by using a different technique than the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The one-way analysis was used, as most variables had only two levels to distinguish between. The multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) would provide a better examination of the data.

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APPENDIX A

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Do not put your name on the marking sheet.
2. Use only a number 2 pencil.
3. Please fill in your social security number in the identification number box.  
(This is a unique number for our record keeping only.)
4. Please answer every question. Don't skip any. Make no extra marks on the answer sheet.

NOTE: In all questions in this booklet, "parent" means the adult in the family who has the most contact with school about the child.

-----

A. The first questions ask for your professional judgment about parent involvement.

A = Strongly Disagree    B = Somewhat Disagree  
C = Somewhat Agree    D = Strongly Agree

1. Parent involvement is important for good school climate.
2. Some parents already know how to help their children on school work at home.
3. This school has an active and effective parent organization (e.g., PTA or PTO).
4. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school.
5. All parents could learn ways to assist their children on schoolwork at home, if shown how.
6. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.
7. Teachers should receive recognition or compensation for time spent on parent involvement activities.
8. Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels.
9. Teachers cannot take the time to involve parents in very useful ways.
10. Teachers need in-service training to understand and implement effective parent involvement practices.
11. Parent involvement is important for student success in learning and staying in school.
12. At the grade level I teach, family and school connections are important on topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and drop out prevention.
13. Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents.

B. Teachers contact their students' families in different ways. Please indicate whether you used these practices last year with the families of your students?

Parents contacted: A = Less than 25%    B = 25-49%    C = 50-75%    D = 100%

14. contacted by memo or letter
15. contacted by phone
16. talked with informally at school
17. met in formal, individual conferences
18. visited at home about student's work

C. The next few questions concern some of the ways teachers involve parents as volunteers at the school building. Please check the ways that you are using volunteers in your own classroom this year.

MARK: A = yes, they do    B = no, they do not

In my CLASSROOM, volunteers. . .

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 19. work in the classroom                        | 22. grade papers                      |
| 20. listen to children read aloud                | 23. tutor children in specific skills |
| 21. read to the children                         | 24. help on trips or at parties       |
| 25. give talks (e.g., on careers, hobbies, etc.) |                                       |

D. THIS YEAR, how many different parents or other volunteers help you in your classroom?

26. Number of different volunteers who assist me in an average week = \_\_\_\_.

A = 0    B = 1-2    C = 3-4    D = 5-6    E = 7 or more



G. Right now, how would you rate the nature of the involvement of the following groups of parents?

MARK: At the present time the involvement at this school. . .

A = NO INVOLVEMENT                      C = SOME POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT  
B = LITTLE POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT      D = A LOT OF POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT

60. Most parents at your school...  
61. Working parents...  
62. Less educated parents...  
63. Parents of the children in other K-2 classrooms in the school...  
64. Single parents...  
65. Young parents...  
66. Parents of transfer or new students...  
67. Other adults with whom the child lives...

H. General Information

68. How many years have you taught?

A = 1-3    B = 4-7    C = 8-11    D = 12-16    E = 17 OR MORE

69. A = MALE    B = FEMALE

70. Age: A = 20-29    B = 30-34    C = 35-39    D = 40-44    E = OVER 45

71. I have had a college course in parent involvement. A = YES B = NO

72. OPS has provided an inservice on parent involvement that I have taken. A = YES B = No

73. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

A = BA or BS degree                      D = Master's + 30

B = BA + 18 credits                      E = Ph.D or Ed.D

C = Master's

74. What grade do you teach?

A = Kindergarten                      D = First Grade

B = Alternative Kindergarten    E = Second Grade

C = Prefirst

**APPENDIX B**

Pawnee School  
March 21, 1991

Dear Teacher:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha working on my thesis on parent involvement in the Omaha Public Schools. Please help by taking the time to complete this survey. I appreciate your time and cooperation!

All information you provide is completely confidential. No teacher's responses will ever be individually identified only a summary of group data will be shared with the district. I greatly need a response from every teacher to make the results useful.

Please complete this survey with a number 2 pencil and return it to Donna Dobson, Pawnee Elementary, through the school mail by April 15, 1991.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely,

Donna Dobson