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# The Investigation Of Elementary Parental Involvement Programs And Their Relationship To School Effectiveness

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Educational Administration](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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THE INVESTIGATION OF ELEMENTARY PARENTAL  
INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP  
TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

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The Investigation of Elementary Parental Involvement Programs  
and Their Relationship to School Effectiveness  
(TITLE)

BY

Susan G. Noggle

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

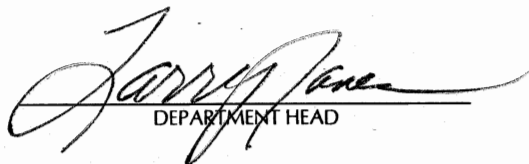
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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary parent involvement programs in small, rural school districts in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness. The review of literature and research on school effectiveness indicated that effective schools are supportive of the important roles of parents and community members. A survey instrument was the basis for seeking respondents' perceptions of the parental involvement strategies that are currently being utilized and their effectiveness. Fifty-two participants returned the survey which is a 72% response rate. The findings of the study could be used to develop a model parental involvement program. The results of this field experience should help to effectuate positive change in the parent involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools. Overall, the writer concluded that a majority of the principals surveyed view parental involvement as an important component of effective schools.

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## CHAPTER I OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

The key element in parental involvement is the sense of partnership between the parent and school. Schools alone cannot educate children. To maximize the educational opportunities for every child, it is critical that parents and educators work together. The increasing number of working parents and demographic changes in school populations have been contributing factors that have discouraged parent participation (W. Koenecke, personal communication, February 15, 1994).

According to Sletter and Grant (1988), there are some other barriers that may inhibit parent involvement. In some school districts, there are educational practices that discourage parent involvement such as providing only limited opportunities for involvement and failing to train teachers in working with parents. It is the researcher's opinion that there is a lack of awareness of the vital role parents can play in the educational process and a deemphasis for promoting school and family connections beyond the elementary school setting.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary parent involvement programs in small, rural school districts in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness. The research questions were:

1. To what extent does parental involvement exist in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois?
2. How has parental involvement been effectively used in small, rural elementary schools?



School and family connections deserve special attention because they are strong contributing factors to successful students and successful family environments. A study of parental involvement was selected for this field experience because historically there has been only limited participation of parents to become effective partners within small, rural elementary school districts. This is the primary causal factor for investigating parental involvement programs in similar size districts in this area. Findings from this study can also guide other educators as they attempt to devise methods to encourage mutually supportive relationships with parents and to bridge the gap between the home and school.

The breadth of this field experience's effects was the 77 target elementary schools located in ESC #13 in East Central Illinois. Although the writer is focusing on a parental involvement program for small, rural elementary school districts, it is the researcher's opinion that many of the suggestions may be expanded and adopted for other districts, regardless of size, location, or grade levels served. The emphasis is to increase school-level support for parent involvement which will ultimately generate strong community support for these programs.

#### Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that school districts will comply with state law and attempt to provide meaningful strategies in reporting to parents and develop parent involvement activities in their school improvement plans. Establishing links between families, schools, and communities requires specific efforts toward change in state and local educational agencies. In Illinois, the Public School Accreditation Process endorses family-school involvement as an integral part of every school system. Building-level school improvement plans must provide evidence that school/home communication efforts are being made.

It is an assumption that the current parental involvement program for Paxton-Buckley-Loda School District is not adequate. It is also assumed that the perceptions of the principals from the target schools will provide meaningful information pertaining to the extent of parental involvement in these communities and the effectiveness of their parent involvement activities.

#### Limitations of the Study

Outside the scope of this study are intermediate and secondary school parent involvement programs. Additionally, the writer chose to include only rural elementary schools in the locality of Educational Service Center #13. This area was delineated and selected because it was a reasonable size and a desirable location.

#### Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions are germane to understanding the context of this study:

1. Elementary school: A school of the first six grades (including kindergarten) where basic subjects are taught.
2. Parent involvement: The support and participation of parents at home, in the community, and at the school site that directly and positively affect the educational performance of children.
3. School effectiveness: The quality of a school's curriculum, instruction, and management as well as the knowledge, techniques, and creativity of people who are dedicated to helping students learn and become successful.
4. East Central Illinois School Districts: School districts encompassing Livingston, Douglas, Piatt, Champaign, Ford, Kankakee, Iroquois, and Vermilion counties in Illinois which are served by the Educational Service Center #13.

5. Small, rural school districts: School districts with enrollments of less than 5,000.

6. Principal: Public school administrator of school buildings in Educational Service Center #13 in Illinois.

7. Parents: Any caretakers of children including biological parents, guardians, grandparents, and foster parents.

## CHAPTER II

### RATIONALE, RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The purpose of the study was to investigate elementary parent involvement programs in small, rural communities in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness. The research questions were:

1. To what extent does parental involvement exist in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois?
2. How has parental involvement been effectively used in small, rural elementary schools?

#### Rationale

The rationale for this study is predicated on the need of small, rural elementary school districts to make judgments about modifications which are needed in their present parent involvement programs. The results of this study will provide the researcher with information to make decisions for implementation and improvement of the parental involvement program at the researcher's school district.

#### Review of the Literature

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners consistently rank parental involvement high among the components of effective schools (Cross, 1990; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Brookover et al., 1979). The quality and success of educational programs are enhanced when parents become involved in the educational process.

National reports, such as A Nation at Risk, identified effective schools as ones that involve parents in their children's learning. In 1981, the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) published The Evidence Grows, which describes 35 studies on parent involvement in relationship to school effectiveness. For each study, the results

were positive: Parent involvement in most any form is a component of effective schools. In 1987, the NCCE updated their studies of parent involvement. In combination with the earlier research, the evidence clearly stated that involving parents can make a critical difference if effective schools are judged to be successful when student achievement increases (Henderson, 1987).

Recent years have witnessed an intensive search for effective schooling practices to refine our understanding of what really is effective in bringing about a positive change in the schooling process. The staff at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) has prepared a synthesis that encompasses an updated, current revision of the most notable effective school practices from educational research literature in their publication entitled, Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis 1990 Update. In this report, a description of the key components in the effective schooling research base are summarized. This research base conceptualizes the practices used in schools and associated characteristics that demonstrate what effective schooling practices contribute to student achievement, attitudes, and excellence in student behavior. Three major areas are identified: Classroom characteristics and practices, school characteristics and practices, and district characteristics and practices.

Noteworthy for this study is the subset of school characteristics and practices entitled, "Parent and Community Involvement." Information is provided in a synthesis of findings from the effective schooling research (Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis, 1990) and is reproduced below:

1. There are written policies which legitimize the importance of parent involvement, and administrators provide ongoing support to parent involvement efforts.

2. Procedures for involvement are clearly communicated to parents and used consistently. Staff make certain that parents know that their involvement makes a great deal of difference in their children's school performance.

3. Parents are offered various options for their involvement, e.g., tutoring their children at home, assisting classrooms, participating in parent-teacher conferences, etc.

4. Parents are given especially strong encouragement to become involved in activities that support the instructional program.

5. Staff members provide parents with information and techniques for helping students learn (e.g., training sessions, handbooks).

6. Special efforts are made to involve the parents of disadvantaged students, who are often underrepresented among parents involved in the schools.

7. Regular, frequent home-school communications are maintained. This includes providing parents with information about student progress and calling attention to any areas of difficulty.

8. Administrators and staff continually look for ways to involve parents in decision making regarding school governance; parent/community advisors give input into school improvement efforts.

9. Parent involvement activities are monitored and evaluated, and staff and parents continually work to keep activities effective (p. 23-24).

The review of the literature on school effectiveness indicates that effective schools are supportive of the important roles of parents and community members in the education of children. Unfortunately, in the researcher's opinion, there is no solitary solution for achieving school effectiveness through family involvement. An array of successful parent involvement strategies, methodologies, and guidelines will be discussed in the pages that

follow to assist elementary educators in building sound educational programs that meet the needs of children and families in small, rural communities.

In spite of limited time, personnel, and financial resources, even small, rural schools can provide comprehensive, systematic, and effective parent involvement programs. By taking advantage of their size to get parent and community support, the small school can set up special relationships with parents and take on a more personal quality (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 1989).

To organize the data in developing a close, ongoing partnership between home, school, and community, five major types of parent involvement that are categorized by Epstein (1987) will be discussed. Specifically, suggestions for implementing the five types of parent involvement for small, rural elementary schools are given by Epstein.

Epstein's (1987) first category of parent involvement is the basic obligations of parents to support children's growth and development and build positive home environments to support school learning and behavior. This includes parental responsibility for preparing a child for school, providing for the child's nutritional and health care needs in the home, and providing appropriate child-rearing activities. Specific school strategies to provide support to parents in accomplishing these tasks may include the following:

1. Parenting workshops and publications on topics such as discipline, homework, child growth and development, nutrition, child supervision, and other relevant topics.
2. Establishing a Parent's Center.
3. Providing access to community resources and services.
4. Providing a parent coordinator or parent liaison.

5. Creating a home/school advisory council.
6. Organizing activities that link parents and their children, such as field trips, make-it/take-it sessions, filmstrips, videos, and educational classes that are relevant to parents (Swap, 1990; Epstein, 1987; McConnell, 1991).

The basic obligation of schools to provide communication to parents about children's progress and school programs is the second type of parent involvement (Epstein, 1987). Specific strategies that can be employed by schools are newsletters from teachers and the principal; parent/teacher conferences; school calendars of events; interim reports; report cards; taped messages accessed by telephone; and grade-level meetings. According to Epstein (1987) these communications should vary in form and frequency according to the situation.

A third type of parent involvement is parent involvement at school which brings parents to the school building. According to Epstein (cited in Brandt, 1988), "Parent involvement at school refers to parent volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school. It also refers to parents who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their own education or training" (p. 25). Schools can incorporate parent volunteers by developing a school volunteer program in areas such as housekeeping, clerical work, tutoring, class parties, field trips, teaching mini-courses, demonstrating hobbies or talents, fund-raising, community presentations, homework clinics, and serving as consultants on special issues (Dulaney, 1987).

The fourth major type of parent involvement is assistance with learning tasks in the home. This may include parents who work with their child in activities that build skills



directly related to schoolwork, guidance from teachers on helping with homework and monitoring its completion, skill practice, and other parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help (Epstein, 1987). At the elementary level, the school can play a role in helping parents teach at home by:

1. Suggesting or providing activities such as creating a "How Parents Can Help" handbook which gives practical suggestions for home activities
2. Publishing a monthly activity calendar of home learning activities for each day
3. Providing classes to help parents who are nonreaders
4. Providing learning packets for parents to use during the summer months
5. Communicating a homework policy for parents
6. Establishing a homework hotline
7. Establishing a parent library of resources that can be checked out
8. Establishing programs such as Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork and Parents as Reading Partners
9. Soliciting feedback from parents on a parent survey

Parent involvement in governance and advocacy is the fifth type of parent involvement indicated by Epstein (1987). This category provides parents an opportunity to be involved in governance, advocacy groups, and decision making. Although some schools are not supportive in this area (Sevener, 1990), schools can and should provide parents and community members with the information needed to support school improvement. School strategies to include parents may include leadership roles in

Parent/Teacher Organizations, advisory councils, committees, programs such as Chapter One, and parent training in decision-making and leadership.

Establishing meaningful and successful partnerships with parents and other community members is best achieved by schools with the development of a comprehensive, systematic plan that incorporates the effective practices of the five types of parent involvement outlined in Epstein's typology. According to Swap (1990), a collaborative effort between the school and home is vital. In her model, she describes a sequence of program activities to assist in the process which includes:

1. Initiating positive contacts between parents and teachers.
2. Development of activities that respond to needs and interests of parents and teachers.
3. Clarification of a joint mission.
4. Development of activities that support the mission.
5. Development of activities and mechanisms to share and celebrate accomplishments.
6. Widening the circle of involvement and leadership (p.31).

In order to accomplish the program activities, the planning process should involve four basic steps: analyzing, action-planning, implementing, and evaluation (Bridging Schools and Community, 1989). An outline of each step and suggestions for educators are:

**Step 1: Analyzing**

Survey community attitudes and interest. Determine how parents are currently being involved in your schools. Identify new ways parents can be involved.

**Step 2: Action-Planning**

Develop a comprehensive parent involvement policy. Prepare a parent involvement plan, outlining goals, objectives, and strategies. Get community members involved in the planning.

**Step 3: Implementation**

Target programs to different audiences, making sure you tailor them to meet different needs. Get school staff members involved.

**Step 4: Evaluation**

Listen to what is being said and how people are reacting to your communication efforts. Survey the people and look at the effectiveness of your program.

Conduct an honest appraisal of your goals and objectives (p. 61-62).

In summary of the preceding review of the literature, the information demonstrates the importance of elementary parent involvement programs in relationship to school effectiveness. It has provided a summary of the five types of parental involvement described by Epstein (1987) and suggestions for implementing an effective parental involvement plan for the Paxton-Buckley-Loda School District and for other districts of similar size and demographics.

### Research Review

A review of current research of elementary parent involvement programs in relationship to school effectiveness will be addressed by focusing on three areas. These areas will be increasing parent involvement as a means of improving schools; the relationship of student achievement and success through parent involvement programs; and improving communication with elementary school parents through a targeted parent involvement program. It is the intent of the writer to provide an overview of the current

studies related to these areas and to demonstrate the importance of each as it relates to effective schools.

At the national level, parent involvement has been endorsed as a strategy for school improvement and school effectiveness. In the document entitled, America 2000: An Education Strategy (1991, p. 1), the first goal for education states that "by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn." Parents, who are the first teachers of their children, must provide the foundation for learning prior to attending school. Once a child begins school, cooperation between the home and school is imperative.

The students whose parents are involved in their education do better in school, and schools where parents and guardians are involved are more effective (Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis, 1990). According to Moore (1990), there are some key concepts that are essential ingredients of successful parent involvement programs.

First, is the sense of partnership between the parent and the school that enhances integration of teachers' expertise and a parents' sense of responsibility. Together parents and educators join to bond a child's life experiences in a meaningful way.

Secondly, both parents and teachers "must acknowledge the scope and contributions of each and the necessity of the reciprocal relationship" (Moore, 1990, p. 4). For this to be successful there must be consistent communication and a common sense vision.

When both of these considerations are embedded in a partnership, students emerge as winners. Both are facilitators in the process of contributing to children's development.

Bishop (1990) describes the need to provide elementary school teachers with effective strategies to encourage parent involvement. Some of the strategies include

personal, two-way communication, home visits, employing positive approaches in an atmosphere that is non-threatening, and provisions for instructional guidance of ways parents can provide activities at home for their child. Based on her research study, it was concluded that these strategies were an effective means of improving schools and had positive benefits for parents, teachers, and students.

When parent involvement increases, there are positive influences on school effectiveness. Special programs that utilize parent volunteers are one way to encourage more parent involvement at the elementary level. The result of a study by Su (1989) showed a marked increase in parent involvement when consistent efforts are made to involve children in the activities, when educators communicate to parents that their input is worthwhile, and when school personnel maintain nonbiased opinions about parents.

The second area to be discussed is the research on the relationship of student achievement and success. When parents are involved in the educational process, research does suggest that parental involvement may improve students' learning (Epstein, 1984, 1991), but there are some inconsistencies in the research findings (Keith, 1991; Geyer & Feng, 1993). According to a recent review of the research, it has been concluded that the effects of parent involvement may vary with the age of the students studied. Most often, parental involvement is most effective for elementary youth. Parental involvement effects may also vary depending on the criteria being used for evaluating it. Grades have been shown to be more easily affected than test scores (Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987). Finally, there is little substantiation for determining whether actual involvement or the student's perceptions of involvement become the most important factors of learning (Keith, 1991).

For the purposes of this study, it can be ascertained that parent involvement does not seem to have a negative impact on student achievement at the elementary level from the researcher's point of view. The consensus from the effective schooling research supports parental involvement as a positive component to influence student achievement and overall school improvement (Effective Schooling Practices: A Research Synthesis, 1990; Becher, 1984).

The final area being addressed in the review of the research involves improving communication with elementary school parents through a parent involvement program. Truby (1987) conducted a study that indicated an increase of parent involvement when a carefully planned program is developed. The program should be comprehensive, long-lasting, and well-planned. When a well-designed program is implemented, parents take a more active part in their child's school and communicate much more frequently.

Moore (1990) summarizes three important reasons why parents should be included in the educational process to improve schools, to improve a child's educational achievement, and to improve the communication with parents in a targeted parent involvement program. First, parents are the most important and forceful part of a child's life. Second, parents' attitudes toward school directly influence children's attitudes toward school. Third, parents may be able to provide special insights into the educational process to enrich a child's learning experiences.

#### Uniqueness of the Study

The results of this field experience may be used as a catalyst for positive change in the parent involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools. Information gained from this study may provide a mechanism for strengthening the relationship among educators, families, and community members and improve student achievement and

attitudes toward school. The Illinois School Accreditation Process requires school administrators to provide documentation of parental involvement. This study has provided a program design that may be utilized.

CHAPTER III  
DESIGN OF THE STUDY  
General Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary parent involvement programs in small, rural communities in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness. The research questions were:

1. To what extent does parental involvement exist in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois?
2. How has parental involvement been effectively used in small, rural elementary schools?

Sample and Population

The setting of this study consisted of the following 60 targeted school districts in Illinois:

Momence CUSD #1	Tri-Point CUD #6J
Hersher CUSD #2	Prairie Central CUD #8
Manteno CUSD #5	Dwight #232
Grant Park CUD #6	Rooks Creek CCD #425
Bourbonnais #53	Cornell CCD #426
Bradley #61	Pontiac CCD #429
Pembroke CSD #259	Pontiac-Esmen CCD #430
Donovan UD #3	Odell CCD #435
Central UD #4	Saunemin CCD #438
Sheldon UD #5	Bismark CUD #1
Cissna Park UD #6	Westville CUD #2



Watseka UD #9	Georgetown-Ridge Farm #4
Iroquois West UD #10	Catlin CUD #5
Crescent City CCD #275	Rossville-Alvin CUD #7
Milford CCD #280	Potomac CUD #10
Bryce-Ash Grove CCD #284	Hoopeston CUD #11
Flanagan CUD #4	Jamaica CUD #12
Woodland CUD #5	Armstrong-Ellis CD #61
Villa Grove CUD #302	Oakwood CUD #76
Newman CUD #303	Bement CUD #5
Arthur CUD #305	Monticello CUD #25
Arcola CUD #306	Atwood-Hammond CUD #39
Fisher CUD #1	Deland-Weldon CUD #57
Mahomet-Seymour CUD #3	Cerro Gordo CUD #100
Tolono CUD #7	Tuscola CUD #301
Heritage CUD #8	Paxton-Buckley-Loda #10
Thomasboro CCD #130	Odgen CCD #212
Rantoul City Schools #137	Prairieview CCD #192
Ludlow CCD #142	Gifford CCD #188
Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley #5	St. Joseph CCD #169

The participants involved were the principals from 52 elementary schools that responded to the survey. The elementary schools are located in Educational Service Center #13, have enrollments of less than 5,000, and are primarily rural. The population of the sample consisted of schools with similar characteristics.

### Data Collection and Instrumentation

Using excerpts from the California Strategic Plan for Parental Involvement in Education: Recommendations for Transforming Schools through Family-Community-School Partnerships (1992), the researcher developed a survey instrument that was the basis for answering the two research questions. The survey was mailed to the principals at the targeted elementary schools. Turn-around time was approximately two weeks to receive survey responses from 41 of the participants (56%). The researcher mailed another survey 30 days later to increase the number of participants. Eleven participants responded raising the percentage of responses to 72%.

The actual survey sought respondents' perceptions of the parental involvement strategies that are currently being utilized in their districts and their effectiveness. The inquiry delineated specific criteria for each of the five types of parent involvement categorized in terms of Epstein's (1987) model of parental involvement strategies. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of their involvement in parental involvement by checking (✓) one of three boxes which state, "Now Occurs", "Does Not Fully Occur", or "Does Not Occur." At the same time, respondents were asked to respond to a three-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of the degree of effectiveness of the parental involvement strategy. A "Comments" section was provided for each of the five types of parent involvement on the survey form.

### Data Analysis

The data were collected, and the results were scored and compiled by the researcher. The information in Chapter IV is reported in table format using descriptive statistics to interpret the data.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

## Analysis of the Data

The Parent Involvement Survey was sent to 73 elementary principals who have been served by the Educational Service Center #13. Forty-one participants returned the Parent Involvement Survey which is 56%. The researcher sent out another survey 30 days later to increase the number of participants and 11 participants responded raising the percentage of responses to 72%.

The descriptive data from the survey included an analysis of the 52 responses received. The inquiry delineated specific criteria for each of the five types of parent involvement categorized in terms of Epstein's (1987) model of parental involvement strategies. Subjects were asked to respond by checking a box indicating that the criteria, "Now Occurs", "Does Not Fully Occur", or "Does Not Occur" which was used to formulate the extent of parental involvement currently utilized in their district. The degree of effectiveness of the parental involvement strategy was measured by a three-point scale asking the respondents to circle the most appropriate number: 1=Ineffective; 2=Adequate; and 3=Very effective. A "Comments" section was provided to allow for feedback on perceptions of the necessary components of an effective parental involvement program.

Ten items were included on this survey. For each of the five types of parental involvement, two criteria were listed. The criteria included specific examples to clarify the intent of each area.

Data have been analyzed and summarized in relation to the five types of parental involvement that are described in this paper. The format for the presentation of the

results includes a narrative description of the actual percentage of responses for each criteria and a summary of the results.

Table 1 describes Type 1 activities (Help all families establish home environments to support learning). For Criteria One (School offers workshops, materials, lectures, and other activities to promote a supportive home environment), 27% of the subjects indicated this is now occurring, 44% indicated this does not fully occur, and 29% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 19% who judged this criteria as ineffective, 50% judged it as adequate, 8% of the respondents judged it as very effective, and 23% did not respond.

For Criteria Two of Table 1 (School takes an active role in helping parents enhance their parenting and child-rearing skills), 33% indicated this is now occurring, 38% indicated this does not fully occur, and 27% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 23% who judged this as ineffective, 44% judged it as adequate, 6% judged this as very effective, and 27% did not respond.

---

**Table 1**

**TYPE 1: HELP ALL FAMILIES ESTABLISH HOME ENVIRONMENTS TO SUPPORT LEARNING.**

*Respondent's Perceptions*

<u>Criteria 1: School offers activities to promote a supportive home environment:</u>		<u>Criteria 2: School takes an active role in helping parents with parenting skills:</u>	
% THAT NOW OCCURS	27%	% THAT NOW OCCURS	33%
% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	44%	% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	38%
% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	29%	% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	27%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	0%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	2%
% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	19%	% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	23%
% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	50%	% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	44%
% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	8%	% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	6%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	23%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	27%

---

From the subjects surveyed, approximately one-third of the responses for Type 1 parent involvement indicated this is presently occurring in their school and approximately three-fourths feel this type of involvement is occurring to some degree. The overall effectiveness is judged by approximately two-thirds of the respondents who feel the involvement is adequate or better.

Several of the comments from the principals indicated that the preschool programs offer this type of parent involvement in their schools. Other comments include that many opportunities are available, but parents do not choose to participate.

Table 2 describes Type 2 activities (Design effective forms of communication to reach parents). For Criteria One (School promotes ongoing, two-way family-school communications), 87% of the subjects indicated this is now occurring, 13% indicated this does not fully occur, and no one indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 10% who judged this criteria as ineffective, 44% judged it as adequate, 44% judged it as very effective, and 2% did not respond.

For Criteria Two of Table 2 (Students and parents receive frequent assessment and advice about academic performance and behavior), 87% indicated this is now occurring, 12% indicated this does not fully occur, and 1% did not respond. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 4% who judged this as ineffective, 48% judged this as adequate, 44% judged this as very effective, and 4% did not respond.

Table 2

**TYPE 2: DESIGN EFFECTIVE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION TO REACH PARENTS.***Respondent's Perceptions*

<u>Criteria 1: School promotes ongoing two-way family-school communications:</u>		<u>Criteria 2: Students &amp; parents receive feedback on performance and behavior:</u>	
% THAT NOW OCCURS	87%	% THAT NOW OCCURS	87%
% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	13%	% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	12%
% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	0%	% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	0%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	0%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	1%
% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	10%	% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	4%
% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	44%	% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	48%
% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	44%	% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	44%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	2%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	4%

From the subjects surveyed, approximately nine out of ten of the responses for Type 2 parent involvement indicated this is presently occurring in their school and approximately one out of ten feel this type of involvement is occurring to some degree. The overall effectiveness is judged to be adequate or better by all respondents except for 4%, and they rated it as ineffective.

Comments from two respondents in this section indicated that their schools maintain good contact with their parents in this type of communication. Another respondent commented that the school tries to involve and communicate with parents but that the parents do not respond.

Table 3 describes Type 3 activities (Recruit and organize parent help and support). For Criteria One (School encourages parents to volunteer at the school with adequate training), 46% of the respondents indicated this is now occurring, 44% indicated this does not fully occur, and 10% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree

of effectiveness ranged from 17% who judged this criteria as ineffective, 52% judged this as adequate, 21% judged this as very effective, and 10% did not respond.

For Criteria Two of Table 3 (Parents support their children by attending school functions), 79% indicated this is now occurring, 19% indicated this does not fully occur, and 2% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 10% who judged this as ineffective, 29% judged this as adequate, 56% judged this as very effective, and 5% did not respond.

**Table 3**

**TYPE 3: RECRUIT AND ORGANIZE PARENT HELP AND SUPPORT.**

*Respondent's Perceptions*

<u>Criteria 1: School encourages parents to volunteer at school:</u>		<u>Criteria 2: Parents support their children by attending student performance:</u>	
% THAT NOW OCCURS	48%	% THAT NOW OCCURS	79%
% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	44%	% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	19%
% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	10%	% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	2%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	0%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	0%
% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	17%	% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	10%
% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	52%	% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	29%
% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	21%	% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	58%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	10%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	5%

From the subjects surveyed, approximately three-fifths of the responses for Type 3 parent involvement indicated this is presently occurring in their school and approximately nine-tenths feel this type of involvement is occurring to some degree. The overall effectiveness is judged by approximately nine-tenths of the respondents who feel the involvement is adequate or better.

Some comments from the respondents surveyed indicated that student performance activities were supported by parents but other types of activities may suffer because of lack of parent interest. Others indicated there were limited opportunities at

the kindergarten and first grade level and that sports activities were well attended by parents but other activities were not.

Table 4 describes Type 4 activities (Provide ideas to parents on how to help child at home). For Criteria One (School offers workshops and activities to improve learning skills at home), 42% of the subjects indicated this is now occurring, 37% indicated this does not fully occur, and 21% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 17% who judged this criteria as ineffective, 52% judged this as adequate, 14% judged this as very effective, and 17% did not respond.

For Criteria Two of Table 4 (Teachers communicate with parents on how to help children at home), 75% indicated this is now occurring, 25% indicated this does not fully occur, and no one indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 12% who judged this as ineffective, 52% judged this as adequate, 35% judged this as very effective, and 1% did not respond.

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**Table 4**  
**TYPE 4: PROVIDE IDEAS TO PARENTS ON HOW TO HELP CHILD AT HOME**

*Respondent's Perceptions*

<u>Criteria 1: School offers materials, workshops, &amp; other activities to parents:</u>	<u>Criteria 2: Teachers communicate with parents on how to help children:</u>
% THAT NOW OCCURS 42%	% THAT NOW OCCURS 75%
% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR 37%	% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR 25%
% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR 21%	% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR 0%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND 0%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND 0%
% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE 17%	% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE 12%
% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE 52%	% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE 52%
% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE 14%	% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE 35%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND 17%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND 1%

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From the subjects surveyed, approximately one-half of the responses for Type 4 parent involvement indicated this is presently occurring in their school and approximately four-fifths feel this type of involvement is occurring to some degree. The overall effectiveness is judged by seven-tenths of the respondents who feel the involvement as being adequate or better.

A respondent indicated that a workshop on showing parents how they can help with homework was excellent, but he would have liked a larger turnout. Another comment indicated that more parent/teacher conferences are needed. One respondent wrote that weekly "Friday Letters" were sent in addition to a monthly newsletter.

Table 5 describes Type 5 activities (Support parents as decision makers and develop their leadership, governance, advisory, and advocacy roles). For Criteria One (School recruits parents to perform in decision-making roles), 38% of the respondents indicated this is now occurring, 46% indicated this does not fully occur, and 17% indicated this does not occur at their school. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 19% who judged this criteria as ineffective, 44% judged this as adequate, 21% judged this as very effective, and 16% did not respond.

For Criteria Two of Table 5 (School trains parents to participate in governance roles), 8% indicated this is now occurring, 29% indicated this does not fully occur, 62% indicated this does not occur, and 1% did not respond. The degree of effectiveness ranged from 35% who judged this as ineffective, 25% judged this as adequate, 6% judged this as very effective, and 34% did not respond.

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**Table 5****TYPE 5: SUPPORT PARENTS AS DECISION MAKERS & DEVELOP THEIR LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY.***Respondent's Perceptions*

<u>Criteria 1: School recruits parents to take decision-making roles in PTA:</u>		<u>Criteria 2: School trains parents to participate in school governance roles:</u>	
% THAT NOW OCCURS	38%	% THAT NOW OCCURS	8%
% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	46%	% THAT DOES NOT FULLY OCCUR	29%
% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	16%	% THAT DOES NOT OCCUR	62%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	0%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	1%
% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	19%	% THAT FEEL IT IS INEFFECTIVE	35%
% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	44%	% THAT FEEL IT IS ADEQUATE	25%
% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	21%	% THAT FEEL IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE	6%
% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	16%	% THAT DID NOT RESPOND	34%

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From the respondents surveyed, approximately one-fifth of the responses for Type 5 parent involvement indicated this is presently occurring in their school and approximately three-fifths feel this type of involvement is occurring to some degree. The overall effectiveness is judged by approximately one-half of the respondents who feel the involvement as adequate or better.

A respondent commented in this section that an attempt was made to include more parents, but that the teachers complained that they felt the parents and the principal were interfering. Several comments reflect an attempt to improve in this area. Others indicated that parents had to be recruited to participate.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary parent involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness. The research questions focused on the extent of parental involvement in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois and how effective they are.

It was the writer's intent that the successful completion of this study will effectuate positive change in the parental involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools. The lack of comprehensive and systematic parental involvement in small, rural elementary schools prompted the investigation of parental involvement programs in similar size districts in this area.

Sixty elementary schools in ESC #13 were the targeted group that were surveyed. Fifty-two out of the 73 principals in the sample responded to the survey. This study delineated specific criteria for each of the five types of parental involvement categorized in terms of Epstein's (1987) model.

A review of the literature on school effectiveness indicated that effective schools are supportive of the important roles of parents and community members in the education of children. The five types of parental involvement categorized by Epstein (1987) were reviewed with suggestions for implementation. The need for a comprehensive, systematic plan that incorporates the best practices outlined in this typology are crucial. Four major steps (analyzing, action-planning, implementing, and evaluation) were discussed as a plan to accomplish the program activities.

A review of the research focused on increasing parental involvement as a means of improving schools, the relationship of student achievement and success through parental involvement programs, and improving communication with parents through a targeted parental involvement program.

The current research showed that when parental involvement increases, there are positive influences on school effectiveness. There is a positive relationship between student success and parental involvement programs at the elementary level. Some inconsistencies in the research findings were noted. A strong component to a well-designed plan is the need for open lines of communication with parents and a plan that is systematic and well-organized.

#### Findings

The analysis of data provided a realistic overview of the parental involvement programs currently in place in small, rural elementary school districts in East Central Illinois noting that the majority of the principals surveyed felt that their schools are promoting ongoing, two-way family-school communications (Type 2); ideas are being offered to help parents with their child at home (Type 4); and that parents are supportive of school activities (Type 3). These are the same areas that are perceived as being adequate or very effective. The discussion of the findings from this study is centered on the two questions posed by this study.

In reviewing the results of the parental involvement survey, the findings concerning the extent of parental involvement in small, rural elementary districts in East Central Illinois in relationship to school effectiveness were:

1. Type 1 activities (Helping all families establish home environments to support learning) are being utilized in 71% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed

(Approximately 40% indicated this does not fully occur). The criteria included workshops, materials, lectures, videotapes, and other activities to promote a supportive home environment and enhancing parenting and child-rearing skills.

2. Type 2 activities (Designing effective forms of communication to reach parents) are utilized in 99% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed (Approximately 12% indicated this does not fully occur). The criteria included ongoing, two-way communication about the school curriculum and reporting frequently the academic performance and behavior of students.

3. Type 3 activities (Recruiting and organizing parent help and support) are utilized in approximately 95% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed (Approximately 30% indicated this does not fully occur). The criteria included encouraging parent volunteers and parental support of student achievement.

4. Type 4 activities (Providing ideas to parents on how to help their child at home) which included providing assistance to parents in helping their child improve learning skills at home are utilized by 79% of the schools surveyed (37% indicated this does not fully occur). Communicating via newsletters, conferences, workshops, and other ways are utilized by 100% of the schools surveyed (25% indicated that this does not fully occur).

5. Type 5 activities (Supporting parents as decision makers) which includes recruiting parents to take roles in PTA, advisory councils, or other committees are utilized by 84% of the schools surveyed (40% indicated this does not fully occur). Training parents to participate in effective leadership and school governance roles are utilized by 37% of the schools surveyed (29% indicated this does not fully occur).

Based on the results of the study, the findings concerning the effectiveness of parental involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools in East Central Illinois were:

1. Type 1 activities (Helping all families establish home environments to support learning) are perceived as adequate or better in approximately 54% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed.

2. Type 2 activities (Designing effective forms of communication to reach parents) are perceived as adequate or better in approximately 47% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed.

3. Type 3 activities (Recruiting and organizing parent help and support) are perceived as adequate or better in approximately 79% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed.

4. Type 4 activities (Providing information to parents on how to help their child at home) are perceived as adequate or better by approximately 78% of the schools surveyed for both of the criteria listed.

5. Type 5 activities (Supporting parents as decisions makers) are perceived as effective in 65% of the schools surveyed in the area of recruiting parents to take decision making roles in PTA, advisory councils, or other committees. Thirty-one percent of the schools surveyed perceived the training of parents to assume these roles as adequate or better.

The necessary components of an effective parental involvement program were also investigated. In reviewing the results of the parental involvement survey, these are some generalities from some of the comments that were received from the principals who responded:

1. Early intervention programs provide a model that have proven to have components useful for an effective parental involvement program.
2. Both parents and educators must acknowledge the contribution of each and the necessity for a reciprocal relationship.
3. Both parents and school staff must show an interest in working together to help children.
4. A parenting group should be maintained to support school functions.
5. A school should communicate the school's mission and goals to parents.
6. A school should provide many opportunities for parents to be informed about what is happening at the school.
7. A school should work toward improving parents' participation in governance roles.

### Conclusions

Based on the results gathered, the writer feels that it is safe to conclude that the majority of small, rural elementary school principals in ESC #13 who responded to the survey perceived parental involvement as an important component of effective schools. A key factor to successful programs is promoting a two-way communication link between home and school. Based on the comments received, it can also be generalized that more needs to be done to promote an interest in the schools so more parents will become involved.

It can also be concluded from the survey data that the majority of the parental involvement programs currently in place include provisions for designing effective forms of communication to reach parents (Type 1) via workshops, meetings, and academic and behavior advice from the school. Other areas where parental involvement programs are

utilized more extensively are in student performance activities (Type 3) and newsletters, conferences, and calendars sent home to parents (Type 4).

Areas that are weak include training parents to participate in school governance roles (Type 5) and offering workshops, lectures, and other activities to promote supportive home environments (Type 1). The most ineffective area is perceived as the area of training parents to participate in effective leadership and school governance roles (Type 5) with the most effective areas as the communication with parents on how to help the child at home through newsletters, conferences, and workshops (Type 4).

#### Recommendations

The recommendations presented are designed to assist other educators and professionals who may desire to investigate similar parental involvement programs in relationship to school effectiveness.

1. It is recommended that all schools develop more comprehensive programs of parental involvement to help more families become knowledgeable partners in their child's education.
2. It is recommended that specific practices in the school that encourage home/school involvement and guide parents in how to help at home should be encouraged and developed through both policy and practice.
3. It is recommended that a program implemented must be the outcome of careful planning and meet the requirement of the existing situation.
4. It is the researcher's belief that in order to have an effective school, principals must assume an active leadership role and direct involvement in promoting parental involvement programs.



5. This study represented the perceptions and opinions of a small sampling of principals. Similar studies must be conducted, on a much higher scale, to obtain more input on the relationship of parental involvement programs and effective schools.

6. It is the researcher's opinion that, educationally, the results of this study can begin to provide answers to the extent of parental involvement programs in small, rural elementary schools and their perceived effectiveness. Additionally, the research and literature review provides generalizable results to develop a plan for a parental involvement program in small, rural elementary schools. The findings are important because, while parental involvement is currently in vogue in the educational realm, it is being advocated as a method for improving United States schools.

7. This information will be utilized to develop a model parent involvement program that incorporates Epstein's five types of parental involvement in the researcher's school district.

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Appendix

Parent Involvement Survey

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Specific criteria for each of the five types of parent involvement categorized in terms of Epstein's (1987) model of parental involvement strategies are listed below. Under these categories are specific statements for the respondent. Information is requested to facilitate a review of elementary school-level parent involvement programs and to help schools during the planning, implementing, and evaluation process.

School \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE 1: HELP ALL FAMILIES ESTABLISH HOME ENVIRONMENTS TO SUPPORT LEARNING.**

Criteria	Check (✓) the box that applies.			Circle appropriate answer.		
	Now Occurs	Does Not Fully Occur	Does Not Occur	1=Ineffective	2=Adequate	3=Very effective
The school offers workshops, materials, lectures, videotapes, & other activities that promote a supportive home environment in which parents serve as models & provide proper nutrition, clothing, shelter, & safety.				1	2	3
The school takes an active role in helping parents enhance their parenting & child-rearing skills.				1	2	3

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE 2: DESIGN EFFECTIVE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION TO REACH PARENTS.**

Criteria	Check (✓) the box that applies.			Circle appropriate answer.		
	Now Occurs	Does Not Fully Occur	Does Not Occur	1=Ineffective	2=Adequate	3=Very effective
The school promotes ongoing, two-way family-school communications. Workshops, meetings, P/T conferences, & communications from principal & teachers will be used to inform parents about the school curriculum at all levels.				1	2	3
Students & parents receive frequent assessment of & advice about academic performance & behavior.				1	2	3

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**TYPE 3: RECRUIT AND ORGANIZE PARENT HELP AND SUPPORT.**

Criteria	Check (✓) the box that applies.			Circle appropriate 1=Ineffective 2=Adequate 3=Very effective
	Now Occurs	Does Not Fully Occur	Does Not Occur	
The school encourages all parents & other family members to volunteer at school to improve the school & its programs. Volunteers are trained in ways to support goals & student learning.				1      2      3
Parents support their children by attending student performances, sports activities, parent meetings, & workshops.				1      2      3
Comments:				

**TYPE 4: PROVIDE IDEAS TO PARENTS ON HOW TO HELP CHILD AT HOME.**

Criteria	Check (✓) the box that applies.			Circle appropriate an 1=Ineffective 2=Adequate 3=Very effective
	Now Occurs	Does Not Fully Occur	Does Not Occur	
The school offers materials, workshops, & other activities to assist parents in helping their children build or improve learning skills at home.				1      2      3
Teachers communicate with parents on how to help children at home through newsletters, conferences, workshops, calendars, and communications from teachers & principal.				1      2      3
Comments:				

**TYPE 5: SUPPORT PARENTS AS DECISION MAKERS & DEVELOP THEIR LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, ADVISORY, AND ADVOCACY ROLES.**

Criteria	Check (✓) the box that applies.			Circle appropriate an 1=Ineffective 2=Adequate 3=Very effective
	Now Occurs	Does Not Fully Occur	Does Not Occur	
The school recruits parents to take decision-making roles in PTA or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or other committees. Independent advocacy groups monitor the school's activities & work for school improvement.				1      2      3
The school trains parents to participate in effective leadership & school governance roles.				1      2      3
Comments:				

(Excerpts from: California Strategic Plan for Parental Involvement in Education: Recommendations for Transforming Schools through Family-Community-School Partnerships, 1992)