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**THE IMPACT OF A PARENT-CHILD PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM ON
THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF
PRIMARY TEACHERS IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**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

Virginia L. Gerhardt

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF A PARENT-CHILD PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM ON THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF PRIMARY TEACHERS IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This study is a causal-comparative examination of the impact of a pre-kindergarten program with a mandatory parent involvement component on primary teachers' perceptions, practices and attitudes toward parent involvement in a public school district located in a metropolitan area. A 56 question survey, based upon one from the publication Hopkins Survey of Schools and Family Connections, Questionnaires for Teachers, Parents and Students, was sent to 285 primary teachers of kindergarten, first, second and third grades. The survey was self-reporting with guaranteed anonymity. Independent variables included the presence of a pre-kindergarten program and the grade level taught. Dependent variables included perceptions, practices and attitudes towards parent involvement.

Both one-way and two-way analyses of variance were run to examine the variables. The results of the survey indicated that the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten currently has no impact on primary teachers' perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement in the Omaha Public School District. Differences were found by grade level taught in the practices teachers use to involve parents. Kindergarten teachers showed a higher use of parent involvement practices than first, second or third grade teachers. No difference was seen in the grade level taught in either perceptions or attitudes. Overall, the survey indicated that primary teachers perceived parent involvement as an important part of the school curriculum. However, teachers showed more unity than diversity in their perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement regardless of the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program within a school building.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION:

The practice of involving parents in the education of their children is not a new concept in the field of education today. Parent participation in some form has been encouraged by classroom teachers and administrators ever since colonial times (Weston, 1989). Berger (1991) believes that today's parent involvement practices "have their roots in parent involvement and education of yesterday" (p. 209). The variety of parent involvement practices commonly used in schools today includes many traditional practices such as parent-teacher conferences, Parent-Teacher-Associations (P.T.A.) and parent volunteers in the classroom as well as more innovative approaches such as home visits, parent educational workshops and home learning activities (Epstein, 1987, 1988; Farquhar, 1991). Whatever the approach used, it is generally agreed that a positive on-going home/school collaboration has a positive effect on the academic achievement of students (Herman & Yeh, 1983; Haynes, Comer & Hamilton-Lee, 1989). The education of America's children should not be solely the responsibility of either teachers or parents; it should be a collaborative effort by both (Sandfort, 1987; Henderson, 1988; Berger, 1991).

Over the past three decades, a variety of early childhood programs having a parent involvement component as a significant part of the program have been implemented. One of these programs is Headstart. Follow-up studies of children and families involved in the Headstart program clearly indicate the positive effect of this program on the lives of the children involved as well as their families (Butler, 1989; Leik & Chalkey, 1990).

The involvement of parents in the education of the preschool-aged children is also seen by some as a way to advance the goals of America 2000, an education strategy

prepared by the U. S. Department of Education. This strategy was designed to help all communities realize and achieve six goals which set national priorities for education in the 1990s. The first goal, which has been set as the cornerstone for successfully achieving the other five goals, states that "by the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn" (Farquhar, 1991, pg. iii). Flaxman and Inger (1991) and Chafel (1990) believe that parent involvement will play a key role in the effort to meet this goal.

In order to meet the challenge of school readiness for all young children, school districts throughout the country are beginning to offer preschool programs for some of the four year old children in their attendance areas. School districts in Illinois (Schmitt, 1986), Minnesota (Kristensen & Billman, 1987), Missouri (Hausman, 1989) and Tennessee (Lueder, 1989) have lead the way by implementing a variety of early childhood programs with parent involvement components. Funding for these programs comes from federal funds such as Chapter I, local tax dollars and tuition. Each of the public school districts within the Omaha metropolitan area- -Bellevue, Millard, Papillion-LaVista, Ralston, District 66 and Omaha- -offers an early childhood program for four year olds within the school system. Literature shows that the practice of involving parents is beneficial to the school, parents, students and teachers. With school districts adding these early childhood programs which have strong parentinvolvement components, it is important to investigate how these programs affect the perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement of teachers at different grade levels within the school district. Are these early childhood programs setting the stage for teachers of future grade levels to develop a strong parent involvement component?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions, practices and attitudes towards parent involvement of two groups of primary level teachers in the Omaha PublicSchools: those teaching in schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten

program and those teaching in schools which do not have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program.

Differences may exist between these two groups of teachers because of the influence of a mandatory parent involvement component which is implemented by Pre-Kindergarten teachers in the schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program.

Definition of Terms

Parent involvement is defined as the practices teachers utilize to involve parents in their child's education in both the home and school.

A primary teacher is one who teaches kindergarten, first, second, or third grade.

Parents are defined as the adult(s) with whom the child lives and the individuals who are responsible for the interaction with school personnel.

Barriers are defined as factors that interfere with positive, effective parent involvement activities.

A Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten is defined as a half day program for four-year-old children in the Omaha Public Schools. The history of this program and its goals are fully described in Appendix A.

English as a Second Language (ESL) is defined as a special program designed to help non-English speaking children develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in English.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formed for this research study:

1. There is a significant difference between primary teachers teaching in schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program and primary teachers teaching in schools which do not have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program in the following three areas:

- a. perceptions of the school climate
- b. amount and type of parent involvement practices utilized
- c. attitudes toward parent involvement activities

2. There is a significant difference between primary teachers teaching in schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program and primary teachers teaching in schools which do not have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program in the following three areas when the responses are analyzed by grade level- kindergarten, first, second and third:

- a. perceptions of the school climate
- b. amount and type of parent involvement practices utilized
- c. attitudes toward parent involvement activities

Limitations

In the study, there were a number of limitations which would affect the overall application of the results of the study. One limitation was that the data was collected from the Omaha Public Schools, therefore the results may not be generalizable to all school districts. Also, this study was directed at the parent involvement practices of primary teachers; therefore, the results can not be generalized to the intermediate grade levels (grades 4, 5, 6).

The sample populations were randomly selected from the total population of primary teachers in the Omaha Public Schools. Therefore, the age, gender, educational level and the number of years of teaching experience may not be truly representative of all primary teachers in the Omaha Public schools.

The Omaha Public Schools are involved in busing to achieve desegregation within their elementary schools. In 60 percent of the elementary schools, either the second or third grades are bused out thus eliminating that grade within a school. Due to the method by which the sample population was selected, the number of teachers being asked to

participate in the survey may not be equal at all grade levels-kindergarten, first, second and third.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Parent involvement is an important component of the educational process for every child; this involvement is important since parents are a child's first true teacher. Although parent involvement is not a new aspect in the field of education, the current trend is emphasizing the importance of parent involvement in the educational process as a way to improve our schools and increase the achievement level of students. There is widespread agreement in the teaching profession that the positive collaboration of the home and school is necessary to provide children with the support and encouragement needed to be successful.

Parent involvement has been around since the beginning of schools; however, in the last two decades, educators have had a renewed interest in the importance of parent involvement in the educational process, especially in the preschool years. This review of related literature describes what parent involvement is, the historical overview of parent involvement, the various types of parent involvement, barriers which interfere with effective parent involvement, the teacher's role in parent involvement, the benefits of parent involvement and a description of several successful parent involvement programs. Although there is no research on the parent involvement practice initiated by primary level teachers in schools with pre-kindergarten programs, a review of several studies on parent involvement practices will conclude this chapter.

Parent Involvement

A cursory view of parent involvement might result in the notion that parent involvement is an easy concept to understand and implement. However, this is not true. Parent involvement is more than being physically involved in school activities. Swick (1984) describes the involvement process as "a highly challenging system of human interactions with effective implementation dependent upon careful attention to a number of sensitive

variables" (p. 113). Some of these variables are communication, understanding, flexibility and organization. Another common misconception is that parent involvement has to take place at school to be effective. Becker and Epstein (1982) found that parental supervision of home learning activities may have the most educational significance of all the types of parent involvement. In view of the fact that parents are a child's first teacher, parent involvement is actually a developmental process which begins at birth and continues throughout the life cycle (Swick, 1984). Swick (1984) also maintains that this developmental process rose into a collaborative partnership between parents and teachers through a variety of mutually supportive activities such as parent volunteers and home learning activities that improve the educational environment and build a positive home-school relationship.

Parent Involvement in Formal Education

Mintz (1989) suggests that the involvement of parents in the education of their offspring was around even before the first settlers set foot on American soil. If children were to receive any type of education at all, it was the responsibility of the family and it took place in the home environment (Wissburn & Eckart, 1992). The kind of education that children received was dependent on the interest and abilities of parents as well as their access to printed material (Berger, 1991). With parents serving as role models, children learned communication skills, values, traditions and knowledge which allowed children to be functional, productive individuals in the community. In America, Parents continued to be the primary educators until the early 1900s when they began to leave most of the responsibility of educating their children to the local schools. As the schools took over the responsibility of educating children, the level of parent involvement in the educational process began to diminish. However, parents continued to show support for education through more formal parent-teacher organizations (Wissburn & Eckart, 1992).

For the first half of the twentieth century, the education of the young child was the shared responsibility of the home and the local school. Until the age of five or six, most children were at home with their mothers. The kindergarten or first grade year marked the beginning of formal education for the child as well as the beginning of a long term relationship between parents and school. For the most part, this relationship was a positive one during this time period. There was trust and mutual respect between the home and the school (Comer, 1986).

During the second half of the twentieth century, 1950s to the present, the home-school relationship has been through some turbulent times. Many changes in the way Americans experience life including the increasing numbers of working mothers, rising divorce rates, teenage pregnancy occurring at younger ages, children in daycare centers, increased family mobility and financial instability which contribute to many families being under stress (Flaxman & Inger, 1991; Morrison, 1978). Along with the growing changes in family situations, other factors such as technological advances (the invention of television, video cameras, cable television networks), advances in the modes of transportation and space exploration have had an impact on the teacher/parent relationship. Technological advances influenced the development of attitudes and values in children that were different from those held by parents and teachers. This caused the level of trust and agreement that existed between the home and school to decline (Berger, 1991; Comer, 1986).

At the same time, the focus on poverty and its devastating effect on children brought about new interest in parent involvement and led educators to look for more effective ways to involve the family in the educational process. Out of these concerns came several programs, the first of which was Headstart, a federally funded program developed in 1965 to meet the needs of children whose family income was below the poverty level. The first summer session, implemented in 1965, enrolled a half million children through-

out the United States. Funding for Headstart programs has been continual since 1965; however, the program is still unable to serve all children who are eligible (Morrison, 1991). The first Headstart program was unique in several ways. Most notably, it was a comprehensive, developmental program which had several components: education, health, social services, career development for parents, staff and administration, and parent involvement. The Headstart program had a strong commitment to involving parents with the philosophy that children's lives can not be improved without involving parents. An evaluation of Headstart indicated that participation in the program has a positive short-, mid-, and long-term effects. Some positive effects included a reduced number of children assigned to special education, a reduced number of children who were retained, and a greater number of children with higher math and reading scores. Children who attended Headstart surpassed their peers on I. Q. tests for up to 3 years after completing the program and they attributed their achievement to the development of self-competence and self-esteem. Parents were also positively affected; involvement in the program improved life skills, job training, and employment which resulted in more satisfaction with their lives (Hubbell, 1983; Gullo, 1989; Morrison, 1991).

Another program for preschool-aged children which is almost as well known as Headstart is the Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Curriculum materials and methods used in the original program as well as a variety of other resource materials are presently marketed and distributed widely by the High/Scope Foundation in Ypsilanti. The program itself is now commonly referred to as the High/Scope program. The primary goals of the program were to promote children's intellectual and social development. A key component of the program was parent involvement, chiefly in the form of weekly home visits by the preschool teachers and aides. Beginning in 1962, the Perry Preschool Project enrolled a group of children who would today be characterized as

at-risk due primarily to low family incomes. The children were randomly placed into two groups: preschool and nonpreschool. A longitudinal study was done on these two groups of children as well as on other children who attended the preschool in subsequent years. Data collected from the group of preschool subjects at age 19 indicated that the preschool program had lasting beneficial effects in 3 areas: scholastic success, socioeconomic success and social responsibility. Results showed improvement in cognitive performance during early childhood education, improvement in scholastic placement and achievement during the school years; decreased delinquency and crime, decreased use of welfare as well as a decrease in the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Data also showed an increase in high school graduation rates, frequency of enrollment in post-secondary programs and employment (Schweinhart et al., 1985; Harper, 1987; Morrison, 1991). The data from this study have produced some of the best evidence to date on the positive effects of a carefully designed preschool program which also includes parent involvement.

Berger (1991) sums up the importance of parents in the educational process by stating "Children are the nation's future. The hope of that future lies in the acknowledgement by schools and society alike that parents must be involved with their children's education if our nation is to continue flourishing" (p. 217). Since 1965, the number of parent-child early childhood programs has increased and it seems likely that these programs will continue to be important (Berger, 1991).

Types of Parent Involvement

Based on surveys of educators, parents and students as well as other research studies, Epstein (1987, 1988) identified five types of parent involvement that increase home-school partnerships and reduce the potential discontinuity between home and school. In the review of related literature, several types of parent involvement were mentioned. While there appears to be little agreement on the most effective types of parent involve-

ment , the most frequently recommended ways of involving parents appear to be covered in Epstein's five types. Epstein's five types are as follows:

Basic Obligations of Parents

In this first type of involvement, parents provide for the basic needs and the general well-being of their children. Most parents accomplish this independently; however, schools play active roles in assisting parents to develop positive home conditions and practices that affect school achievement.

Basic Obligations of Schools

The second type of involvement is defined as the communication from school to home. This communication can be either written or verbal. Examples of these types of communication are monthly newsletters or telephone calls.

Parent Involvement at School

The third type of involvement is defined as the type of participation which brings the parents into the school for activities, programs and volunteer work.

Parent Involvement in Learning

The fourth type of involvement is defined as parent assistance with learning activities at home with or without the direction of the teacher.

Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

The fifth and final type of involvement is defined as parent involvement in governance and advocacy. This type of involvement includes parents in the decision-making process and governance groups such as Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.), Parent Teacher Organization (P.T.O.) or Parent Advisory Council (P.A.C.).

Although Epstein (1987) has identified five types of involvement, that does not mean that these are the only types that can be used or are effective; the type, format, frequencies and location of parent involvement activities may vary from school to school. Each school has its own individual needs so there is no one recipe or blueprint that can be

applied to each school setting (Hester, 1989). A comprehensive parent involvement program may effectively use all five types of involvement to get all parents involved in the education of their children as well as to meet the goals for improvement of school programs, teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Epstein, 1987).

Barriers to Effective Parent Involvement

Despite the interest of both educators and parents in parent involvement, there are a number of barriers that hinder or prevent effective communication and partnerships between parents and schools. Parents' influence and involvement in today's schools continues to decline according to Flaxman & Inger (1991). Chavkin (1989) believes that changes in the American family have contributed to building barriers between the home and school; increasing divorce rates, a rise in the number of single parent families, working mothers and the number of families below the poverty level compounded by factors such as lack of transportation, lack of time for both parents and teachers, lack of adequate childcare, negative attitudes of educators towards parents and a lack of knowledge, materials and funding for parent involvement programs have influenced and even created barriers that have prevented or interfered with the development and implementation of effective parent involvement programs. Chavkin (1989) describes four additional barriers to effective parent involvement: the lack of a precise definition of parent involvement, the lack of written policies, insufficient training in the area of parent involvement and the lack of a multicultural perspective.

First of all, the lack of a precise definition of parent involvement can be a barrier. Although there is a general agreement on what the concept of parent involvement is, educators and parents may imply different meanings when using the term parent involvement. Chavkin (1989) believes that a consensus on the exact definition of parent involvement by educators and parents is vitally important to meet the needs of children, parents

and educators as well as to prevent more barriers to effective parent involvement from being erected.

Secondly, despite the fact that educators have talked about parent involvement for many years, very few schools or school districts have any sort of written policies. The lack of written policies has resulted in inconsistent and sometimes inappropriate parent/school involvement. Nardine and Morris (1991) believe that without written policies at the local, state and national levels, educators have not given the development and implementation of parent involvement programs priority. Without these written policies, issues such as teacher and parent roles and responsibilities are not addressed resulting in negative experiences that are ineffective for the school, the teachers and the families involved (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Third, the lack of training for teachers and administrators has also created barriers for effectively working with parents (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Chavkin, 1989; Greenberg, 1989). Greenberg (1989) states that many teacher institutions fail to provide teachers with the history, theory and information needed to enable them to implement appropriate parent involvement activities. Beginning teachers may also be ill-equipped to work comfortably with parents from diverse backgrounds (Greenberg, 1989). Galinsky (1988) believes that tension may exist between parents and educators because sometimes educators lack respect for, or underestimate parents' skills and abilities. In any case, there is general agreement that the lack of training in parent involvement is a major obstacle to effective home-school relationships.

Fourth, the lack of a multicultural perspective on the part of both teachers and parents has built barriers to effective parent involvement. Lack of knowledge of cultural diversity has prevented educators from treating all parents as equals. Greenberg (1989) states that social class, race and gender negatively influence many educator's efforts to include parents. In their study of inner-city schools in Chicago, Menacker, Hurwitz and Weldon

(1988) found that teachers are resistant to involving low-class minority parents. Becker and Epstein (1982) agree that teacher resistance is an important factor in the lack of involvement of parents.

Changes in family life have distanced some parents from schools. With the increasing number of single parent families and the need to work for survival, it is often difficult for parents to become involved in school activities. But regardless of family patterns, socioeconomic and educational background, parents are interested in their children's education (Chavkin, 1989). Because of the various barriers described, parent involvement programs do not always reach those who most need to be involved. Programs need to be developed that break down these barriers between low income, culturally diverse families and schools. (Flaxman & Inger, 1991). Epstein (1986) warns that "by limiting the communications and collaborative activities, teachers reinforce the boundaries that separate the two institutions" (p. 293).

Teacher Roles

Teachers play an important role in bridging the gap between home and school (Greenberg, 1989). In their 1981 nationwide survey, the National Education Association found that 94% of teachers felt that there needed to be more home-school interaction (Rich, 1987). Another survey done in Maryland by Becker and Epstein (1982) found that 75% of the teachers surveyed supported the concept of parent involvement. However, the particular types of parent involvement programs developed by each teacher were related to each teacher's attitude, training and experience (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Many of the teachers surveyed were unable to design and implement parent involvement activities and the most common reason given was lack of preservice training (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Greenberg, 1989). Other factors which affect the development of effective parent involvement are the attitudes and beliefs of teachers themselves and school administrators (McLaughlin & Shields, 1989). From their investigations, Mitchell (1989) and

Williams and Chavkin (1989) maintain that school climate and administrative support have a major influence on the nature of home/school interaction and how teachers respond to the needs of their families.

According to Swick (1991), teachers have been encouraged to view their role as encompassing a partnership with all parents. As teachers take the initiative to develop and promote parent involvement, they are sharing their teaching responsibility with the most significant teachers, the parents (Greenberg, 1989). To successfully share the responsibility of educating children, Swick (1991) states that the teacher must be flexible, sensitive, reliable and accessible. Educators need to remember that whatever their socioeconomic status, most parents are concerned and want to be involved in their children's education (McLaughlin & Shields, 1987; Lindle, 1989). The roles taken by the teacher and the parents must be unique but complementary (Swick (1991). Flaxman and Inger (1987) believe that now, more than ever, meaningful parent involvement is needed to successfully educate all children. Motivated teachers and administrators must assume the role of initiator by implementing a variety of parent involvement strategies (McLaughlin & Shields, 1987).

Benefits of Parent Involvement

Research shows that effective parent involvement yields many benefits. Teachers, children and parents all profit from effective parent involvement programs (Gullo, 1991). Past research studies reveal that parent involvement influences students' academic achievement (Herman & Yeh, 1983; Watson, Brown & Swick, 1983). Hester (1989) states that effective parent involvement programs improve student behavior, increase motivation, improve school attendance and increase parent and community support. As parents become involved, they come to believe they should help, they have a better understanding of school programs and are more supportive of their children at home (Hester, 1989). According to Gullo (1989), parent involvement has had positive effects

on parents in ways other than those related to parenting skills. Findings from a study of Headstart parents indicated that Headstart parents who were more involved were more likely to increase their educational level, increase their economic opportunity through improving job skills and increase their economic self-sufficiency. The research concluded that low-income, minority families gain a great deal from appropriate parental involvement (Gullo, 1989).

Teachers who effectively design and implement parent involvement programs benefit too. Not only is student achievement increased and behavior improved, parents come to recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts and merits and this recognition results in higher ratings of teachers' abilities by parents. Parents become more satisfied with school as a whole (Epstein, 1984, 1986; Hester, 1989). Besides the benefits of parent involvement for students, parents and teachers, all levels of parent involvement enhance the school climate which is an important factor in the educational process (Haynes, Comer, Hamilton-Lee, 1989).

Sample Parent Involvement Programs

Since the beginning of the Headstart program and the Perry Preschool project in the 1960s, a variety of parent involvement programs have been implemented in school districts throughout the United States (Berger, 1991). Several of these programs are described in the following paragraphs.

In Illinois in the early 1980s, the Mascouth Public Schools initiated a program for four-year-olds who were identified as at-risk due primarily to low family incomes. The program involved the parents as the actual teachers in the home environment. Parent meetings provided parents with lesson plans and instructions for working with their children. The basic philosophy of the program was that positive interaction between parent and child in the home environment enhances a child's self-concept which is crucial for success in school. The cost effective program was able to help parents realize the

importance of the home-school partnership and the home environment for their children's success in school (Schmitt, 1986).

The Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education Program (ECFE) was founded in 1974 with the assistance of State Senator Jerome Hughes, a firm believer in lifelong learning (Kristensen & Billman, 1987). This program, which recognizes parents as the first and most important teachers of young children, was designed to offer support and information for all parents and their children from birth to kindergarten entrance and to provide a good early childhood education experience for young children. The program benefits included parents becoming involved in their children's education at an early age. This involvement resulted in parents who were more responsive to school activities and programs for them as well as their children. Parents also learned more positive discipline techniques. The children also benefitted from the ECFE program. The program emphasized self-esteem; the children began to see themselves as successful, competent, valuable individuals. This view of oneself clearly has a positive influence on the learning process (Kristensen & Billman, 1987).

The state of Missouri was the leader in a statutory mandate to provide parent education and family support services in every school district by passing a law in 1984. The Parents as Teachers program (P. A. T.) was designed and piloted in 1981 to enhance child development and scholastic performance by reaching out to families before a child is born. These services were made available for all families with children up to age four. Parent involvement strategies included home visits, parent meetings and resource services (Meyerhoff & White, 1986; Hausman, 1989).

In 1986 in Tennessee, \$1,000,000 was appropriated by the state government to design and implement a statewide parent involvement initiative. The goal of this endeavor was to develop or enhance various parent involvement models in local school districts in order to demonstrate the benefits of a strong partnership between parents, students and

the school. The initiative involved 11 models including a combination of early intervention, public awareness, pre-school readiness, enrichment, parent education and volunteer programs. A survey of the parents involved found the parents enthusiastic about all 11 models. The program also increased the amount of time parents were involved with the schools and their children's education (Lueder, 1989).

In reviewing these parent involvement programs, it is evident that parent involvement in the early years has had a positive impact on children's success in school (Henderson, 1988). The various state programs indicate that many different methods can be utilized to effectively involve parents in the educational process.

Research Studies Related to Parent Involvement

In this review of the literature, no research studies were found on the impact of early childhood programs on the parent involvement practices of elementary teachers in the public schools. This last section will describe research studies that have been done on parent involvement and teacher practices in general.

In 1982, Becker and Epstein studied teacher's attitudes and practices of parent involvement in the Maryland Public Schools. Data collected from a survey of first, third and fifth grade teachers indicated that the majority of teachers had a positive attitude towards parent involvement. Although Becker and Epstein (1982) found teachers having favorable attitudes towards parent involvement, the study also revealed that the amount and type of parent involvement initiated by each individual teacher varied. Attitude, training, school climate, grade level taught and educational level of parents influenced which techniques each individual teacher used to involve parents. Becker and Epstein (1982) also found that the teachers surveyed involved only a few of the parents at the school. These teachers strongly favored involving parents in home learning activities. Another finding of this study was that parent involvement strategies were used more by

teachers of younger children and by those teachers who dealt with parents having a higher educational level (Becker & Epstein, 1982)

Williams (1984) conducted a comparison study on the attitudes of teachers, school administrators and parents towards parent involvement in the elementary school. Using a survey approach, Williams (1984) collected data on four dimensions of parent involvement: attitudes towards parent involvement, parent involvement in decision making, parent involvement roles and current parent involvement practices. The data collected indicated that both parents and educators found parent involvement an acceptable way to participate in the educational process. However, the data also revealed that parents and educators disagreed on the definition of parent involvement and the roles parents and teachers should have in parent involvement. Educators favored the traditional parent involvement roles whereas the parents wanted to be involved in traditional as well as non-traditional roles, such as helping set school policies, home tutoring and parent education workshops. Williams (1984) stated that the lack of agreement on what parent involvement is and what roles teachers and parents should have in parent involvement appeared to be related to lack of training in the area of parent involvement. Williams (1984) also provided recommendations for improving the parent involvement aspect of the educational process. His major recommendations were to provide preservice and inservice training for teachers and administrators in order to provide: (a) background knowledge of the various types of parent involvement, (b) information on how to design and implement programs that effectively involve all parents, (c) an examination of teachers' attitudes toward parent involvement, (d) opportunities for teachers to utilize knowledge gained by working with parents and (e) written policies that clearly state a commitment to parent involvement.

Watson, Brown and Swick (1983) studied the effect of parent support on children's school achievement. The investigators used a parent questionnaire to collect data from

parents in two suburban school districts in South Carolina. The questionnaire measured the behaviors of home support, neighborhood support and the level of income and education. Home support was measured by questions concerning parent emphasis on academics and parent involvement in listening and reading to the child. Neighborhood support was measured by questions dealing with neighborhood-related items such as transportation and educational support. Questions about parents' income and educational levels were also included on the questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that there was a significant relationship between the support parents receive from the environment and the support parents give to their child. Significant relationships were also seen between the amount of home support, a child's attendance in a preschool program and first grade achievement; children who had supportive parents had higher achievement levels in first grade than those children who had non-supportive parents. The study also revealed that regardless of the amount of neighborhood support and the education and income level of the parents, the home environment as well as the quantity and quality of parent support a child receives does have a positive effect on achievement (Watson, Brown & Swick, 1983).

In a similar study done in California with parents of second and third grade students, Herman and Yeh (1983) supported these findings by concluding that the degree of parent interest, support and participation in school activities is positively related to student achievement.

In 1986, Epstein completed a study of parents' perspectives of school and family relations. The study paralleled an earlier one done by Epstein and Becker (1982) on teachers' attitudes and practices of parent involvement. Using a survey, data was collected from parents of first, third and fifth grade students in the Maryland Public Schools. The survey examined the parents' perspectives of teachers' efforts to involve parents, their knowledge about school programs and teachers' effectiveness. The parents' responses

were analyzed to show the parents' perspectives on teachers' practices which emphasized cooperation or separation of school and families. The study found that parents, regardless of educational level, favored programs that stressed the cooperation of the schools and families. The study also revealed that few parents were actively involved at school and that parents appeared to prefer home learning activities as a desirable form of parent involvement. Other findings were that parents of younger children viewed involvement as more important and that parents rated teachers higher when they provided and encouraged parent involvement activities.

The results of this study and the study of teachers' attitudes and practices done by Epstein and Becker in 1982 show that parent involvement is important to both teachers and parents. Both groups favored home learning activities as the preferred type of parent involvement and both groups felt that parent involvement was more important in the lower grades. However, differences were found between teachers and parents on the following questions: Do teachers want and need to involve parents? Do parents really want or feel they need to be involved? (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986). Regardless of their education, marital status or employment, parents indicated a strong interest in wanting and needing to be involved at all levels of their children's education. Teachers' attitudes towards and practices of parent involvement directly influenced actual parent involvement and whether parents had a positive, productive relationship with schools in educating their children (Epstein, 1986, 1988; Dauber and Epstein, 1989).

To address the idea of whether or not parents who lack a high school diploma or post-secondary education want to be involved in their children's education, Dauber and Epstein (1989) studied parents' attitudes and practices of parent involvement in the inner-city schools. They collected data from parents of children in eight Chapter I inner-city schools in Baltimore. The data showed that parents favored parent involvement. Parents' attitudes and actual participation in parent involvement activities were directly related to

the specific parent involvement practices utilized by the school such as communication techniques, classroom volunteers and home learning activities. School practices of parent involvement had more impact on actual involvement than family income, education level and family size. In comparing the results from this study of parents with a similar study of teachers from the same inner-city schools in Baltimore, Dauber and Epstein (1989) found that teachers and parents from the same schools had different perspectives on parent involvement. Both parents and teachers supported parent involvement. However, their definitions of parent involvement were not compatible. As suggested by Williams (1984), Dauber and Epstein (1989) felt that these differences must be dealt with in the future as activities are developed to improve parent involvement.

For more than a decade now, the interest in parent involvement has grown. The public at large supports parent involvement programs. However, not many states have guidelines or written policies related to parent involvement. Nardine and Morris (1991) describe two studies which investigated a different aspect of parent involvement, the status of policies, programs and staffing in the area of parent involvement in the 50 states. In the first study, data was collected through a survey of school administrators and policymakers to determine the status of state leadership, staffing patterns, funding, training and technical assistance for parent involvement activities. The results indicated that only nine states actually assigned staff, allocated time and set aside funds for parent involvement programs. The study concluded that parent involvement programs are not comparable in all 50 states; the amount and types of parent involvement varied from state to state depending on the policies, money and inservice training provided by state education departments and individual school districts. The second study examined state legislation, guidelines and regulations dealing with parent involvement. The results showed that 60% of the states have enacted some kind of parent involvement legislation, such as parent involvement in discipline issues, parent-teacher conferences and specific guide-

lines for parent involvement activities. The remaining states did not view parent involvement legislation as a high priority and had neither legislation nor written guidelines for parent involvement activities. The majority of states indicated that federal regulations adequately emphasized and encouraged the development of parent involvement programs. Most of the parent involvement activities reported in the study were connected to federally mandated or funded programs such as Chapter I. Such practices generally do not include the entire school population. Despite the abundance of research supporting the need for and the positive outcomes of home/school collaboration along with the increasing desire of today's parents to be involved in the educational process of their children, states have not made parent involvement legislation a top priority. Nardine and Morris concluded their article by saying "If we believe that parents can make an invaluable, sustained contribution to their children's education , then the educational leaders of our states need to give parent involvement a much higher priority" (p. 366).

Summary and Conclusions

In general, researchers have found that both educators and parents support parent involvement programs. There is also a great deal of research which concludes that students, teachers and parents all benefit from parent involvement. Although both parents and teachers support parent involvement programs, barriers such as a lack of teacher training in parent involvement, a lack of written policies and changing family situations have interfered with the development and implementation of parent involvement programs. The lack of legislation requiring parent involvement also suggests that the home/school collaboration is not seen as a high priority issue.

The Headstart program and the Perry Preschool project of the 1960s as well as a variety of other early childhood programs which have been implemented over the years clearly indicate that parent involvement is a key component in effective program development. Families and schools constitute an important influence on the education and

development of children. Best results are achieved when both schools and families work together (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

If truly effective parent involvement practices are to be implemented at every grade level, then much more needs to be learned about how to get parents involved as their children

progress through the grades. Research indicates that parent involvement is likely to be highest when children are beginning school (Becker & Epstein, 1982). If parental interest were

maintained in subsequent grades, it would surely have a positive impact on the entire educational process. The present study is an effort to provide some information in this area. Do parent involvement practices initiated at the pre-kindergarten level have an impact on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers in subsequent grade levels? Do parent involvement practices initiated at the pre-kindergarten level set the stage for teachers of subsequent grade levels to develop strong parent involvement practices? Further investigation by this researcher will attempt to identify the impact of the Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program with a mandated parent involvement component on the perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement of the primary teachers in the Omaha Public Schools.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Description of Research Methodology

A causal-comparative approach was the research method selected to study the assumed differences in the perceptions, practices and attitudes towards parent involvement of two groups of primary teachers in the Omaha Public Schools. One group consisted of primary teachers in schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program; the other group consisted of primary teachers in schools which do not have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program. The differences between these groups were measured by a statistical comparison of data collected from a survey completed by each of the selected teachers in the Omaha Public Schools.

Selection of Subjects

The study was conducted in the Omaha Public School district. This district is the largest public school district located in a metropolitan area in the state of Nebraska. It provides educational services for a culturally, racially, socially and economically diverse population.

The Omaha Public Schools has 57 elementary and 16 secondary schools. The sample population was chosen from 55 of the 57 elementary schools. Two of the schools were excluded because these schools do not have the grade level assignments being examined in the study; one school has only fourth through eighth grade and the other provides educational services for the physically handicapped. A complete list of the 55 elementary schools with teachers and grade level assignments was compiled by the researcher from the 1992-93 personnel directory published by the district's administrative office. Upon compiling the list of elementary schools, the researcher divided the list into two groups: schools which have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program and schools which do not have a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program. From the list of 20 pre-kindergarten and

35 non pre-kindergarten schools, the researcher randomly selected 11 schools from each group. Surveys were sent to 140 primary teachers in non pre-kindergarten schools and 145 primary teachers in pre-kindergarten schools, a total of 285 surveys. The sample population included teachers in the alternative kindergarten program and teachers in ESL (English as a second language) kindergarten programs. Teachers in preschool handi-capped, special education and pre-kindergarten programs were not surveyed.

Variables

Independent variables included the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program and the grade level taught at the schools selected for the study. The presence of a pre-kindergarten program variable was organized as two levels: schools having a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program (PreK) and those not having a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program (Non PreK). The grade levels taught variable was organized in two different ways. First of all, each grade level was compared individually with the other independent variable. The grade levels were organized into four levels with kindergarten and alternative kindergarten as the first level (1), first grade as the second level (2), second grade as the third level (3) and third grade as the fourth level (4). A second comparison was done in which the grade levels taught were paired as follows: Kindergarten-first and second-third. Exhaustive comparisons were done within and between the groups by the pre-kindergarten variable.

The dependent variables were the perceptions, practices and attitudes of primary teachers towards parent involvement. Survey questions relating to each of these variables were clustered in order to analyze and compare the data.

I. Perceptions of Parent Involvement (SCHLCLIM): questions # 1-5

II. Practices of Parent Involvement (PRACTICES): questions # 6-11 and # 17-23

III. Attitudes towards Parent Involvement (ACTIVTYS): questions # 28-45

A numerical value was assigned to each survey response. The clusters were derived by

taking the arithmetic mean of all relevant survey questions.

Questions # 12-16 and 24-27 were not included in any of the cluster variables. After the surveys were returned, it was decided that these two areas may not provide the researcher with reliable and valid data. The questions in these two sections asked the participating teacher to indicate the number of various types of contacts they had with each child's parents. The researcher felt that the teacher may only have estimated the numbers of actual contacts thus providing the researcher with an inaccurate picture of the actual amount of parent contacts made.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect the data was a self-reporting survey (see Appendix B). The survey was based on one developed by Epstein and Becker (1987) and revised by Dobson (1991). Both groups of teachers answered the survey anonymously. Due to the time limit, the number of subjects involved and the cost, the survey was the most feasible instrument to utilize to collect the needed data.

Procedure

The research was done during the second semester of the 1992-93 school year. Permission was granted from the Omaha Public School district administrative research office prior to the survey being sent to the selected subjects (see Appendix C).

On March 23, 1993, the survey was sent through the school mail to each primary teacher in the elementary schools selected to participate in the research study. Each survey was accompanied by a letter of explanation of the study (see Appendix D) and a pre-addressed envelope for the survey to be returned to the researcher anonymously. The surveys were to be returned by April 15, 1993. The researcher was unable to record which teachers did or did not participate. A follow-up letter (see Appendix E) was sent on April 16, 1993 for surveys not returned. The teachers were asked to complete the survey if they had not done so and return it to the researcher by April 23, 1993. A fol-

low-up letter of appreciation (see Appendix F) for participating in the study was sent on April 29, 1993 to the entire sample population.

Data Analysis

The survey data was 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 main-frame computer. The SPSS-X programs FREQUENCIES, ONE-WAY and TWO-WAY Analyses of Variance and MEANS were used for the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Description of the Sample Population

The participants in this study responded to several survey items which provided the researcher with some general background information on the teachers who chose to return the survey. Out of 285 surveys sent out, 216 were returned, an overall return rate of 76%. The results indicate that the sample population at each grade level was fairly evenly distributed (See Table I).

Table I

Grade Level Taught/School Assignment(PreK)

<u>Grade</u>	<u>PreK Prog in bldg</u> n	<u>No PreK Prog in bldg</u> n
Kindergarten	20 (9.5%)	20(9.5%)
First	35 (16.0%)	27(12.5%)
Second	24 (12.0%)	24(11.5%)
Third	28 (13.0%)	35(16.0%)
Subtotal	107 (50.5%)	106(49.5%)
		N = 213

Survey participants were asked to indicate their gender and age. Arranged by grade level taught, Tables II and III indicate that 97% of the participants were female with the age of the participants being fairly representative of all ages except the 59 and over group. The majority of participants fall in the 40-49 age range.

Table II
Gender of Survey Respondents

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Male</u> <u>n</u>	<u>Female</u> <u>n</u>
Kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	40 (18.0%)
First	2 (1.0%)	60 (28.0%)
Second	0 (0.0%)	48 (23.5%)
Third	4 (2.0%)	59 (27.5%)
Subtotal	6 (3.0%)	207 (97.0%)
		N = 213

Table III
Age of Survey Respondents

<u>Grade</u>	<u>22-29</u>		<u>30-39</u>		<u>40-49</u>		<u>50-59</u>		<u>over 59</u>	
	<u>n</u>		<u>n</u>		<u>n</u>		<u>n</u>		<u>n</u>	
Kindergarten	3	(1.0%)	10	(4.5%)	17	(8.0%)	9	(4.0%)	1	(.5%)
First	15	(7.0%)	12	(5.0%)	20	(9.0%)	14	(7.0%)	1	(.5%)
Second	7	(3.0%)	10	(4.5%)	22	(11.0%)	9	(4.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Third	13	(6.0%)	20	(10.0%)	19	(9.0%)	11	(5.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Subtotal	38	(18.0%)	52	(24.0%)	78	(37.0%)	44	(20.0%)	2	(1.0%)
										N = 214

Survey participants were also asked to indicate the number of years they had taught as well as the highest degree they had obtained. Table IV shows that the number of years taught were also fairly evenly distributed with the largest group teaching twenty or more years. The highest degree obtained by the majority (45%) of the participants was a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts (see Table V).

Table IV

Number of Years Taught by Survey Respondent

<u>Grade</u>	<u>1-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11-15</u>	<u>16-20</u>	<u>20+</u>
	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>
Kindergarten	5 (2.0%)	5 (2.0%)	12 (6.0%)	8 (4.0%)	10 (5.0%)
First Grade	18 (8.0%)	12 (6.0%)	8 (4.0%)	13 (6.0%)	10 (5.0%)
Second Grade	6 (3.0%)	14 (6.5%)	7 (3.0%)	8 (4.0%)	13 (6.0%)
Third Grade	16 (7.5%)	14 (6.5%)	8 (4.0%)	10 (5.0%)	14 (6.5%)
Subtotal	45 (20.5%)	45 (21.0%)	35 (17.0%)	39 (19.0%)	47 (22.5%)
					N = 211

Table V

Highest Degree Obtained by Survey Respondent

<u>Grade</u>	<u>B.S./B.A.</u>	<u>B.A./B.S.+18</u>	<u>M.S./M.A.</u>	<u>M.A./M.S.+18</u>	<u>PhD./EdD.</u>
	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>n</u>
Kindergarten	15 (7.0%)	12 (6.0%)	8 (4.0%)	5 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)
First Grade	28 (13.0%)	19 (9.0%)	11 (5.0%)	4 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Second Grade	20 (9.0%)	12 (6.0%)	10 (5.0%)	4 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Third Grade	35 (16.0%)	12 (6.0%)	13 (6.0%)	3 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Subtotal	98 (45.0%)	55 (27.0%)	42 (20.0%)	16 (8.0%)	0 (0.0%)
					N = 211

The focus of this research study was teachers' perceptions, practices and attitudes towards parent involvement so the participants were asked to indicate what training, if any, they received on parent involvement during either preservice or inservice preparation for their teaching profession. Table VI shows that 90% of the teachers who responded to the survey had not had a college course in parent involvement. Table VII indicates that 29% of those teachers responding have completed inservice training on parent involvement provided by the school district.

Table VI
College Course on Parent Involvement

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>n</u>	<u>No</u> <u>n</u>
Kindergarten	4 (2.0%)	36 (17.0%)
First Grade	8 (4.0%)	54 (25.0%)
Second Grade	4 (2.0%)	44 (20.0%)
Third Grade	4 (2.0%)	59 (28.0%)
Subtotal	20 (10.0%)	193 (90.0%)
		N = 213

Table VII
Teacher Inservice on Parent Involvement

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>n</u>	<u>No</u> <u>n</u>
Kindergarten	10 (5.0%)	30 (14.0%)
First Grade	18 (8.0%)	44 (21.0%)
Second Grade	10 (5.0%)	38 (18.0%)
Third Grade	24 (11.0%)	39 (39.0%)
Subtotal	62 (29.0%)	151 (71.0%)
		N = 213

Finally, the survey participants were asked to select from several general statements that would describe their class population as a whole. Table VIII indicates that the majority (65%) of those participants who teach in a school with a pre-kindergarten program described their class population as low-income, at-risk, whereas the majority (54%) of those participants teaching in schools without a pre-kindergarten program described their class population as diverse.

Table VIII
Description of Class Population

	<u>PreK</u> n	<u>Non PreK</u> n
Low-income, at risk	71 (65.0%)	22 (21.0%)
Middle income, average/ above average	9 (8.0%)	22 (21.0%)
Upper-income, average/ above average	1 (1.0%)	5 (4.0%)
Diverse	28 (24.0%)	57 (54.0%)
		N = 215

Analyses of Variance

Using the general information from the survey, three two-way analyses of variance were run on the three dependent variables: perceptions of school climate (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS) and practices (PRACTICE) with pre-kindergarten status (PREK) and grade level taught (GRALEVEL) as factors. Missing data on any of the survey questions making up the clusters for each variable resulted in that participant being dropped from that specific analysis. Therefore, the number of participants per analysis varied according to the pattern of missing data on the surveys.

Results of the two-way analyses of variance indicated that there were no significant differences or two-way interactions by grade level and pre-kindergarten in perceptions (SCHLCLIM) and attitudes (ACTIVTYS) (see Tables IX, X). For these variables, the hypotheses were not accepted. (There were no significant differences between primary teachers teaching in schools which have a pre-kindergarten and primary teachers teaching in schools without a pre-kindergarten in the areas of perceptions of school climate and

attitudes towards parent involvement activities). However, there was a nearly significant difference in practices (PRACTICE) (see Table XI). The analysis showed no significant difference by pre-kindergarten (PREK) status but a nearly significant difference by grade level (GRALEVEL) ($F=2.589$, $p=.054$). An examination of grade level means indicated that the difference existed between kindergarten and all other grade levels (see Table XIV).

Table IX
Two-Way Anova
Perceptions Toward Parent Involvement (SCHLCLIM)
By PreK and Grade Level Taught

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	4	2.104	1.679	.157
PREK	1	2.776	2.215	.138
GRALEVEL	3	1.578	1.259	.290
PREK x GRALEVEL	3	.432	.344	.793
Explained	7	1.387	1.107	.360
Residual	185	1.253		
Total	192	1.258		

Table X
Two Way Anova
Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement
By PreK and Grade Level Taught

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	4	33.632	1.158	.331
PREK	1	15.590	.537	.465
GRALEVEL	3	37.848	1.303	.275
PREK x GRALEVEL	3	17.603	.606	.612
Explained	7	26.762	.921	.491
Residual	185	29.049		
Total	192	28.965		

Table XI
Two Way Anova
Practices of Parent Involvement
By PreK and Grade Level Taught

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	4	13.450	1.978	.100
PREK	1	2.042	.300	.584
GRALEVEL	3	17.605	2.589	.054
PREK x GRALEVEL	3	2.020	.297	.828
Explained	7	8.551	1.257	.274
Residual	185	6.801		
Total	192	6.865		

To further investigate the differences found by grade level and to address the issue of the absence of the second and third grade levels in some of the schools randomly selected to participate in the study, three additional two-way analyses of variance were run. Due to the district's busing plan, the grade level distribution was not even across schools, which led to an artificial skewing of the sample responses. Thus, in order to adjust for the skewing, it made sense to examine the responses by grade level groups rather than by individual grade level. Two-way analyses of variance were run on the grade levels collapsed into two groups (COLLGRAD): kindergarten-first grades (group 1) and second-third grades (group 2). Thus, perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS) and practices (PRACTICE) were the dependent variables in three new two-way ANOVAS with pre-kindergarten status and collapsed grade level groups as factors.

Once again, the results of the two way analyses of variance indicated that there were no significant differences or two-way interactions by grade level groups and the pre-kindergarten status in perceptions (SCHLCLIM) and attitudes (ACTIVTYS) (see Tables XV-XVI). For these variables, the hypotheses were not accepted. However, there was a significant difference in practices (PRACTICE). The analysis showed no significant

Table XII
Means of Perceptions (SCHLCLIM)
By Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	9.2689	1.1305	212
Kindergarten	9.3333	1.0842	39
First Grade	9.0000	1.3550	62
Second Grade	9.3125	1.2056	48
Third Grade	9.4603	.7793	63

Table XIII
Means of Attitudes (ACTIVTYS)
By Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	63.8768	5.3842	203
Kindergarten	62.4737	4.8920	38
First Grade	64.0690	5.5436	58
Second Grade	63.7021	5.5361	47
Third Grade	64.7167	5.3491	60

Table XIV
Means Of Practices (PRACTICE)
By Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	23.2475	2.6180	202
Kindergarten	24.3750	2.5589	40
First Grade	23.1552	2.5533	58
Second Grade	22.8444	2.7957	45
Third Grade	22.8814	2.4218	59

difference by pre-kindergarten but a significant difference by grade level ($F=4.191$, $p=.042$) (see Table XVII). Once again, examination of group means indicated that the lower grade level group had the higher mean.

Table XV
Two-Way Anova
Perceptions Towards Parent Involvement (SCHLCLIM)
By PreK and By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d.f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	2	3.086	2.478	.087
PREK	1	3.023	2.428	.121
COLLGRAD	1	2.491	2.000	.159
PREK x COLLGRAD	1	.012	.010	.921
Explained	3	2.061	1.655	.178
Residual	189	1.245		
Total	192	1.258		

Table XVI
Two-Way Anova
Attitudes Towards Parent Involvement (ACTIVTYS)
By PreK and By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d.f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	2	22.912	.785	.457
PREK	1	16.173	.554	.457
COLLGRAD	1	24.843	.851	.357
PREK x COLLGRAD	1	1.068	.037	.848
Explained	3	15.631	.536	.658
Residual	189	29.177		
Total	192	28.965		

Table XVII
Two-Way Anova
Practice of Parent Involvement (PRACTICE)
By PreK and By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>S. V</u>	<u>d. f</u>	<u>M. S</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Main Effects	2	14.760	2.168	.117
PREK	1	2.424	.356	.551
COLLGRAD	1	28.538	4.191	.042
PREK x COLLGRAD	1	1.524	.224	.637
Explained	3	10.348	1.520	.211
Residual	189	6.810		
Total	192	6.865		

Table XVIII
Means of Perceptions (SCHLCLIM)
By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	9.2689	1.1305	212
COLLGRAD 1	9.1287	1.2622	101
COLLGRAD 2	9.3964	9842	111

Table XVIX
Means of Attitudes (ACTIVTYS)
By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	63.8768	5.3842	203
COLLGRAD 1	63.4375	5.3268	96
COLLGRAD 2	64.2710	5.4298	107

Table XX
Means of Practices (PRACTICE)
By Collapsed Grade Level

<u>Group</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S. D.</u>	<u># of Cases</u>
Entire Population	23.2475	2.6180	202
COLLGRAD 1	23.6531	2.6128	98
COLLGRAD 2	22.8654	2.5772	104

To further explore the differences found in the two-way analyses of variance by grade level taught, one-way analyses of variance were run separately on each groups: pre-kindergarten (PREK) and non pre-kindergarten (NON PREK) by grade level with perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS) and practices (PRACTICE) as the dependent variables. Where appropriate, multiple range tests were also run using the least significant difference method (LSD) to look at all pairwise comparisons of the grade level means for perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS), and practices (PRACTICE).

Results from the one-way analysis of variance of the pre-kindergarten group (PREK) indicated that there were no significant differences by grade level taught in perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS), and practices (PRACTICE) (see Tables XXI-XXIII). Results of the least significant difference test run on practices in the pre-kindergarten group indicated a significant difference between kindergarten and third grade ($p < .05$).

Table XXI
 One-Way Anova
Perceptions (SCHLCLIM) (PreK)
 By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	.7861	.4581	.7122
Within Groups	102	1.7162		
Total	105			

Table XXII
 One-Way Anova
Attitudes (ACTIVTYS) (PREK)
 By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	51.7708	1.5486	.2070
Within Groups	96	33.4316		
Total	99			

Table XXIII
 One-Way Anova
Practices (PRACTICE) (PREK)
 By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d.f.</u>	<u>M.S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	11.34490	1.7174	.1687
Within Groups	94	6.60508		
Total	97			

Results from the one way analysis of variance of the non pre-kindergarten group (NONPREK) also indicated that there were no significant differences by grade level taught in perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS), and practices (PRACTICE) (see Tables XXIV-XXVI). Results of the least significant difference test run on practices in the non pre-kindergarten group indicated a significant difference between kindergarten and both second and third grades ($p < .05$).

Table XXIV
One-Way Anova
Perceptions(SCHLCLIM)(NONPREK)
By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	1.6863	2.0805	.1074
Within Groups	102	.8106		
Total	105			

Table XXV
One-Way Anova
Attitudes (ACTIVTYS) (NONPREK)
By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	6.3461	.2545	.8580
Within Groups	99	24.9390		
Total	102			

Table XXVI
One-Way Anova
Practices (PRACTICE) (NONPREK)
By Grade Level

<u>S. V.</u>	<u>d. f.</u>	<u>M. S.</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>F-Prob</u>
Between Groups	3	13.3813	1.9723	.1230
Within Groups	100	6.7847		
Total	103			

Overall, the analyses of variance showed that no significant differences exist between the two groups of teachers, based on the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program, in the three variables examined: perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS) and practices (PRACTICE). No significant differences existed between the two groups by grade level taught in two of the three variables examined: perceptions (SCHLCLIM) and attitudes (ACTIVTYS). However, a nearly significant difference was found in the area of practices (PRACTICE) by grade level taught. The results of both the one-way and two-way analyses of variance revealed that the sample of teachers showed more unity than diversity in the perceptions of, attitudes towards, and practices of parent involvement regardless of the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program or the grade level taught.

Frequencies

Since a unity-versus-diversity conclusion was drawn from the initial analysis of the data collected, a second analysis was run to examine frequency tables for each of the survey questions, clustered for the independent variables. The following discussion examines responses to each individual survey question to discover the similarities in

primary teachers' perceptions (SCHLCLIM), attitudes (ACTIVTYS), and practices (PRACTICE) of parent involvement in the Omaha Public Schools as a whole.

I. Perceptions of Parent Involvement (SCHLCLIM):
questions 1-5

The majority (96%) of the teachers in the sample population felt that their school had an "open door" policy for parent involvement (Question 1). Eighty-eight percent felt that their school supported parental involvement by providing a variety of activities to include all parents (Question 2). Furthermore, 77% felt that at their school, parent involvement activities were planned to accommodate the needs of all families (Question 3), while 74% of the teachers agreed that their school had an active and effective parent organization supported by the school staff (Question 4). Overall, 87% of the teachers perceived their school as having an inviting climate for developing a positive partnership between the home and the school (Question 5). It is evident that the teachers in this sample population feel that the atmosphere and staff of the schools in which they teach support and encourage parent involvement activities.

II. Parent Involvement Practices (PRACTICE):
questions 6-11 and 17-23

Parent involvement practices were analyzed by clustering a portion of both parent contacts and parent volunteer questions together. The results of the parent contacts items show that the majority (57%) of the teachers routinely used newsletters to communicate with their parents (Question 6). Fifty-five percent of teachers indicated that they only sometimes utilized telephone calls (Question 7) and informal contacts at school (Question 8) to contact parents. Scheduled parent teacher conferences were utilized by 88% of all teachers surveyed (Question 9). Fifty-seven percent of the sample population said they had never used home visits to contact their parents (Question 10). It was interesting to see, however, that 39% of the sample had utilized home visits at some time to reach their parents (Question 10). Sixty-four percent of the teachers showed that they utilized

workshops and parent meetings as a way to contact, communicate and work with their parents (Question 11). Questions 12-16 in the parent contacts section of the survey indicated that on the average, the teachers surveyed had either written or verbal contact with their parents through monthly newsletters, an occasional telephone call, school activities such as special programs and P. T. A. meetings, and two scheduled parent teacher conferences for each child in their classroom in a school year.

Analysis of the parent volunteers section indicated that the majority of the teachers surveyed did not use parent volunteers in their classroom to assist during the normal school day (69%) (Question 17), to listen to children read aloud (67%)(Question 18), to read to children (69%)(Question 19) and to tutor children experiencing difficulties with learning specific skills (67%)(Question 21). However, a large majority of the teachers surveyed indicated that they did utilize parent volunteers to assist with class parties and field trips (92%) (Question 22), and 52% indicated that they used parents as resources for career education and to provide learning materials for their classrooms (Question 23). In reviewing the frequency responses from questions 24-27 which were excluded from the variable cluster, the data show that the majority (58%) of the sample population encouraged and invited all parents to get involved in volunteer activities (Question 27). Forty-five percent of the teachers surveyed indicated that they utilized three different parent volunteers once or twice per week (Question 24 -25) and 35% of the teachers rated their parent volunteer as good and fairly dependable (Question 26).

Obviously, the results show that the majority of teachers favored more traditional practices of parent involvement. However, it also appears teachers do not utilize parent volunteers as much as they could.

III. Attitudes Towards Parent InvolvementActivities (ACTIVTYS): questions 28-45

Teachers use a wide variety of parent involvement activities in order to establish a

positive home-school partnership. In this section, the teachers surveyed were asked to express their attitudes towards several parent involvement activities. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers felt that it is important to encourage parents to attend school activities such as programs and meetings (Question 28). Fifty-five percent felt that it was important for parents to get involved in their children's clubs and school activities (Question 29). Ninety-eight percent felt it was essential to have parent teacher conferences at least once a year (Question 30), and 96% of the teachers surveyed felt it was crucial to let parents know about problems or failures that their children experience (Question 31). Eighty-four percent felt it was important to let parents know of positive accomplishments achieved by their children (Question 32). Only 43% felt it was important to involve all parents in classroom activities (Question 33). Eighty-seven percent felt it was important to inform parents of the skills needed to pass each subject at their grade level (Question 34), and 87% also agreed it was important to inform parents of how report card grades are earned (Question 35). Seventy-two percent of the teachers surveyed indicated that they felt it was important that teachers provide parents with ideas to assist their children in completing schoolwork at home (Question 36), while 76% felt strongly about providing parents with specific ideas that parents can use with their children to improve schoolwork and grades (Question 37). Fifty percent of the sample population agreed that they should provide homework activities that require parents to interact with their children (Question 39), while 61% agreed that it was important for teachers to provide parents with techniques to assist their children in studying and working on skills mastery at home (Question 40). Reading and writing activities seemed to be favored by the majority of teachers surveyed with 91% agreeing that parents should read to their children (Question 41) as well as listen to their children read (Question 42). Eighty-six percent felt parents should listen to children read their own written work and discuss it with them (Question 43). Providing information for

parents to discuss television programs (34%) (Question 38) and current events (43%) (Question 44) was not viewed as very important. Finally, the majority of the sample population (73%) agreed that teachers should work together to develop a parent involvement curriculum (Question 45).

Overall, the teachers' responses to these questions indicated a positive attitude toward parent involvement. Although the teachers indicated that parent involvement activities at school are an important part of the curriculum, the majority of teachers emphasized the involvement of parents in learning activities in the home environment.

Question 56 was an optional item on the survey which asked the teachers surveyed to provide any additional information about parent involvement activities within their school that might be valuable data for this study. Twenty-five percent of the population provided additional input. Overall, all those teachers responding to this question said that they feel strongly about parent involvement because parents provide the primary learning environment and their involvement in the learning process is important for student success in school. These teachers indicated that they actively attempt to get parents involved, however without much success. They stated that the schools in which they teach provide a variety of opportunities and activities for parents to get involved but because of the changing family situations, work schedules, lack of child care, lack of transportation and so on, many parents do not get involved in their children's education. Many of the teachers responding to this question felt that the busing plan for purposes of desegregation within the school district has affected parent involvement in schools. The teachers indicated that parents who do not live in the school neighborhood are less likely to get involved, so the teachers are relying on home learning activities to involve parents in the educational process. Some teachers did indicate that the district's move to develop family room programs within the schools has helped improve parent involvement within their schools. Family rooms provide organized family-centered activities that encourage and

help parents feel at ease about getting involved in their children's education at school, at home and in the community. The teachers also suggested that the addition of counselors in the elementary schools has also helped some schools increase parent involvement in their schools by offering parenting workshops and other educational experiences for parents. Some teachers said that the Omaha Public Schools also offers a district wide familiness series which is another opportunity for parents to get involved in educational activities by providing them with valuable information on raising and educating their children.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions, practices and attitudes towards parent involvement of primary teachers based on the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program within the schools where they teach. The Omaha Public Schools initiated their Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program in 1987 as a pilot program in an English as a second language classroom and has currently expanded the pre-kindergarten program to 39 half day programs for four-year-olds. The program includes mandatory parent involvement component included as a major part of the program.

According to the analysis of data collected from the survey, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. There is no significant difference in primary teachers' perceptions of parent involvement based on either the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program or by the grade level taught.

2. There is no significant difference in primary teachers' attitudes towards parent involvement based on either the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program or by the grade level taught.

3. There is no significant difference in primary teachers' practices of parent involvement based on the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program. However, there is a nearly significant difference in primary teachers' practices of parent involvement by grade level taught. Kindergarten teachers had a higher mean than those teachers who teach first, second or third grades regardless of the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program.

4. Teachers in schools with Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten programs and those in schools without Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten programs agreed that the school climate is an important factor in establishing a positive parent involvement program. Both groups perceived their schools as having an "open door" policy and an inviting school climate for developing a positive partnership between the school staff and their families. Both groups of teachers also felt their schools worked to accommodate the needs of all families when planning school activities. This school climate variable indicated that there are more similarities than differences between the two groups of teachers in their perceptions of parent involvement.

5. The teachers in both the pre-kindergarten schools and the non pre-kindergarten schools indicated that they used similar methods to contact and involve parents. Teachers in both groups indicated that they preferred more traditional types of parent involvement. Scheduled parent-teacher conferences were the most common method of contact used by teachers to communicate with their parents. Both groups also indicated that they utilized newsletters, telephone calls and school functions such as P. T. A. meetings to contact and communicate with parents. Although home visits are not used by the majority of teachers in either the pre-kindergarten or non pre-kindergarten group, more teachers in pre-kindergarten buildings indicated that they utilized home visits to contact and communicate with parents than teachers in a non pre-kindergarten school. Both groups indicated that they use workshops and parent meetings now and then to contact and communicate with their parents.

6. The majority of teachers in both the pre-kindergarten and non pre-kindergarten group indicated that they do not use parent volunteers in their classrooms on a daily basis. Teachers indicated that they used parent volunteers for special events such as classroom parties, field trips and as an educational resource when needed.

7. In the area of attitudes toward parent involvement activities, the majority of teachers at all grade levels in both the pre-kindergarten and the non pre-kindergarten group felt that parent involvement practices initiated by the teacher are important; however, teachers' attitudes towards the importance of involving and working with other teachers within the school to develop a parent involvement curriculum showed a somewhat lower frequency of support. All teachers indicated that they felt that activities which focused on parent involvement in academic areas such as working on study skills, reading, writing and listening skills either at home or school as well as the achievement of good grades were more important than getting parents involved by attending programs, meetings and workshops.

8. Because there are no written policies for parent involvement at either the district or individual school level for all grade levels except pre-kindergarten, primary teachers' actual practices of parent involvement are unique to each individual teacher, and they are based on that teacher's perceptions of, attitudes towards and preparation for developing and implementing parent involvement activities.

9. Results indicate that, overall, teachers in the grade levels closest to the pre-kindergarten years feel stronger about and utilize parent involvement practices and activities more than those teachers in grade levels further removed from the pre-kindergarten years.

Further Study/Research

Upon completion of this research study, several recommendations for future studies pertaining to parent involvement and early childhood programs can be made. This study involved only 39% of the primary teachers in the Omaha Public Schools. Future studies may involve increasing the sample population to include all primary teachers. Expanding the population would allow the researcher to get a clearer, more precise picture of the differences, if any, that exist in the perceptions, attitudes and practices of

parent involvement by primary teachers based on the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program.

This study focused only on the effect of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program on the perceptions, attitudes and practices of primary teachers. Further studies could include all grade levels within the elementary school. Unity as opposed to diversity was found to be true at the primary level; however, this may or may not be the case for the intermediate grades. Surveying the intermediate teachers would allow the researcher to discover the impact of the Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program on the entire teaching staff.

As the Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten programs become more widespread throughout the district's elementary schools, further study of a longitudinal nature could be done to examine the impact of time and the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program on teachers' perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement at all grade levels within the elementary school.

Finally, parent involvement requires the interaction of two groups: teachers and parents. Future studies may include surveying the parents on their perceptions, attitudes and practices of parent involvement either based on the presence of a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program or just as a whole. The views of the parents and teachers could be compared to provide a more in-depth and complete picture of parent involvement in the Omaha Public Schools. A longitudinal study could also be done with the parents to examine how involved the parents remain as their children advance through the grade levels based on a child's participation in a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten program.

Recommendations

Teachers, children and parents all profit from effective parent involvement programs (Gullo, 1991). Meaning parent involvement is necessary to educate all children (Flaxman and Inger, 1987). Based on the findings and literature researched in this study, the following recommendations are presented for teachers and administrators of the Omaha

Public School District.

1. All teachers and administrators should be required to complete either preservice or inservice training in the area of parent involvement.
2. Preservice and inservice training needs to focus on how to work effectively with all parents in order to establish a long-lasting, positive partnership between home and school.
3. The district needs to establish more parent education programs and opportunities such as Familyness and parent rooms in all school buildings. Programs such as these can serve as a means of strengthening parents' ability and role as partners in the education of their children.
4. The district needs to establish formal written policies that clearly state the district's commitment to parent involvement. With written policies, teachers would see it as an integral part of their job possibly giving parent involvement programs and practices more priority.

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APPENDIX A

Goals of the Pre-Kindergarten Program

The goal of the Omaha Public Schools pre-kindergarten program is to provide a quality Early Childhood program which will benefit: Children by allowing each child to discover and follow his/her own course toward maturity and knowledge with the safety and security of adult encouragement and guidance and developing:

- * each child's own self esteem and acceptance of the uniqueness of self and others
- * each child's ability to make choices with responsibility, to use his/her time and energy effectively and to pursue and complete tasks with originality
- * each child's ability to work cooperatively and with other children and adults
- * each child's ability to comprehend others' spoken, written, dramatic and graphic communications and to express his/her own thoughts, ideas and feeling through a variety of modes
- * each child's ability to think, reason question and experiment in order to grow in knowledge, skill in the arts and physical dexterity

Families by strengthening family ties and the ties among agencies that serve young children and developing:

- * each family's understanding of child development and family issues
- * each family's abilities to encourage and guide the young child
- * each family's awareness of available resources and the goals of a family-school-community partnership

The Community by providing a safe, quality environment for children and developing:

- * the community's awareness of early childhood concerns

- * the community's future success by preparing young children to become productive citizens
- * the community's efficiency by promoting interagency collaboration

APPENDIX A

In the Omaha Public Schools, a Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten is defined as an early intervention program for four year old children. The program was started in 1987 as an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in two elementary schools. As of 1993, the district has 20 elementary buildings housing Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten programs and two off campus locations which include 25 Chapter I (federally funded), 12 District (locally funded) and 2 ESL (English as a second language) half day Parent-Child Pre-Kindergarten programs. The location and the type of pre-kindergarten program (District or Chapter I) are determined by available space and money and the request of the principal of the school. Schools are selected to receive the federally funded Chapter I programs based on the number of free and reduced price lunches served within the school buildings. Schools designated as Chapter I buildings within the Omaha Public Schools have both District and Chapter I pre-kindergarten programs; 35 of the 39 pre-kindergartens are located in Chapter I buildings.

There is no difference between the Chapter I pre-kindergarten program and the District pre-kindergarten program as far as curriculum is concerned. Both programs include a mandatory parent involvement component using the five types of parent involvement as defined by Epstein (1987, 1988). These programs run Monday through Thursday. Friday is devoted to teacher initiated parent involvement activities and inservice. Both the Chapter I and the District programs can serve up to 16 children per class session. However, two differences do exist between the Chapter I and District programs. First of all, the District programs are funded through the school district's budget whereas the Chapter I programs are funded through federally allocated funds. ESL programs are also district funded.

The second difference exists in the selection of children to participate in the pre-kindergarten program. The District program selects children to participate on a first

come, first served basis whereas the Chapter I program selects its participants based on two criteria: the child must live in a Chapter I attendance area and participate in a screening interview at which the four-year-old Brigance Preschool Inventory is administered. Children must score below the 76th percentile on the preschool inventory to be eligible for the Chapter I pre-kindergarten program. Children who show the greatest need, based on rank order of the inventory scores, are served first.

**THE IMPACT OF A PARENT-CHILD PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM ON
THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES
OF
PRIMARY TEACHERS IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**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

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Please complete the following survey by marking your responses on the attached computer sheet with a number two pencil. Do not put your name on the response sheet. Make sure you answer each question. Please return the completed response in the addressed envelope.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

The school climate is an important factor in establishing a positive parent involvement program.

Please respond to the following statements by marking: A= yes B= no

1. The school in which I teach has an "open door" policy for parent involvement.
2. This school supports parental involvement by providing a variety of activities to include all parents.
3. Parent involvement activities are planned to accommodate the needs of all families.
4. This school has an active and effective parent organization supported by the administration and teaching staff.
5. This school has an inviting school climate for developing a positive partnership between administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

PARENT CONTACTS

Teachers utilize a variety of methods in making contacts with parents. I use the following methods to make contacts with all my parents throughout the school year.

Please indicate how much you use each method using the following scale:

A= never B=sometimes C=routinely

6. newsletters
7. telephone calls
8. informal conversations at school
9. scheduled parent- teacher conferences
10. home visits
11. parent meetings and workshops

Using the following scale, please indicate the number of contacts you make for each child in a school year: A=0 B=1 - 3 C=4 - 6 D= 7 - 9 E= more than 10

12. newsletters
13. telephone calls
14. parent-teacher conferences
15. contact with parents at school activities such as programs , P.T. A. meetings and workshops
16. home visits

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering is a traditional form of parent involvement. Please respond to these questions concerning parent volunteers in your classroom by marking: A= yes B= no

17. Parents assist in the classroom during a normal school day.
18. Parents listen to children read aloud
19. Parents read to children.
20. Parents assist in grading papers.
21. Parents tutor children experiencing difficulties with specific skills in the classroom.
22. Parents assist with special classroom events such as field trips and holiday parties.
23. Parents provide resources for the classroom such as career education, learning materials, etc.
24. How often does a parent volunteer assist you in your classroom?
A. every day B. once or twice a week C. once or twice a month D. a few times a year E. volunteers are not used.

25. The number of different parent volunteers who assist in my classroom in a week is _____.

- A. 0 B. 1 - 3 C. 4 - 6 D. 7 - 10 E. more than 10
26. How would you rate the majority of the parent volunteers in your classroom?
A. excellent and dependable B. good and fairly dependable C. fair and not dependable D. poor and undependable E. volunteers are not used.

27. Do you invite and encourage all your parents to get involved in volunteer activities in your classroom?

- A. invite and encourage all B. invite and encourage only a few. C. encourage parents to just drop in D. wait for parents to ask to volunteer E. volunteers not used.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES:

Teachers use a wide variety of parent involvement activities in order to establish a positive home-school partnership. Depending on the grade level taught, teachers find some parent involvement practices more important than others. Please indicate which parent involvement practices are important for you to use at your grade level.

A=unimportant B= somewhat unimportant C=somewhat important D=important

28. Encourage parents to attend meetings, performances and workshops.
29. Encourage parents to participate in parent-teacher-student clubs or activities.
30. Conduct conferences with all parents at least once a year.
31. Contact parents about students' problems or failures.
32. Inform parents when children do something very well.
33. Involve all parents in the classroom.
34. Inform parents of the skills required to pass each subject at your grade level.

35. Inform parents how report card grades are earned.
36. Provide ideas to help parents talk with their children about schoolwork at home.
37. Provide specific activities that parents and children can do to improve schoolwork and grades.
38. Provide ideas for discussing specific T.V. shows.
39. Assign homework activities that require children to interact with parents.
40. Suggest ways to practice spelling or other specific skills at home before a test at school.
41. Ask parents to read to children.
42. Ask parents to listen to children read.
43. Ask parents to listen to and discuss work written by their child.
44. Provide guidelines for discussing current events at home.
45. Work with other teachers to develop a parent involvement curriculum.

GENERAL INFORMATION

46. What grade level do you teach?
 - A. Kindergarten
 - B. First
 - C. Second
 - D. Third
47. Gender:
 - A. male
 - B. female
48. Age:
 - A. 22-29
 - B. 30-39
 - C. 40-49
 - D. 50-59
 - E. over 59
49. Number of years taught:
 - A. 1-5
 - B. 6-10
 - C. 11-15
 - D. 16-20
 - E. more than 20
50. What is the highest degree obtained?
 - A. B. A. or B.S. degree
 - B. B. A. or B. S. plus 18
 - C. Master's of Arts or Science Degree.
 - D. M. A. or M. S. plus 30
 - E. Ph. D. or Ed. D.
51. In all your college courses, have you ever taken a course specifically focused on parent involvement ?
 - A. yes
 - B. no
52. Have you ever participated in an inservice on parent involvement provided by the school district?
 - A. yes
 - B. no
53. Does your building have a Pre-Kindergarten Program?
 - A. yes
 - B. no
54. How many years has the Pre-Kindergarten Program been in your building?
 - A. less than 1 year
 - B. 1 year
 - C. 2-3 years
 - D. more than 3 years
 - E. no Pre-K

55. How would you describe your class population?
A. low-income, at risk students B. middle income, average/above average students
C. upper-income, average/above average students D. diverse population

56. Optional-On this sheet, please provide any additional information about parent involvement activities in your classroom or building that might be valuable data for my study.

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

APPENDIX C



DIVISION OF RESEARCH
3215 CUMING STREET OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131-2024 (402) 554-6251

December 18, 1992

Virginia Gerhardt
Walnut Hill School
4370 Hamilton Street
Omaha, NE 68131

Dear Virginia,

Your proposal to conduct a research project in the Omaha Public Schools has been reviewed and approved. Permission is herewith granted to proceed with your study, as outlined.

It is our understanding that you will seek the participation of all or selected classroom teachers at the schools indicated and that teacher involvement would consist of completion of your survey instrument. As in the case of all external studies of this nature, participation would be on a voluntary basis.

Please notify my office approximately two weeks in advance of your survey distribution and I will be happy to send a communication to each principal advising them of the forthcoming study.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Irving E. Young".

Irving E. Young
Coordinator of Research

APPENDIX D

Walnut Hill School
March 23, 1993

Dear Primary Teacher:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha working on my thesis. The topic I have chosen for my thesis is parent involvement in the primary grades in the Omaha Public Schools. You are part of a group of teachers randomly selected to participate in the study. Please help me in completing my thesis by taking time to complete this survey. Your input, time and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

All the information you provide is completely confidential. No teacher's individual responses will ever be identified. Only a summary of all data collected will be shared with the district. It is crucial that I receive a response from every primary teacher in order to obtain accurate, valuable data.

Please complete this survey with a number 2 pencil. Please return the survey and the completed response sheet to Virginia Gerhardt, Walnut Hill Elementary, in the enclosed envelope by April 15, 1993.

Thank you for your help in completing my research!

Sincerely,

Virginia L. Gerhardt

APPENDIX E

April 16, 1993

Dear Primary Teacher,

I need your input to complete my research study. If you have not completed the survey I sent you earlier this spring, I would appreciate it if you could do so. Your response is important for the completion of my project. Once again, your help would be appreciated. If possible, please return the completed survey in the school mail no later than Friday, April 23, 1993.

Thanks Again,

Virginia Gerhardt

APPENDIX F

April 29, 1993

Dear Primary Teacher,

I would like to take the time to thank-you for willingly completing my recent survey on parent involvement at the primary grade levels in the Omaha Public Schools. The information you provided has been extremely useful in helping me complete my thesis. Your input and time was greatly appreciated.

Respectfully Yours,

Virginia L. Gerhardt
Pre-Kindergarten Teacher