

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON THE LITERACY
ACHIEVEMENT OF LOW-INCOME PRE-KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

by

LaWanda Dale Williams

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Educational Leadership

College of Education

Charlotte

2010

Approved by:

Dr. Corey Lock

Dr. John Gretes

Dr. Lynn Ahlgrim-Delzell

Dr. Jonathan Marks

© 2010
LaWanda Dale Williams
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

LAWANDA DALE WILLIAMS. The Impact of parental involvement on the literacy achievement of low-income pre-kindergarten students. (Under the direction of DR. COREY LOCK)

The focus of this correlational study was to determine whether and to what degree a statistical relationship exists between parental involvement and literacy achievement for pre-kindergarten students from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Secondly, an independent *t*-test was used to examine if there was a statistical difference between high and low levels of parental involvement. Finally, to examine the relationship between three aspects (home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school conferencing) of parental involvement and academic achievement, a multiple regression test was conducted.

For most students, parents are their first teachers so it should come as no surprise that parental involvement is generally accepted to be an educational input that affects student achievement (Yan & Lin, 2005). The common wisdom is that parental involvement and strong schools are inseparable. It is not possible to have one without the other.

The study sample included parents or guardians and low-income pre-kindergarten students at an urban pre-kindergarten site. Data were gained through the use of the Family Involvement Questionnaire-Early Childhood (FIQ- Fantuzzo, Munis, and Perry, 2002), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (PPVT-III, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening PreK (PALS-PreK, Invernizzi, Sullivan, Meier & Swank, 2004).

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my beloved sister,

Beverly Gail Oates

who became an angel way before I was ready to let her go.

I also dedicate this study to my two loving grandsons,

Dylan Rion Williams

and

Deion Ralston Williams

the best little angels a grandma could have.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In Ecclesiastes 9:11 it is stated that "...the race is not to the swift..." so I give my Lord and Savior the highest praise for allowing me to endure this journey to the end. I am truly amazed by His grace that made this moment possible.

Deepest gratitude is expressed to my remarkable husband, Dr. Dennis R. Williams and my children, Dennis II (Rebekah), Daniel (Nicole) and Danielle for their love and support during this study. I want to thank my wonderful parents, Charles and Pearl Moore, for their prayers and support as I labored to complete this educational milestone. Words cannot begin to express how much their love and support mean to me. I would like to thank very special people, Debbie Moore, Antonia George, Janet Lewis, Qunita Wells-Martin and Moease Caldwell for always having a listening ear when I needed one. I would like to thank the St. Rest and Faith families for their many prayers. Finally, I would like to thank my sister Beverly for all of the memories that have become the wind beneath my wings.

Sincere appreciation is extended to the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Corey Lock for persevering with me until the end. I would like to thank Dr. John Gretes and Dr. Jonathan Marks for their contribution to my professional growth. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Lynn Ahlgrim-Delzell, research advisor, for going well above the call of duty to review and advise me on my data. Dr. Lynn, thank you for jumping in and holding my feet to the fire.

It is with sincere gratitude that I thank the study site participants - administrative staff, facility, the pre-kindergarten students and their families. Without their participation, this study would not have materialized.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Research Question	4
Significance of the Study	4
Definition of Terms	4
Summary	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Introduction	8
Defining Parental Involvement	11
Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement	12
Levels of Parental Involvement	13
Aspects of Parental Involvement that Impact Student Achievement	17
Summary	21
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	23
Purpose	23
Research Setting	23
Type of Study	24
Sample	25
Data Collection	26
Instruments	27

	vii
Family Involvement Questionnaire	28
Literacy Assessment Data	29
Data Analysis	34
Summary	34
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	36
Participant Sample	36
Study Participants' Demographics	37
Family Involvement Questionnaire	39
School-Based Involvement Results	39
Home-Based Involvement Results	40
Home-School Conferencing Results	40
PPVT-III and PALS-PreK Data	42
Research Question 1	43
Research Question 2	44
Research Question 3	45
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	48
Summary of Findings	48
FIQ Results Discussion	50
Implications	51
Recommendations	54
REFERENCES	59
APPENDIX A: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER	64
APPENDIX B: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER	66

	viii
APPENDIX C: THANK YOU / REMINDER NOTICE	68
APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS	70

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Frequency Distribution of Participants Demographics.	39
TABLE 2: Percent of Family Involvement Questionnaire per Item in Each Dimension.	42
TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics for Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum.	44
TABLE 4: Group Statistics for PPVT-III and PALS-PreK Assessment Quartiles.	45
TABLE 5: Multiple Regression using FIQ subscale and Demographic Variables as Predictors of PPVT-III Score.	47
TABLE 6: Multiple Regression using FIQ subscale and Demographic Variables as Predictors of PALS-PreK Score.	48

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

As educators face the universal problem of meeting the ever-increasing academic achievement demands placed on today's students, they have become keenly aware that working in isolation is not the answer. Engaging the child's first teachers – parents, very well may be the missing piece from the academic achievement puzzle.

America must take a closer look at parental involvement and its impact on literacy achievement. The term literacy achievement or student achievement refers to growth as measured by test scores on standardized assessments and the attainment of predetermined educational outcomes. The earlier parents get involved in a child's educational process and stay involved, the better the child's achievement will be. The most effective forms of parent involvement are those that engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home. When families engage their children in learning activities at home, they are attempting to help their children become ready for school (Ortega & Rameriz, 2002).

Parental involvement and healthy relationships between home and school are needed to improve school performance in early childhood education. When parents invest early, are involved, and send children who are ready to learn, those children embrace the school experience with an eagerness to learn and positive feelings. They are much more likely to succeed in school as indicated by higher grades, test scores and graduation rates.

Prepared students have better school attendance; show increased motivation and have better self-esteem. Students with parents involved are more likely to have decreased use of drugs and alcohol and fewer instances of violent behavior. They are also more likely to become responsible, productive members of society (National Education Association, 2006).

Although parental involvement is an important predictor of academic success, most schools with at-risk students do not have much parental involvement and many children are born into a life that is filled with disadvantages, often putting them “at-risk” of school failure long before they enter school. Clearly, the time to intervene with students “at-risk” of school failure is early. There is a wealth of evidence that suggests that children “at-risk” of school failure could benefit from increased parental involvement and early intervention. However, if early intervention is not gained at home through parental involvement, preschool or kindergarten programs that are characterized as formal, structured, and intensive would be of great benefit to these children. Results can also be obtained from informal programs that are not haphazard in nature. Early childhood intervention programs for the economically disadvantaged strive to prevent negative adjustment outcomes such as school failure that is associated with poverty and its stressful consequences.

Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz (2008) contend that extensive work has been conducted on the impact of the relationship between parental involvement in children’s schooling and children’s literacy achievement, however, there is much less research about parental involvement in preschool. It has been argued that more research is needed on preschool and parental involvement, given the importance of emergent academic

development (Arnold et al., 2008). In short, parental involvement has become a major target for improving student achievement because American education has rediscovered parental involvement as the latest panacea to improving student achievement (Keith & Keith, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact parent involvement had on literacy achievement, particularly for pre-kindergarten students from poverty-stricken backgrounds. As family involvement starts to play an increasingly and more prominent role in public education, it can no longer be viewed as a frill or an added plus. School leaders must develop programs and partnerships that address the issue of increasing parental involvement to impact students' literacy achievement. By considering involvement as a means for progressively empowering parents, more cohesive and effective programs may be achieved. Empowering parents should be of particular interest to communities with a high percentage of "at-risk" families. In order for this goal to be accomplished schools, families, and communities must work together to promote successful students. With more and more research pointing to the vital role that parents play throughout their child's formal education, school leaders must make every effort to value the culture, community, goals, and strengths of all families and encourage relationships that are based on trust, mutual support, and a commitment to students. It is agreed by parents and teachers that family involvement can make a significant difference in student performance; however, there must be healthy relationships between home and school that positively contribute to student literacy achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Research Question

This study examined the extent to which parental involvement had a impact on literacy achievement of at-risk pre-kindergarten children at an urban elementary school, receiving Title I funding. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement among low-income pre-kindergarten students?
2. Is there a difference in literacy achievement among students with more parental involvement versus those students with less parental involvement?
3. Can any of the three aspects of parental involvement predict literacy achievement?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that findings can inform how parents' parental practices impact student achievement. The children can benefit if the findings build on the understanding that parental involvement impacts literacy achievement and enables students to achieve at higher levels. It could give educators another tool to bring low achieving, poverty students to higher levels of literacy achievement.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will apply:

1. "At-risk" learners – Students who are most likely to fail academically. A majority of academically at-risk students come from poverty backgrounds, experience social and family stress, are characterized by a lack of control over their lives, have low self-esteem, and are members of minority

groups. The most defining factor used by local LEAs to identify at-risk students is free and reduced lunch status.

2. Bright Beginnings Program – A Title One, full day literacy based program for four year olds.
3. Head Start – A federally funded program for children ages 3 -5. The program promotes school readiness and engages parents in their children's learning.
4. Home-Based Involvement – Parents involvement in establishing and actively participating in a supportive learning environment for their children at home (Epstein, 1995).
5. Home-School Conferencing- Meaningful two-way communication between parents, teachers and school personnel (Epstein, 1995).
6. More at Four Program – A Pre-Kindergarten program that serves children who are at risk and prepares them for success in school.
7. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001- The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and is based on four principles that provide a framework through which families, educators, and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning. The four principles comprising the framework are accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanding parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research.

8. Parent - the term parent refers to any caregiver who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for children, including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, and stepparents.
9. Parental Involvement - Parental involvement is defined under No Child Left Behind as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). [Section 9101(32), ESEA.]
10. School-Based Involvement – Parents' active positive participation in their children's school environment (Epstein, 1995).
11. Title One - Title I is the largest federally funded elementary and secondary education program. It evolved from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which was enacted as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. The program provides for supplementary academic assistance to economically and educationally disadvantaged children.

Summary

For most students, parents are their first teachers so it should come as no surprise that parental involvement is generally accepted to be an educational input that impacts student achievement (Yan & Lin, 2005). The common wisdom is that parental involvement and strong schools are inseparable. In short, parental involvement yields hefty benefits for improving student achievement.

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature used to support the study. Chapter 3 is a description of the research methodologies, purpose of the study, research setting, study subjects, study sample, threats to validity, data collection, instruments used and methodology summary. In Chapter 4 results data from the study are presented. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study along with study recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Tight budgets and increasingly high academic standards are forcing school leaders to face the reality that they need help in meeting the ever-increasing achievement standards being placed on students today. Refocusing the efforts of parental involvement has the potential to yield valuable dividends for schooling in America. Conversely, parental involvement is receiving much attention from education advocates, parent organizations, and government leaders including the President of the United States.

The documented importance of parental involvement and success in school has prompted the United States government to be active in establishing standards for parental involvement in American schools. Major legislation, such as the 1994 and 2001 reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Act have mandated increased involvement of parents in the educational process for their children. The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, entitled the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), continues a legislative commitment to parental involvement that began back in 1965. The 1988 and the 1994 reauthorizations focused on school-parent compacts and the parental involvement funding formula. However, in 2001 there was a notable shift in the expected role of parental involvement in schools. The Act contends that family involvement in education is crucial. The new law empowered parents to be informed and empowered decision-makers in their children's education. The 2001 reauthorization includes increased notification to parents, more educational options and involvement in

governance. The Act requires mandatory testing of students at various grade levels, which symbolizes the increasing importance of State Assessments as measures of literacy achievement. As a result, one of the major areas of study regarding the effect parental involvement has on student achievement centers on state assessments. NCLB gives parents greater opportunities to partner with schools to ensure every child receives the best education possible (National Association for Partners in Education, 2001).

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) contends that schools with well-structured, quality parent involvement programs experience profound benefit for students, parents, teachers, and overall school quality. Therefore, the national PTA in collaboration with parent involvement researchers and other national leaders developed a set of six standards for parent and family involvement programs. The three fold purpose of the national standards are (1) to promote meaningful parent and family participation, (2) to increase awareness regarding the components of effective programs and (3) to provide guidelines for schools that wish to evaluate and improve their programs (National PTA, 2000).

Interest in and the promotion of parent involvement as an important influence on learning is not just confined to education. In an article published in *The School Administrator*, Former First Lady Barbara Bush proclaimed that schools need to “Bring parents back to the fold (1991, p.48). President Barack Obama asserts that parental involvement has a profound impact on the schooling process. In a declaration made by him in an address to the Joint Sessions of Congress in February 2009, the President said, “... There is no program or policy that can substitute for a mother or father who will attend those parent-teacher conferences, or help with homework after dinner, or turn off

the TV, put away the video games, and read to their children.” President Obama said that he speaks not just as a President but also as a father when he says, “The responsibility for our children’s education must begin at home” (Obama, 2009).

Extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between parental involvement in children’s schooling and children’s literacy achievement for grades kindergarten through twelve. There is much less research about parental involvement and its impact on literacy achievement during the preschool years. (Arnold, Zelig, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008).

The aim of the literature review is to share research relating to the three key questions guiding this study:

1. What is the relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement among low-income pre-kindergarten students?
2. Is there a difference in literacy achievement among students with more parental involvement versus those students with less parental involvement?
3. Can any of the three aspects of parental involvement predict literacy achievement?

The next sections of the literature review are organized to address operational definitions for parental involvement and the aforementioned research questions, followed by a summary of the key points.

Defining Parental Involvement

For the purpose of this study, the term parent refers to any guardian who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for children, including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents or stepparents. The operational definitions of parental involvement vary in educational literature. Prior to the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA, 2001), parental involvement was most commonly defined as parental aspirations for their children's literacy achievement (Bloom, 1980), parents communication with children about education and school matters (Christenson et al., 1992), parents' communication with teachers about their children (Epstein, 1991) and parental supervision at home (Keith et al., 1993).

Greater specificity and a more comprehensive definition for parental involvement were introduced by the 2002 reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 2002). In Section 9101(332) of the ESEA, parental involvement is defined as "participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including ensuring that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118." (NCLB, 2002, Section 9101(32). Fantuzzo (2002), Epstein (2001) Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon (2002) also provided similar definitions for parental involvement. Their definition of parental involvement includes home-based, school-based and home school conferencing activities such as promoting a

learning environment at home, volunteering in the child's school, helping with homework, and interacting with the child's teacher (Fantuzzo, 2002, Epstein, 2001; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2002).

Recent research conducted by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, (2005) included a meaningful insight that broadened the understanding of parental involvement. Their research includes considering the difference between the parents' attitudes or feelings about the child's education and schooling and the parent's activities, or actual participation in school activities. This distinction appears to be significant when considering the impact of parent involvement on a child's academic performance (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2005).

Parental Involvement and Literacy Achievement

Parental involvement is a key factor in school improvement efforts. For students to reach their full potential, parents and the community must take an active role in the educational process. Researchers have found parent involvement in a child's education to be associated with a child's academic performance, as measured by the child's scores on standardized achievement tests, by classroom grades, and by teacher ratings of the child's academic performance in the classroom (Bogenschneider, 1997).

Christenson (2004), Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) suggest the potential importance of parent involvement in fostering emergent academic skills development in preschool children (Christenson, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Parents who are involved in their children's preschool may be more knowledgeable about school activities, and thus better able to complement classroom learning. Involved parents are more likely to help build positive relationships between children and their teachers, foster

positive feelings about school in their children, and generally support children's social and academic development, all of which may facilitate learning. In addition to immediate benefits, early involvement patterns could influence later involvement, and help build a foundation of skills with ongoing effects (Clements, Reynolds, & Hickey, 2004; Jimerson et al., 1999).

Marcon (1999) demonstrated that, among pre-school children, increased parent involvement was positively associated with the child's mastery of basic early academic skills. Parent involvement was defined in this study by the number of "yes" or "no" responses for four parent and teacher activities (parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences, home visits by the teacher, extended class visits by the parent, and parental help with a class activity) (Marcon, 1999).

Levels of Parental Involvement

Parent involvement is associated with higher student achievement (Jeynes, 2005). The more families support their children's learning and educational progress, both in quality and over time, the more their children tend to do well in school (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). When parents support their child, engage in developmentally appropriate interaction and respect the child's growing autonomy, children learn to develop social skills that they are able to transfer from the home to the school context. A study of kindergarten children found that positive interaction between mother and child that is sensitive and elicits pro-social behavior impacts a child's social and academic performance in middle school.

Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children's learning (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

A study with ethnically diverse kindergarteners and their mothers found that when mother and child shared a warm, positive relationship an increase could be seen in mathematics and literacy achievement.

Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into teenage and even adult years (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Research indicates that when parents are actively involved in their children's education at the middle/high school level they tend to do better in school than students whose parents are less involved. For example, Feinstein and Symons (1999) found that parental interest in their child's education was the single most powerful predictor of achievement at age 16.

A study conducted by Keith and Keith (1993) to measure the effect of parental involvement on eighth grade student achievement defined parent involvement as educational aspirations, which would be a parent's hopes and expectations for their children's education, from less than high school to higher schooling after college. According to the authors, parent involvement would also include parent-child communication. This was measured by how often children reported talking to their parents about planning their high school program, school activities, and what they are studying. The amount of home structure was also used as a measure. This area focused on the family's rules about keeping up grades, doing homework and watching TV. The final area included as involvement measured whether parents took part in PTA meetings, visited schools and or contacted the school about volunteering. Students' scores on tests in reading, math, science and social studies measured student achievement. The results of the study found that parent involvement has a powerful effect on eighth graders'

achievement. Additional research using the data found that parental involvement is correlated more highly with, and is more predictive of, students learning than is families' SES (Keith & Keith, 1993).

Previous research has produced mixed findings with regard to differences in the level of parent involvement across ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are typically characterized by similar cultural norms, religion, values and family patterns. Specifically, several studies report that parent involvement was found to be lower among African-American parents and Hispanic parents when compared to European-American parents (Kohl et al., 2000; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). This finding was explained in both studies as representing differences in what the parents' perceived role is in their child's education and their view of the school and the teacher. For instance, Kohl et al., (2002) speculated that African-American parents had fewer positive school experiences of their own and may view their child's teacher with discomfort or even resentment.

Children from families with involved parents, regardless of their backgrounds and incomes are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores (Henderson & Mapp, 2007). In one study, when low-income African American families maintained continually high rates of parent involvement in elementary school, children were more likely to complete high school. Moreover, when these same parents participated in schools continually for a period of three or more years, their children completed more years of schooling than children of parents with less consistent involvement. The study suggest that continuous and consistent parent involvement in elementary school shields and protects children from the negative influences of poverty and may be one approach to reducing the achievement gap between white and non-white students (Henderson & Mapp, 2007).

A study of low-income, urban four year olds found that increased parental involvement was associated with positive development in communication, daily living and motor skills for preschool children, especially boys. The study examined passive parental involvement such as parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and other forms of communication to see if a positive impact could be noted. The study also examined active parental involvement such as volunteering and class visits to measure the impact. The results were significant for both passive and active involvement. The results contend that children whose parents have increased contact between home and school can contribute to school readiness for at risk children (Marcon, 1999).

Jeynes (2005) conducted a meta-analysis on the literacy achievement of students whose parents are actively involved in their education compared to that of their counterparts whose parents are not involved. The results of the study found that parental involvement was consistently associated with higher achievement, grades, and test scores. Jeynes (2005), contends that the achievement results hold true for all students including minorities. The achievement scores of children with highly involved parents averaged about .5-.6 of a standard deviation higher than children with less involved parents.

Research conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2002) on parental involvement suggests that effectively engaging parents in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of educational reform. They contend that all parents regardless of income, education level, or cultural background want to be involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well in school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). When families are

involved and help their children both at home and at school, they achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, demonstrate attitudes that are more positive and behavior, graduate at higher rates and have greater enrollment in higher education (National Education Association – Help for Parents, 2005).

In a meta-analysis study conducted by Fan and Chen (1999) different facets of parent involvement were examined to determine whether some had more of an effect on students' literacy achievement. In the study, parent involvement was measured by parents' educational aspirations for children, their communication about school-related activities, parents' supervision of activities, parents' participation in school activities and overall parental involvement. Student achievement was defined by grade point average, test scores, promotion and teacher ratings. The findings of the study concluded that the impact of parent involvement on student achievement was noticeable and apparent (Fan & Chen, 1999).

Aspects of Parental Involvement that Impact Student Achievement

Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to improved student achievement (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997). Downey (2002), conducted a study based on the impact of parents' interaction with children at home. The study concluded that by creating a standard of high parent involvement, pressure would be applied to parents to participate. Downey (2002) contends that when parents are involved and know each other, children more closely identify with the school and tend to do better in school. In analyzing this area Downey (2002), examined authoritative parenting, permissive parenting and authoritarian

parenting styles to determine their relationships to school success (Downey, 2002). He found that a parent's interaction with children at home has a greater effect on school performance than on how parents interact with the school.

Parent involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement (Clark, 2000). Parents with higher expectations for their children are more likely to set higher standards for their children's schooling and social functioning than parents with lower expectations. A study conducted by Fan and Chen (2001) noted that parental expectations and attitudes, rather than specific behaviors such as involvement in school activities are better predictors of academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001). According to the meta-analysis conducted by Jaynes (2005) to determine which aspect of parental involvement has the greatest impact on literacy achievement, the largest effect size emerged for parental expectations.

Epstein (2001) maintains that the main reason to create partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in life. Her research may help correct the widespread misconception that any practice that involves families will raise children's achievement test scores. Instead, in the short term, certain practices are more likely than others to influence students' skills and scores, whereas other practices are more likely to affect attitudes and behavior. Epstein's six types of involvement can guide the development of opportunities for family involvement at school and at home, with important results for everyone (Epstein, 2001).

Epstein's (1995) framework was used to operationalize parental involvement in a study conducted by McWayne et al., (2004). Epstein (1995) framed parental involvement into six categories that include (a) parenting practices at home, (b)

communication between school and home, (c) volunteering in the school, (d) parents participation with student learning at home, (e) decision-making process and, (f) collaboration with the community. Parenting practices at home (learning activities that parents engage in at home to help and assist their children in developing academic abilities), as rated by the child's parent, had the strongest association with teacher-rated reading and mathematics achievement. McWayne et al., (2004) found that increased parent involvement was positively related to teacher ratings of kindergarten children's reading and mathematics achievement.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) extended the work of McWayne et al., (2004) by including the frequency with which parents engage in school and home-based activities, as well as the teacher's perception of the value or importance the parent places on education. These three types of parent involvement (home, school, and teacher perception) together accounted for eight percent of the variance when predicting standardized reading scores.

Hill and Craft (2003) found that parent involvement was a significant predictor of standardized mathematics achievement test scores among kindergarten children. Parent involvement was defined in this study as the activities parents engage in at home and at school, and the teacher's perception of the parent's attitude toward education. The teacher's perception on the parent's attitude toward education was more significantly related to the child's reading and mathematics performance, as rated by the child's teacher, than was activities parents engage in.

Thus, while both activities and attitudes are components of parent involvement, some previous research has found that the attitude the parent has towards education and

school is positively associated with the child's academic performance, whereas increased frequency of activities was not associated with the child's academic performance. These findings may be due to the lack of discrimination in previous studies on the reason for the parents participating in school related activities. For instance, parents may attend parent-teacher conferences to better understand their child's academic skills and to build a strong home-school connection, or they may attend a parent-teacher conference to tell the teacher of concerns over their child's abilities or because the teacher requested a conference due to behavioral or academic difficulties in the classroom. Current frameworks of parent involvement do not appear to adequately account for the different reasons parents may partake in involvement activities.

Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry and Childs (2004) conducted one study showing favorable results toward the aspects of parental involvement. The study examined parent ratings of involvement in Head Start on a multidimensional scale that assessed a parent's overall involvement in school-based, home-based and conferencing strategies. According to Fantuzzo et al., (2004) a strong association was found between home-base involvement strategies and children's receptive vocabulary skills as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (Fantuzzo et al., 2004).

A parent's positive attitude toward education and school was found to be positively associated with positive child academic outcomes (Kohl, et al., 2000; Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 2005). Consistent with this finding, Izzo et al., (1999) found that among kindergarten through third grade children, the parent's positive attitude, rather than quantity or frequency of parent involvement behaviors, predicted improvement in the child's academic performance.

Catsambis (1998) using data from a large, long-term national database provided by the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) sponsored by the National Center from Educational Statistics examined the effects of Epstein's six types of parent involvement in the high school setting. Catsambis (1998) measured the impact each of the six types of involvement had on student achievement. Student achievement was measured by standardized test scores and total credit completed in math, English, and science. In the study, families were compared by social background and composition to determine if these factors impacted how parents interacted with the school and their children. Language backgrounds, engagement in school and achievement records were also used as comparative factors to measure the impact of involvement. Based on the conclusion of study findings, Catsambis (1998) concluded that the most effective types of 12th grade parent involvement are not aimed at supervising students' behavior, but rather are aimed at advising and guiding teen's academic decisions (Catsambis, 1998).

Summary

Educational research literature clearly suggests that there is a correlation between parental involvement and student literacy achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Studies conducted by Christenson (2004), Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), and Marcon (1999) all support this notion. A closer look at the relationship between parental involvement and student literacy achievement reveals that there is considerable evidence to support the assertion that the more parents are involved the greater student achievement. A review of the work conducted by Miedel and Reynolds (1999), Feinstein and Symons (1999), Keith and Keith (1993) Henderson and Mapp (2002) and Jeynes (2005) support this claim. The research regarding which parental involvement activities

have the greatest impact on student literacy achievement is not conclusive. However, it appears that parents expectations (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005) attitudes (Kohl, et al., 2000; Rimm-Kaufman, et al., 2005) and home-base activities (Fantuzzo et al., 2004) impact student achievement more positively than at school-based or conferencing activities. Furthermore, while much research has been conducted in these areas for students in grades kindergarten through 12, much less research has been conducted for the pre-kindergarten years. Thusly, this study, which looked at these assertions for pre-kindergarten students, has the potential for adding helpful insights to the body of existing literature regarding the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement. In chapter 3, the research design to investigate and explore these relationships will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between parent involvement and literacy achievement in pre-kindergarten students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The assumption of the study is that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds with high levels of parent involvement have greater literacy achievement in pre-kindergarten programs than students with lower levels of parent involvement. A second purpose of this study was to determine the literacy achievement difference between high and low parent involvement. The third purpose of the study was to determine which of three aspects (home-base involvement, school-based involvement and home-school conferencing) of parental involvement predicted literacy achievement.

Research Setting

For confidentiality purposes, the term Pre-Kindergarten School was used in lieu of the actual name of the school where the study took place. The Pre-Kindergarten School is a public education facility located in a large urban school district in Charlotte, North Carolina. The Pre-Kindergarten School is the largest of five pre-kindergarten sites located within the school district. It housed 31 classrooms and has an enrollment of 533 students. Of the 31 classrooms, there were 28 Bright Beginnings classes, two Head Start classes and one self-contained class for three year-old exceptional students. Nine of the Pre-Kindergarten School classes implemented the More at Four curriculum and four

classes used inclusive practices. Inclusion is a philosophy that seeks to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education in the regular classroom, with support and interventions, alongside of their non-disabled peers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001). The Pre-Kindergarten School served a diverse population of students that included 9% white, 27% black, 53% hispanic, 4% multi-racial, and 7% classified as other. Students who attended the Pre-Kindergarten School were required to be four years of age on or before September 30.

Student enrollment in the Pre-Kindergarten School was based on a countywide screening assessment developed by the school district. The screening instrument focuses on cognitive development, especially literacy and is used to assess all children who apply and to admit those children determined to have the greatest educational need for school readiness. The Pre-Kindergarten School is a Title I school. Title I is the largest single federal funding source for education. In order to be classified as Title I, schools must have (a) a percentage of low-income students that is at least as high as the districts overall percentage, and (b) have at least a thirty-five percentage of low-income students (whichever is the lower of the two figures). Schools with 75% or more of the students who are eligibility for free and reduced-price lunches are identified as a Title I school and must be served using additional federal dollars (NC Department of Education, 2007).

Type of Study

A correlational research design was used to describe the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement of low-income pre-kindergarten children. The focus of correlational studies is to examine whether and to what degree a statistical relationship exists between two or more variables and to describe the strength of the

relationship between the variables. The basic design for correlational research involves a single group of people who are measured on at least two characteristics (variables). When a correlational design is used, there is no manipulation of the variables being measured (Creswell, 2008).

Sample

The students and their parents at the Pre-Kindergarten School served as the primary sampling unit for the study. In an effort to get a representative sample of the 533 students, the researcher solicited all of the parents to participate in this study. A sample size of 226 was needed to obtain a representative sample of the population of 533 was determined based on the Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The table is based on a 95% confidence level for determining statistical validity of findings for these 533 students. Since the researcher was particularly interested in low-income students, the research site was purposefully selected based on that demographic, but conveniently located within the district in which the researcher was employed. The researcher's employment in the district allowed for accessibility to student information and assessment data for the study population. There was no conflict of interest regarding the researchers personal or professional involvement with the study. Using a convenience sample the researcher could not say with confidence that the study participants were representative of all pre-kindergarten students. However, the sample did provide useful information in determining if parental involvement has an impact on literacy achievement.

Data Collection

Data collection methods followed Dillman's Total Design Method (2000).

Multiple contacts were used to maximize the response rate and create a stronger claim in generalizing results from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2008). Strategies such as prenotification, introduction letter and questionnaire, thank-you postcard, additional questionnaire and a follow-up contact were used to increase response return rate. The first contact was the prenotice letter (Appendix A). One week prior to the start of the study, parents were invited to participate in the study. This informational letter provided the following information: (a) description of the Family Involvement Questionnaire-Early Childhood contents and purpose, (b) that there were no known risks or benefits for the parents by returning the informational letter, demographic questionnaire and Family Involvement Questionnaire-Early Childhood, and (c) contact information for the researcher should questions arise about the scale or the study.

The second contact included a consent form for parents to sign and cover letter (Appendix B) attached to the Family Involvement Questionnaire. Two copies of the informed consent form, cover letter and survey information were delivered to parents in student backpacks used to carry information between home and school. Information was pre-packaged in an envelope with instructions to seal one copy of the consent form and the survey contents in the envelope prior to returning it to school in the backpack. As packets were returned, teachers collected them and place them in a second preaddressed envelope labeled Completed Parent Informational Packets. Teachers submitted the returned survey envelopes to the assistant principal's office. The researcher collected the forms from the assistant principal's office.

The third contact was a thank you/reminder notice (Appendix C) sent two days after the established due date of the packets. This notice thanked those who had completed and returned the survey packet and encouraged the participation of those who had not yet completed the survey. Teachers placed the thank you/reminder message in the bookbags of all students.

The researcher tracked respondents with a sequential numbering system for confidentiality. Each student was assigned a sequential number that indicated the classroom and teacher. This also provided confidentiality as packets were passed back and forth between home and school. Using this system returned packets were tracked and non-respondents were sent replacement materials as the fourth contact two weeks after the first questionnaire. Replacement materials included two copies of the informed consent, the cover letter and Family Involvement Questionnaire in a second pre-packaged in an envelope in the students' bookbag. Parents were asked to return the second survey and informed consent form within two days of receipt. As needed, an additional thank you/follow-up letter was provided as the fifth contact.

Instruments

The research used the following instruments: Family Involvement Questionnaire-Early Childhood (FIQ- Fantuzzo, Munis, and Perry, 2002), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (PPVT-III, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening PreK (PALS-PreK, Invernizzi, Sullivan, Meier & Swank, 2004). The following is a description of each of these instruments.

Family Involvement Questionnaire

Data for the study was collected by a self-report demographic questionnaire and the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Fantuzzo et al., 2002). In the demographic questionnaire families were asked to share the following information: (a) gender of person completing the survey, (b) relationship to the child, (c) year they were born, (d) highest level of education completed, (e) current occupation, (f) total household income, (g) current marital status, (h) mode of transportation for attending school events, and (i) ages of other children in the household. Measures are included in Appendix D. The researcher accessed student demographic information using school records.

The Family Informational Questionnaire (FIQ, Fantuzzo et al., 2002), is a 42-item self-reporting rating scale developed to determine the involvement of parents in their child's education. This instrument is a multidimensional rating scale that asks primary care providers of young children to indicate the nature and extent of their involvement in their child's early educational experiences. The questionnaire was developed in partnership with parents and early childhood teachers in a large, urban school district in the Northeast United States. Questionnaire items were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (rarely) to 4 (always) to assess the respondent's rate agreement with each item measured. The items are grouped into three subscales: school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home-school conferencing. Of the original 42 items developed, only 36 fit into the subscales and was used for these analyses. The School-Based Involvement sub-scale contained 13 items and were defined by activities and behaviors that parents engage in at school to benefit their child. Parent activities include volunteering in the classroom, going on class trips, and meeting other parents to

plan events. A sample item stated “I participate in planning classroom activities with the teacher.” The Home-Based Involvement sub-scale contained 13 items and include behaviors that promote a learning environment at home. Parent behaviors include creating space for learning activities at home and providing learning opportunities within the community. A sample item stated “I review my child’s school work.” The Home-School Conferencing sub-scale contained 10 items that describe the communication behaviors between parents and school personnel as it relates to the child’s educational experiences and progress. Parent behaviors include talking with the child’s teacher about learning difficulties and accomplishments, and discussing with the child’s teacher ways to promote learning at home. A sample item stated “I attend conferences with the teacher to talk about my child’s learning or behavior.”

The Family Involvement Questionnaire demonstrates adequate reliability and validity. Internal consistency for each subscale was reliable as noted with Cronbach alphas of .85, .85 and .81, respectively. Concurrent validity was demonstrated through significant correlations between the three self-reported dimensions of the FIQ and documented parent volunteer experiences in Head Start (Fantuzzo et al., 2002). The questionnaire was assessed using the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS; McDermott, Green, Francis, & Scott, 1996), a teacher-report measure of preschool children’s approaches to learning.

Literacy Assessment Data

The instruments used in this study were the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (PPVT-III, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening-PreK (PALS-PreK, Invernizzi, Sullivan, Meier & Swank, 2004). The PPVT-

III is used to assess receptive vocabulary and verbal ability in standard American English vocabulary. The PPVT-III is standardized for use with people as young as 2 years and as old as 90+ years. The PPVT-III test items represent 20 content categories involving action verbs, adjectives and nouns. The test items are in a multiple-choice format and require no reading or writing. This format makes it fairly easy to administer to preschool children. The PPVT-III has two forms with 204 test items. The test examiner presents a word orally to the student and the student is asked to select a picture that best fits the word meaning. The test is administered until the child has reached a “basal” and a “ceiling” level. Finding the basal and ceiling process usually takes up to five item sets. The basal set is determined when a child makes one or no errors on a test item set. The ceiling set is determined when the child makes eight or more errors on a test item set. It takes approximately twelve minutes to administer the test and the test items are hand scored. The PPVT-III is a well-normed and extensively validated measure of receptive vocabulary. The norming sample consisted of a stratified random sample of 2,725 persons ages 2.5 to over 90 selected to proportionately match the population distribution in the March 1994 Current Population Survey on gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, and socioeconomic status. Reliability, was assessed by examining the internal consistency using Cronbach’s alpha which is an index of internal consistency based on average correlations of task within a screening instrument (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1987). For Form IIIA for both ages 2 years 6 months and 3 years the alpha was .93. For Form IIIB the alphas were .93 and .92, respectively. The Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficients for Form IIIA were .89 for ages 2 years, 6 months and .91 for age 3, and for Form IIIB .92 and .93 respectively. With an approximate one-month interval between

tests, the correlation coefficients for ages 2 years, 6 months through 5 years, 11 months were .92 for Form IIIA and .91 for Form IIIB for test-retest reliability (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). Information is not available on predictive validity of PPVT-III test however; validity has been established in terms of relationship with scores on other language test as well as naturalistic language samples (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). When compared with Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition verbal, performance, and full scale IQ intelligence test, the correlation coefficients ranged from .82 to .92 (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). When compared with the Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test crystallized, fluid, and composite IQ test the correlation coefficients ranged from .76 to .92 (Dunn and Dunn, 1997).

PALS-PreK (Invernizzi et al., 2004) is a comprehensive assessment of young children's knowledge of the important literacy fundamentals that are predictive of future reading success. The cognitive elements supported by the assessment include cipher knowledge, letter knowledge, concepts about print, and phonological awareness. The subtest and skills assessed are Name Writing (students must draw a picture of himself or herself, and label the picture with his or her name), Upper Case Alphabet Recognition (students must correctly identify upper case letters), Lower Case Alphabet Recognition (students must provide an appropriate sound or phoneme that corresponds to each letter if students know 9 or more upper-case letters), Letter Sound (students must provide an appropriate sound or phoneme that corresponds to each letter if the student knows 9 or more upper-case letters), Beginning Sound Awareness (students must match pictures based on their initial sound or phoneme), Print and Word Awareness (students must demonstrate knowledge of a variety of print concepts, recognition), and Nursery Rhyme

Awareness (teacher reads aloud common familiar nursery rhymes, and students must provide the very last word in the rhyme when prompted) (Tompkins, 2003).

Items and testing procedures for each subtest of the PALS-PreK were normed and validated in more than 14 schools across three different geographical areas of the Commonwealth of Virginia between 2000 and 2004. The pilot included preschools randomly selected from a statewide sample. The age range for the sample was between three years, ten months and six years, one month. The pilot study for Name Writing found significant correlations between children's letter naming and name writing ability, which increased with age. Welsch et al., (2003) replicated these findings involving 3,546 four year olds. This study found that name writing is derived from experiences with oral and written language, which are closely related to other literacy skills. The Alphabet Knowledge pilot found a significant correlation when Fall 2000 scores were compared to Spring 2001. The PALS-PreK Summed Score accounted for 48% of variance in spring scores ($r = .69, p < .001$).

Reliability of the PALS-PreK tasks as assessed by examining the internal consistency of the scale using Guttman split-half reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Guttman split-half explores the degree of internal consistency by randomly separating the task items in half and testing the similarity or relation between the two halves. Internal consistency estimates for all PALS-PreK tasks were in an acceptable range. The pilot of the revised Beginning Sound Awareness and Rhyme Awareness task resulted in positive feedback from teachers and acceptable reliability estimates on the revised task (Cronbach's alpha = .83). The Print and Word Awareness pilot also resulted in positive feedback from teachers and acceptable reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha = .73). The

revised Print and Word Awareness report acceptable reliability estimates as measured by Cronbach's alpha .73. The Nursery Rhyme Awareness pilot yielded reliability estimates that were acceptable, including Cronbach's alpha .77 and Guttman split-half reliability .75.

Inter-rater reliability was assessed to determine the extent to which two different individuals would score PALS-PreK task the same. This was accomplished by having two separate and independent raters score tasks as they were administered. Inter-rater reliability estimates, expressed as Pearson correlation coefficient all measured as .99 (Invernizzi et al, 2004).

Concurrent validity refers to how well an assessment related to an existing criterion measure or standard (Sattler, 1988). The Sawyer's *Test of Awareness of language Segments* (TALS, Sawyer, 1987) identifies reading instruction needed for children between the ages of four years, six months and seven years. The correlation between the PALS-PreK tasks and TALS Part A was medium-low but significant ($r = .41$, $p < .01$; $n = 87$). The High/Scope's *Child Observation Record* (COR) (1992), given to children ages two years, seven months and six years is an anecdotal evaluation which uses teacher observations to assess early childhood development skills such as knowledge about books, beginning reading and beginning writing. The correlation between the PALS-PreK Summed Scores and the COR was medium-high and significant ($r = .71$, $p < .01$; $n = 70$). The *Test of Early Reading Ability* (TERA-3, 2001) is a direct measure of the reading ability of children between the ages of three and six years. The correlation between the revised version of the PALS-PreK and the TERA-3 was medium-high and significant ($r = .67$, $p < .01$; $n = 73$).

Data Analysis

For the analysis of this study, the predictor (Y) variable was parent involvement and the criterion (X) variable was student achievement. The level of parental involvement is measured through the use of a Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ, Fantuzzo et al., 2002). Achievement will be measured through the use of raw scores from the PPVT-III and the PALS-PreK reading assessment.

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 15). Descriptive statistical procedures containing frequency tables for each of the Likert-scale items along with correlational design procedures were utilized to analyze survey data from respondents in order to determine the relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement. To answer the first question simple correlations were conducted using total FIQ scores and total PPVT-III and PALS-PreK scores. To answer the second question regarding high versus low parental involvement on achievement FIQ scores were divided into quartiles. The lowest quartile served as low family involvement and 4th quartile served as high family involvement. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups and total PPVT-III and PALS-PreK scores. To answer the third question two multiple regressions were conducted using the three subscales of the FIQ as the predictor variables and total PPVT-III and PALS-PreK scores as the criterion variable.

Summary

In summary, a survey research design gathered the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Fantuzzo et al., 2002) to determine the level of parental involvement of the study participants. The study participants' performance on the Peabody Picture

Vocabulary Test-III (PPVT-III, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening-PreK (PALS-PreK, Invernizzi et al., 2004) assessments was used to determine literacy achievement. Simple correlations, independent *t*-test and multiple regressions were conducted to determine the magnitude of the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement and if there is a statistical significant difference in the literacy performance of students based on the level of parental involvement. These data have been analyzed and the findings are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of parent involvement on the literacy achievement of pre-kindergarten students from low-income families. The objectives for this study were (a) to determine the relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement among low income pre kindergarten students, (b) to examine if there was a statistical difference in literacy achievement among students with more parental involvement versus those students with less parental involvement, and (c) to examine if any of the three aspects (home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school conferencing) of parental involvement predict literacy achievement. The results of the statistical analyses are presented in this chapter.

Participant Sample

Upon approval by the UNC-Charlotte Institutional Review Board and the School System Research Department, data were collected from a sample of 298 students and their parents or guardians from the population of 533. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population, using 550 participants, the minimum recommended study size is 226. Out of the 298 returned FIQs, 18 had to be excluded. Fourteen returned FIQ forms with less than 80% complete and 4 students did not complete the PPVT-III and PALS-PreK testing. The result was 280 participants for the study. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this number exceeds the standard for having a representative sample.

Study Participants' Demographics

Table 1 has complete information regarding study participants' demographics. Of the 280 participants in the sample, most were female (77.5%) with 72.9% indicating they were the parent or guardian and 33% indicating that they were married. Nearly 80% of the parents or guardians were between the ages of 20 years old to 39 years old and nearly 40% of all parents had received some education beyond high school. The most frequent response for the category occupation was unskilled labor (38.6%) with 28.9% not recording any response for this category. Regarding total household income, 41.1% reported making \$20,000 or less, with approximately 5% indicating earnings of greater than \$60,000; 24.6% did not report a total household income. Only 7.1% of study participants reported not having access to a vehicle and most of the preschoolers (73.9%) had one other child in the home.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Participants Demographics

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Gender		
Male	51	18.2
Female	217	77.5
Unreported	12	4.3
Relationship		
Parent / Guardian	204	72.9
Grandparent	2	.7
Other Family Member	4	1.4
Foster Parent	48	17.1
Unreported	22	7.9

Table 1 Continued

Frequency Distribution of Participants Demographics

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Age Group		
Less than 19 Years	1	.4
20-29 Years	97	34.6
30-39 Years	126	45.0
40-49 Years	39	13.9
50-59 Years	3	1.1
60 and Greater Years	1	.4
Unreported	13	4.6
Educational Level		
Some High School	72	25.7
High School Diploma/GED	57	20.4
Some Higher Education	48	17.1
AA Degree/Tech. School	27	9.6
4 Year College Degree	27	9.6
Completed Graduate School	9	3.2
Unreported	40	14.3
Occupation Category		
Professional	12	4.3
Para-Professional	41	14.6
Skilled Laborer	22	7.9
Un-Skilled Laborer	108	38.6
Student/Unemployed/Retired	16	5.7
Unreported	81	28.9
Income Range		
Less than 20,000	115	41.1
21,000-40,000	63	22.5
41,000-60,000	19	6.8
61,000-80,000	7	2.5
81,000-100,000	4	1.4
Greater than 100,000	3	1.1
Unreported	69	24.6
Marital Status		
Single, Never Married	94	33.6
Married	155	55.4
Divorced	8	2.9
Widow	1	.4
Unreported	22	7.9

Table 1 Continued

Frequency Distribution of Participants Demographics

	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Transportation		
Personal Vehicle	195	69.6
Someone Else Vehicle	47	16.8
Taxi	4	1.4
City Bus/Train/Trolley/ Light-rail	16	5.7
Unreported	18	6.4
Number of other Children		
One Other Child	207	73.9
Two Other Children	117	41.8
Three Other Children	49	17.5
Four Other Children	16	5.7
Five or More Children	5	1.1

Family Involvement Questionnaire

Table 2 shows the response percentages for the 42-item Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) grouped by the three dimensions of parental involvement measured: home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing.

School-Based Involvement Results

The highest areas of involvement reported using aggregate scores combining parents responses for “often and always” are: teacher talks about love of learning (62.3%), parents at school support each other (47.5%), parents attend workshops (39.3%), and participate in family social events (39%).

Using the “rarely” response totals under School-based Involvement, parents indicated low participation with the following practices: meet with families outside of school (76.8%), volunteer in child’s classroom and attend class trips (76.1%), participate in planning school trips (73.6%), talk about training opportunities (64.6%) and participate in planning (48.6%).

Home-Based Involvement Results

The high areas of involvement using aggregate scores combining the “often and always” responses are: review of school-work (96.4%), keep regular schedule (95%), maintain clear rules at home (92.8%), work on reading/writing (91.1%), work on creative activities (87.1%), have a place for books (86.1%), talk about learning with relatives (80%), talk about own love of learning (76.1%), and work on number skills (75.3%). Furthermore, when combining the “often and always” responses for this dimension, most indicators (9 of 13) have a score 75.1% or higher, 4 of the 9 scores are greater than 90%.

Using the “rarely” total under home-based involvement parents reported low responses on 10 of the 13 indicators. Of these 10 responses the totals ranged from .4 – 6.1. The highest reported areas under this dimension were: praise child for schoolwork (23.6%), take child to places in the community (21.1%) and share stories about when in school (10.4%).

When considering the high responses reported for “often and always” and the low responses reported for “rarely” home-base involvement is an area that parents indicated a high-level of involvement.

Home-School Conferencing Results

When combining the aggregate scores for “often and always” responses the highest involvement areas are: attend teacher conferences (67.5%), talk about own accomplishments (49.7%), talk about school difficulties (47.9%) and talk about getting along with other (41.1%).

Using the “rarely” response totals the reported high areas are: talk to teacher on telephone (62.5%), talk about relevant personal matters (61.8%), write notes about child or events (37.1%) and schedule meeting with administration (33.6%).

Table 2

Percent of Family Involvement Questionnaire per Item in Each Dimension

Item	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	NA
<u>School-based Involvement</u>					
7 Participate in planning activities	48.6	32.5	8.2	9.6	1.1
8 Attend parent workshops	22.1	37.9	23.6	15.7	.7
16 Participate in planning school trips	73.6	13.6	3.2	6.8	2.9
19 Volunteer in child’s classroom	65.4	18.9	8.2	6.1	1.1
20 Participate in fundraising activities	45.0	28.9	11.4	13.9	.7
26 Attend class trips	76.1	13.2	2.9	5.7	2.1
27 Participate in family social events	16.8	43.2	20.4	18.6	1.1
28 Teacher talk about love of learning	14.3	29.3	22.5	39.8	2.1
33 Discuss meetings with other parents	41.1	31.8	13.2	13.2	.7
35 Talk about training opportunities	64.6	21.8	5.0	6.4	2.1
38 Meet with families outside of school	76.8	15.7	3.6	3.2	.7
40 Parents at school support each other	21.4	26.8	21.4	26.1	4.3
<u>Home-based Involvement</u>					
5 Review school work	1.4	.7	14.6	81.8	1.4
11 Keep regular schedule	.7	3.9	18.9	76.1	.4
12 Praise child for school work	23.6	20.7	17.1	37.1	1.4
13 Share stories about when in school	10.4	26.4	20.4	42.1	.7
14 Take child to places in community	21.1	32.5	21.4	24.6	.4
18 Have a place for books	1.4	5.7	16.1	75.0	1.8
23 Talk about learning with relatives	3.9	15.7	20.4	59.6	.4
24 Talk about own love of learning	4.6	18.9	23.2	52.9	.4
25 Bring home learning materials	6.1	23.6	26.8	43.6	0
29 Maintain clear rules at home	.4	6.4	23.2	69.6	.4
31 Work on reading/writing skills	1.1	7.1	26.8	64.3	.7
41 Work on creative activities	1.4	11.4	25.7	61.4	0
42 Work on number skills	5.4	17.5	25.7	49.6	1.8
<u>Home-School Conferencing</u>					
1 Attend teacher conferences	3.9	27.5	27.5	40.0	1.1
2 Schedule meetings with admin	33.6	41.8	15.0	8.2	1.4
3 Talk about daily school routine	18.2	41.8	23.6	14.3	2.1
9 Talk to child’s teacher about rules	26.8	34.6	18.9	17.1	2.5
15 Talk to teacher on telephone	62.5	23.9	8.9	4.3	.4

Table 2 Continued

Percent of Family Involvement Questionnaire per Item in Each Dimension

Item	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	NA
17 Talk about getting along with others	19.6	38.2	20.4	20.7	1.1
21 Write notes about child or events	37.1	29.3	14.6	18.2	.7
22 Talk about own accomplishments	12.1	37.9	17.9	31.8	.4
30 Talk about school difficulties	21.1	30.4	16.8	31.1	.7
36 Talk about work to practice	25.7	34.6	18.2	20.0	1.4
37 Talk about relevant personal matters	61.8	21.8	6.8	7.9	1.8
<u>Miscellaneous Indicators</u>					
4 Limit TV/video watching	2.9	24.6	35.0	37.1	.4
6 Take child to the library	31.4	34.6	22.1	9.3	2.5
10 Take child to school in the morning	26.4	20.0	66.1	46.4	1.1
32 Arrange for classmates to come play	40.7	23.2	15.4	18.6	2.1
34 Pick child up in the afternoon	38.9	13.9	5.4	40.4	1.4
39 Welcome and encourage involvement	2.9	8.2	20.7	67.1	1.1

Note: Miscellaneous Indicators did not place appreciably in any of the other three dimensions.

PPVT-III and PALS-PreK Data

During the district spring testing window students were given the PPVT-III. The minimum score of 51 and the maximum score was 124. The mean score was 86.55 with a standard deviation of 14.286. Based on the Norms Booklet for the PPVT-III by Dunn and Dunn (1997) students at that age and a raw score of 43 reflect a percentile rank of 19 indicating that these students scored as well as or better than 19 percent of students at this age. The test age equivalent is 3-05 (3 years, 5 months).

The PALS-PreK assessment was also administered during the district spring testing window. The PALS-PreK assessment is comprised of six subtests: Name Writing (7 items), Nursery Rhyme Awareness (10 items), Alphabet Knowledge (26 items), Beginning Sounds Awareness (10 items), Print and Word Awareness (10 items) and Rhyme Awareness (10 items). The Spring Developmental Range scores reported in the

PALS-PreK technical manual for each subtest are: Name Writing (5-7 items), Nursery Rhyme Awareness (6-10 items), Alphabet Knowledge (12-21 items), Beginning Sounds Awareness (5-8 items), Print and Word Awareness (7-9 items) and Rhyme Awareness (5-7 items) (Invernizzi et al., 2001). Spring developmental ranges suggest a range of performance that may be associated with later reading achievement. The mean of the summed PALS-PreK scores of 98.48 indicate the possibility of successful reading achievement in subsequent years.

Table 3 shows the PPVT-III and PALS-PreK achievement data findings. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of scores on the PPVT-III and PALS-PreK assessments. Student PPVT-III and PALS-PreK scores were summed and the mean and standard deviations are reported for each assessment.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PPVT	280	51	124	86.55	14.286
PALS	280	15	115	98.48	17.313

Research Question 1

A Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted to answer the first research question regarding the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement. Bivariate correlations were conducted using the FIQ total score and PPVT-III scores and FIQ total score and PALS-PreK score. The relationship between FIQ totals and PPVT-III scores indicate a weak, but statistically significant relationship, $r(280) = .247, p < .001$.

FIQ scores accounted for 06.% of the variance of PPVT-III scores. The relationship between FIQ and PALS-PreK scores also indicated a weak, but statistically significant relationship, $r(280) = .119, p = .046$. FIQ scores accounted for 1.5% of the variance of PALS-PreK scores.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, “Is there a difference in literacy achievement among students with more parental involvement versus those students with less parental involvement?” For this question, FIQ total scores were divided into quartiles. Total scores that fell between 0 and 92 represented Quartile 1. Scores between 93 and 103 represented Quartile 2. Scores between 104 and 117 represented Quartile 3. Scores of 118 or higher represented Quartile 4. Quartile 1 was used to identify students of low parental involvement and Quartile 4 represented students of high parent involvement. The results given in Table 4 indicate the group statistics for the PPVT-III and the PALS-PreK assessment for Quartiles 1 and 4.

Table 4

Group Statistics for PPVT-III and PALS-PreK Assessment Quartiles

	FIQ Quartiles	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
PPVT	Lower quartile	75	81.88	15.338
	Upper quartile	68	90.71	14.221
PALS	Lower quartile	75	94.41	21.194
	Upper quartile	68	99.63	15.601

A two-tailed Independent Samples *t*-test was used to compare the difference on the PPVT-III assessment between low parental involvement (Quartile 1) and high parental involvement (Quartile 4). The difference between the means was statistically

significant ($t = 3.557$, $df = 141$, $p = <.001$). Parental involvement using PPVT-III scores for students in the upper quartile and the lower quartile show a mean difference of 8.83. The difference between the means of low parental involvement and high parental involvement was also conducted using the PALS-PreK assessment. The difference between the means was not statistically significant ($t = 1.663$, $df = 141$, $p = .099$). The mean difference for parental involvement using PALS-PreK scores in the upper and lower quartile show a mean difference of 5.22.

Research Question 3

The third research question of the study asked, “Can any of the three aspects of parental involvement predict literacy achievement?” Stepwise multiple regression was conducted to help determine if the three dimensions of the FIQ (Home-Based Involvement, School-Based Involvement, and Home-School Conferencing) could be used to predict student literacy achievement as measured by the PPVT-III and PALS-PreK assessment as the criterion variables. The individual item scores of the three dimensions of the FIQ were summed to get a score for each subscale to serve as the predictor variables. The three predictors were entered into the regression using the stepwise method for each dependent variable separately. In the stepwise method each variable is entered one at a time into the regression equation. Only variables that contribute to the prediction are retained in the equation. Nonsignificant contributors to the regression equation are excluded. The results of the regressions are indicated in Table 5.

In the multiple regression conducted using the PPVT-III as the criterion variable, Home-Based Involvement was the only predictor variable retained in the equation. The resulting linear equation was represented as $y\text{-hat} = 55.48 + .730x$. For each .73 point

increase of Home-Based Involvement score PPVT-III increased 1 point. The variance explained by Home-Based Involvement was 10.7%. In order to determine if other demographic variables might contribute to the prediction of PPVT-III scores a second stepwise multiple regression was conducted. The demographic variables in this regression included age, household income, marital status, and highest level of education completed. Of those variables, household income was the only other variable retained in the equation represented as $y\text{-hat} = 51.415 + .776x_1 + 2.046x_2$. For each point increase of .776 of Home-Based Involvement score and 2.046 dollars of income PPVT-III score increased 1 point. This model explained 13.7% of the variance of PPVT-III scores.

Table 5

Multiple Regression using FIQ subscale and Demographic Variables as Predictors of PPVT-III Score

Unstandardized Coefficients				
Model		B	Std. Error	Sig.
1	(Constant)	55.482	5.44	.000
	Home-Based Invol.	.730	.126	.000
2	(Constant)	51.415	6.693	.000
	Home-Based Invol.	.776	.152	.000
	Household Income	2.046	.873	.020

In the multiple regression conducted using the PALS-PreK as the criterion variable, School-Based Involvement was the only variable retained in the equation. The resulting linear equation represented as $y\text{-hat} = 90.401 + .357x$. For each .357 point increase of School-Based Involvement score PALS-PreK score increased 1 point. The variance explained by School-Based Involvement was 1.8%. Demographic variables (age, household income, marital status, and highest level of education) entered in a

second multiple regression of PALS-PreK scores, were excluded as they showed no significant value. The results are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6

Multiple Regression using FIQ subscale and Demographic Variables as Predictors of PALS-PreK Score

Unstandardized Coefficients				
Model		B	Std. Error	Sig.
1	(Constant)	90.401	3.756	.000
	School-Based Invol.	.357	.160	.02

Chapter 4 included the statistical analysis used to determine whether and to what degree a relationship exists between parental involvement and literacy achievement for pre-kindergarten students from low-income families. Chapter 4 presents data used to determine if there was a difference in literacy achievement between high and low levels of parental involvement, and if a relationship between the three aspects of parental involvement impacted literacy achievement. Summary, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study examined whether and to what degree a statistical relationship exists between parent involvement and literacy achievement for pre-kindergarten students from low-income backgrounds. Study participants included students and their parents or guardians at an urban elementary school, receiving Title I funding. The assertion of this study is that parental involvement is related to literacy achievement for low-income students.

Summary of Findings

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What is the relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement among low-income pre-kindergarten students?
2. Is there a difference in literacy achievement among students with more parental involvement versus those students with less parental involvement?
3. Can any of the three aspects of parental involvement predict literacy achievement?

Regarding question 1, a Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted to determine the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement. Bivariate correlations were conducted using the FIQ total score and PPVT-III score and FIQ total score and PALS-PreK score. The results revealed a weak, but statistically significant relationship for both literacy indicators.

Regarding question 2, FIQ total score were divided into quartiles to indicate lower and upper levels of parent involvement for the PPVT-III and PALS-PreK and then a two-tailed Independent Sample *t*-test was conducted for each achievement indicator to determine if there was a difference in literacy achievement of students with high and low parent involvement. The results revealed a statistically significant difference on the PPVT-III assessment between low parental involvement and high parental involvement. The mean difference using the PALS-PreK assessment was not statistically significant.

Regarding question 3, stepwise multiple regression techniques were conducted to determine which dimension of the FIQ (Home-based Involvement, School-based Involvement, and Home-school Conferencing) and demographic variables impact literacy achievement. Using PPVT-III and PALS-PreK as indicators of literacy achievement, Home-Based Involvement was the only FIQ dimension that served as a predictor of literacy as measured by the PPVT-III. School-Based Involvement was the only FIQ dimension retained as a predictor of literacy achievement for the PALS-PreK assessment. It was interesting to note that when regression techniques were run on the demographic data (age, household income, marital status and highest level of education completed) of the parents, household income was the only demographic predictor of literacy achievement and it only retained as a predictor of literacy achievement with the PPVT-III test but not the PALS-PreK.

In summary, the study supports the notion that although weak, a statistical relationship does exist between parent involvement and literacy achievement of low-income students. Delving a little deeper, the study also supports the notion that there is a relationship between literacy achievement and low and high levels of parental

involvement with higher involvement leading to higher literacy achievement. Finally, the study supports the notion that Home-based Parental Involvement and School-based Parental Involvement may predict literacy achievement of low-income students.

FIQ Results Discussion

Consistent with research conducted by Henderson and Mapp (2002), Christenson (2004), and Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2002), this study revealed that there was a correlation between parent involvement and literacy achievement. More specifically, the study results revealed a weak relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement for low-income pre-kindergarten students. Overall, the FIQ scores were low. The Home-Based involvement dimension received the highest parental involvement responses and School-Based involvement dimension received the lowest responses. The findings give educators some hope regarding advancing the literacy achievement of Pre-Kindergarten students from low-income homes.

It is important to note that based on the 2009 federal standards for poverty (\$22,050), only 41% of the study participants met this standard. The Pre-Kindergarten Site used the Title 1 standard (free and reduced-priced lunch eligibility) as their criteria for admission. Therefore, caution must be used when communicating the results of the study for low-income students, as there are different ways of defining low-income status. For the purpose of this study, low-income was defined as being at a Title 1 school.

Study findings regarding the relationship between literacy achievement and low and high levels of parental involvement was encouraging. As was documented by a meta-analysis conducted by Jeynes (2005), this study found that high parental involvement leads to higher literacy achievement. This is a clear message to educators

that one way to impact literacy achievement for low-income students is through increasing parental involvement. Additionally, it should be encouraging to parents to know that their involvement makes a difference.

This study supports research conducted by Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry and Childs (2004), which revealed that different aspects of parental involvement affect achievement differently. This study revealed that Home-based parental involvement and School-based involvement may predict literacy achievement of low-income pre-kindergarten students. These findings afford educators the opportunity to use a more targeted approach with parent involvement strategies.

Implications

The overriding implication regarding this study for educators and parents is that parent involvement could lead to higher literacy achievement for pre-kindergarten students from low-income household. Key to this effort will be focusing on all dimensions of parent involvement and finding ways to assess the current realities regarding the level of parent involvement at schools, especially for schools with a high percentage of low-income students. However, greater emphasis should be placed on Home-Based Involvement and School-Based Involvement as the study indicated they may predict literacy achievement for low-income pre-kindergarten students.

Another implication for schools and LEAs is that the approach to developing parent involvement programs should be research based and data driven. For example, many educators may plan parent involvement programs around the assumption that parents do not have adequate transportation, while based on this study, only 7.1 % of parents reported not having access to a vehicle. Some schools may find high frequencies

with one dimension of parent involvement while another school may have low frequencies with the same dimension. The point is that approaches to increasing parent involvement at schools should be data driven, which will result in different plans of action based on need.

A key implication regarding this study is examining how students can play a more critical role in motivating parents to become more involved in the education process. Educating students and parents about effective parent involvement strategies and the impact they have on students' academic success can assist schools in achieving their student performance goals. For example, based on the results of this study, the following information could be shared to impact the three aspects of parental involvement used at the study site:

Improvement for School-Based involvement

Schools could facilitate ideas for parents to meet with other families outside of school as 76.8% rarely met with families. Parents should be invited and encouraged to attend more class trips as 76.1% rarely attend. Parent input should be solicited in the planning of school trips as 73.6% rarely participated. Parents should be actively encouraged to volunteer in their child's classroom as 65.4% rarely volunteered.

Improvement for Home-Based involvement

Home-Based involvement is an area where parents reported fairly high levels of parental involvement. To improve this area even more, parents need to be encouraged to praise their child for schoolwork as 23.6% reported that they rarely praise their child. A list of places that welcome parents and children to visit in the community should be generated and proved to parents as 21.1% rarely visit community places. Parents should

be encouraged to share stories about when they were in school as 10.4% reported that they share stories. This could be done strategically as a homework assignment by having students ask parents to share stories of their youth.

Improvement for Home-school conferencing

Conferencing with the teacher during scheduled parent-teacher meetings was the highest indicator in this dimension. To get more bang for their buck, educators have to be more strategic about building trust and making parents feel comfortable enough to use other methods of communication. Based on the study results, 62.5% of parents rarely talk with the teacher by phone, 61.8% rarely talk about relevant personal matters with the teacher. Note writing about the child or an event should be encouraged as 37.1% rarely write notes to the teacher.

One final implication regarding this study is that parents must be educated regarding how vital their involvement is to advancing the academic performance of their children. Furthermore, parents must become part of the solution in terms of getting other parents to participate more frequently with all aspects of the schooling process.

Limitations of the Study

Specific limitation of the study included the focus on the staff and students of only one pre-kindergarten site with a high enrollment of non-white students. Eighty percent of the school's population is classified as non-white. Three-fourth (75%) of the schools population qualifies for free or reduced price lunch based on the socioeconomic status of their parents. Additionally, the results of the study will rely on a self-reporting questionnaire that will be provided to parents and returned by students. The study relies

on the integrity and honesty of subjects on the questionnaire used in the data collection process. Finally, the study findings may be applicable only in similar settings.

Delimitations of the Study

The key delimitation of the study is that the study was restricted to one Title I pre-kindergarten site in a large urban school district. The study focus included parent involvement and literacy achievement only. Additionally, the study responses were restricted to the returned questionnaires.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations regarding using parental involvement to improve literacy performance for pre-kindergarten students from low-income backgrounds:

1. Parental involvement must become an integral part of any comprehensive plan to improve students' academic performance, especially pre-kindergarten students from low-income households. With the increasing pressures and limited resources made available to increase student academic performance, parent involvement cannot be overlooked.
2. School systems should develop a comprehensive parental involvement strategy for all of its schools. This plan should include but not be limited to the following: (a) defining parent involvement, including identifying indicators for each dimension, (b) staff development and training for both educators and parents, (c) involvement of parents at all levels of the schooling process, including using students to engage parents more in the education process and (d) an evaluation process that includes an audit that results in each

school receiving a report card on its performance with parent involvement strategies.

3. Further research is needed to examine more fully the impact of parent involvement on the academic performance of students from low-income households. Finding an urban site with a high percentage of students from low-income households where parents report high levels of parent involvement will be an ideal site to evaluate the true relationship between parent involvement and academic performance. In this study, overall, parents reported low to moderate levels of parental involvement based on the dimensions depicted on the FIQ therefore, a weak but statistically significant relationship was established. It would be even more revealing to evaluate the relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement when parents actually report high levels of involvement on all three dimensions of parent involvement.
4. The researcher suggests that schools and school districts engage community agencies in an awareness campaign, educating them regarding parent involvement and its impact on the educational process. Community agencies should be made aware of the ways parent involvement impacts community objectives and be challenged to find ways to motivate and help parents be more involved in the education of all children in its community.
5. Teacher preparatory programs should include curriculum and learning experiences for its students around the importance of parent involvement for

achieving high academic standards for all students, especially students from low-income households.

6. The researcher recommends using growth scores instead of developmental scores when determining PALS total scores. This may give a clearer picture regarding the relationship between parental involvement and literacy achievement. Growth scores are computed by determining the difference between fall and spring PALS-PreK scores.
7. The researcher suggests that a closer examination is needed regarding the demographics of study participants. By doing so, a richer dialogue as well as more qualitative data could be obtained regarding the many different factors that impact parent involvement and literacy achievement.
8. The research suggests that further research be conducted at a study site where there is a lower percentage of hispanic and white study participants. By doing so, the researcher could explore how parental involvement impacts literacy achievement of African - American study participants.
9. The researcher suggests that further research be conducted to examine if there exists a causal relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement. By doing so, the researcher could determine any cause and effect relationships of parental involvement and literacy achievement.
10. The researcher suggest re-wording the Spanish format of the demographic question asking parents or gaurdians to list the ages of children in their household. The researcher noted that the current format caused confusion for parents based on how they answered the question.

The role of parent involvement in the education process has rightly become a forefront issue as school leaders and parents or guardians seek ways to support the education of our nation's children. Schools are under tremendous pressure to meet the increasing demands of high academic standards of all students. One group that has consistently been a challenge for educators is students from low-income households. Rediscovering the importance of effective parent involvement may very well be the answer many school leaders are looking for. While no single strategy can be a panacea for the ills of public schooling, parent involvement must be a part of the comprehensive approach to improve educational outcomes for all students, especially for students from low-income backgrounds.

The good news about this study can be found in the literature review chapter and the results chapter: (1) Based on research shared in the literature review chapter, most parents really care and want to be involved in their child's education and students from all backgrounds, including low-income households, benefit from effective parent involvement just like students from other social economic backgrounds. Moreover, (2) based on the results of this study, there is a relationship between parent involvement and literacy achievement of pre-kindergarten students from low-income households.

The education of pre-kindergarten children, especially those from low-income households must be an integral component of student achievement and school reform. This is critical as research supports the notion that the earlier parents get involved in their child's education the higher the probability for success in school. Students not only receive immediate benefits from effective parental involvement but these early involvement patterns could possibly influence future success and build a foundation to

advance the life – long learning process of students. We as a nation must work relentlessly, wisely and aggressively to successfully engage parents in the educational process. The welfare of our education system and subsequently our very quality of life may very well depend upon it.

REFERENCES

- Arnold, D. H., Zelig, A., Doctoroff, G. L., & Ortiz, C. (2008). Parent involvement in preschool: Predictors and the relation of involvement to preliteracy development. *School Psychology Review*.
- Bloom, B. S. (1980). The new direction in educational research: Alterable variables. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 61 (6), 382-385.
- Bogenschneider, K. (1997). Parental involvement in adolescent schooling: A proximal process with transontextual validity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 718-733.
- Bush, B. (1991, February). Bring parents back to the fold. *The School Administrator*, 48.
- Catsambis, S. (1998). *Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in secondary education – effects on high school academic success*. Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CREPAR Report 27). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED426174)
- Christenson, S. L., Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Christenson, S. L. (2004). The family-school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. *School Psychology Review*, 33, 83-104.
- Clements, M.A., Reynolds, A., & Hickey, E. (2004). Site-level predictors of children's school and social competence in the Chicago child-parent centers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 19, 237-296.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Desforges, D. & Abouchaar, A. (2003). The impact of parental involvement; Parental support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment: A literature review.
- Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Downey, D.B. (2002). Parental and family involvement in education. In A. Molnar (3d), *School reform proposals: the research evidence*. Tempe Az: Education Policy Unit (EPRU), College of Education. Arizona State University.

- Dunn, L. M., & Dunn, L. M., (1997). PPVT-III: *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). School and improving schools. Family and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Boulder, CO. Westview Press.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnership: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-712.
- Epstein, J.L., Simon, B.S., & Salinas, K. C. (1997). Involving parents in homework in the middle grades. Research Bulletin No 18, 4 pages. Retrieved September 19, 2009 from <http://www.pdkintl.org/edres/resbul18htm>.
- Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *The Journal of School Psychology* 31(4) 379-401.
- Fan, X. & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A Meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review* 13(1), 1-22.
- Fantuzzo, J., McWayne, C., Perry, M. A., & Childs, S. (2004). Multiple dimensions of family involvement and their relations to behavioral and learning competencies for urban, low-income children. *School Psychology Review*, 33(4). P. 467-480.
- Fantuzzo, J., Tighe, E., & Childs, S. (2000). Family involvement questionnaire: a multivariate assessment of family participation in early childhood education. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 92, 367-376.
- Feinstein, L. & Symons, J. (1999). Attainment in secondary school. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 51, 300-321.
- Goddard, R. D., Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2001). A multilevel examination of the distribution and effects of teacher trust in students and parents in urban elementary schools. *Elementary School Journal*, 102(1) 3-17.
- Grolnick, W. E., & Slowiaczek, M. (1994). Parents' involvement in childrens' schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child Development* 65, 237-252.
- Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Hill, N.E., & Craft, S. A. (2003). Parent-school involvement and school performance: Mediated pathways among socioeconomically comparable. African American and Euro-American families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 74-83.

- Ho Sui-Chu, E. & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eight grade achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 69(2), 126-141 Retrieved from EJ5333315.
- Invernizzi, M. Sullivan, A. Meier, J. & Swank, L. (2004). PALS-PreK: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschooler (2nd ed). Charlottesville, VA: University Printing Service. Retrieved December 12, 2009 from <https://pals.virginia.edu>.
- Izzo, C. V., Weissberg, R. P., Kaspro, W. J., & Fendrich, M. (1999). A longitudinal assessment of teacher perceptions of parent involvement in children's education and school performance. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 817-839.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta- analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's achievement. *Education and Urban Society*. Thousand Oaks 35(2) 202-219.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). The effects of parental involvement and family structure on the literacy achievement of adolescents. *Marriage & Family Review*, 37(3).
- Jimerson, S., Egeland, B. E., & Teo, A. (1999). A longitudinal study of achievement trajectories: Factors associated with change. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 91, 116-126.
- Keith, T. Z., & Keith, P. B. (1993). Does parental involvement affect eighth-grade students achievement? Structural analysis of national data. *School Psychology Review*, 22(3) 474-496. Retrieved from EJ486048
- Kohl, G., Lengua, L., & McMahon, R. (2000). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38(6), 501-523.
- Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607-610.
- Marcon, R. A. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school inner-city preschoolers' development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review*, 28(3), 395-412.
- Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2001). Promoting inclusion in secondary classrooms. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 24(4), 265-274.
- Mehrens, W. A., & Lehmann, I. J. (1987). Using teacher made measurement devices. *NASSP Bulletin*, 71(496), 36-44.

- McWayne, C., Owsianik, M., Neale, R., Burger, E., Valuyout, R., & Cleary, B. (2004). Mother and father involvement and children's emotional and behavioral adjustment in a culturally diverse head start center
- Miedel, W. T., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: does it matter? Chicago longitudinal study. *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4) 379-402.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (1990). Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988: Base year: Student component data file user's manual. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. (NCES 90-464).
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education: *What's Happening?* (Jan. 2006).
- National Educational Association – *Help for Parents-Parent involvement in education, what research says*. Family-school-connections work (May 6, 2005).
- National Educational Association: *Getting Involved In Your Child's Education* (May 2006).
- National Educational Goals Panel (1996). The National Goals Report: *Building a nation of learners*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National PTA (2000). *Building successful partnerships: A guide for developing parent and family involvement programs*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Pub L. No.107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Obama, B. (2009, February). Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery. Whitehouse.gov. 2009-02-24.
- Ortega, A. & Ramirez, J. (2002, May). Parent's literacy workshops' one school's parent program integrated with the school day (Electronic version). *The Reading Teacher, 8*(55), Retrieved November 11, 2009 from ABI/ InformGlobaldatabase
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Pianta, R. C. (2000). An ecological perspective on the transition to kindergarten: A theoretical framework to guide empirical research. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 21*, 491-511.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Family-school communication in preschool and kindergarten in the context of a relationship-enhancing intervention. Charlottesville, VA: National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education.
- Tompkins, G. (2003). *Literacy for the 21st century* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

- US Department of Education. (1994). *Achieving the goals: Goal 8*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Yan, W., & Lin, Q. (2005). Parent involvement and mathematics achievement: across racial and ethnic groups. *Educational Research, 99*, 116-127.
- Zellman, G. L., & Waterman, J. M. (1998). Understanding the impact of parent school involvement on children's educational outcomes. *The Journal of Educational Research 91*(6), 370-380.

APPENDIX A

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER
Contact 1 (English)

March 31, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am currently involved in conducting research for a graduation project. The goal of the project is to determine if there is a connection between parent involvement and student literacy achievement. With the support of your principal, Ms. Principal, I am asking your help in completing a Family Involvement Questionnaire.

After spring break, you will receive a questionnaire asking about your school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home-school conferencing activities. Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Once the form is completed, please return it to school with your child on the next school day.

You should understand that your participation is voluntary and that choosing not to participate in this study will not affect your relationship with the school or the school district. Although all the information will be useful to the study, you have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer.

The results of this study may be published, but any information that could result in your identification will remain confidential. Questions about the study should be directed to researcher, LaWanda Williams at lowillia@uncc.edu or study advisor, Dr. Corey Lock at crlock@uncc.edu. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

LaWanda Williams
Graduate Student
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Corey Lock, Ph.D
Study Advisor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX A (Continued)

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER
Contact 1 (Spanish)

Fecha

Estimado Padre/Guardián:

Soy una estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte. Estoy actualmente realizando una investigación para un proyecto de graduación. El objetivo del proyecto es determinar si hay una conexión entre la participación del padre – estudiante y su progreso académico. Gracias al apoyo de la Sra. Principal Directora de la escuela Pre K Center, quien me ha permitido hacer llegar a sus hogares un Cuestionario Familiar de Participación.

Dentro de la semana próxima, recibirá un cuestionario en el cual se le preguntara acerca de su participación en la escuela, participación en el hogar y su participación en las diferentes conferencias programadas. Completar el cuestionario debe tomarles aproximadamente 20 minutos de su tiempo. Una vez que la forma sea completada, por favor sirvase regresarla a la escuela con su niño.

Debe comprender que su participación es voluntaria y si usted decide no participar en este estudio, no afectará su relación con la escuela ni con el distrito. Aunque toda la información será útil al estudio, tiene el derecho de no contestar dichas preguntas.

Los resultados de este estudio podrían ser publicados, pero la información relacionada a su identificación personal quedara confidencialmente guardada. Las preguntas acerca del estudio deben ser dirigidas a la investigadora a: lowillia@uncc.edu (LaWanda Williams) o crlock@uncc.edu. (consejero de estudio, el Dr. Corey)

Gracias por su participación.

Sinceramente,

LaWanda Williams
Estudiante de Postgrado
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Corey Lock, Ph.D
Consejero de estudiantes de Postgrado
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX B

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER
Contact 2 (English)

April 15, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Prior to Spring Break, you received information informing you of a research project that is being conducted for a graduation project. The goal of the project is to determine if there is a connection between parent involvement and student literacy achievement. With the support of your principal, Ms. Principal, I am asking that you sign the Consent Form giving your permission for participation and you complete the Family Involvement Questionnaire.

The attached questionnaire is asking some demographic information about your family and information about your school-based involvement, home-based involvement and home-school conferencing activities. Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Once the form is completed use the enclosed envelope to return the **Informed Consent Form** and the **Family Involvement Questionnaire** to school with your child on the next school day.

You should understand that your participation is voluntary and that choosing not to participate in this study will not impact your relationship with the school or the school district. Although all the information will be useful to the study, you have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer.

The results of this study may be published, but any information that could result in your identification will remain confidential. Questions about the study should be directed to researcher, LaWanda Williams at lowillia@uncc.edu or study advisor, Dr. Corey Lock at crlock@uncc.edu. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

LaWanda Williams
Graduate Student
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Corey Lock, Ph.D
Study Advisor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX B (Continued)

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER
Contact 2 (Spanish)

15 de Abril de 2010

Estimado Padre/Guardián:

Días antes de las vacaciones de primavera, recibí información de un trabajo de investigación que se realizara para un proyecto de graduación. El objetivo del proyecto es determinar si hay una conexión entre la participación del padre - estudiante y el progreso académico. Con el apoyo de su directora, la Sra. Principal, pedimos que firmará el consentimiento que da permiso para su participación y de esta forma usted podría completar el Cuestionario Familiar.

En el cuestionario encontrará preguntas acerca de la labor de los padres, su participación en la escuela, participación casa-escuela y participación en diferentes conferencias realizadas en la escuela. Completar el cuestionario debe tomarles aproximadamente 20 minutos de su tiempo. Una vez que la forma sea completada favor de devolverla con su niño/ña a la escuela en el sobre que recibiera con el cuestionario.

Debe comprender que su participación es voluntaria y que escogiendo no tomar parte en este estudio no afectara su relación con la escuela ni con el distrito de la escuela. Aunque toda la información será útil al estudio, tiene el derecho de no contestar preguntas que usted no desea contestar.

Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser publicados, pero cualquier información que podría tener como resultado su identificación quedará confidencialmente guardada. Las preguntas acerca del estudio deben ser dirigidas al investigador, LaWanda Williams en lowillia@uncc.edu o consejero de estudio, el Dr. Corey Lock en crlock@uncc.edu. Gracias por su participación.

Sinceramente,
LaWanda Williams
Estudiante de posgrado
Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte

Dr. Corey Lock, Ph.D
Consejero Estudiantil
Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte

APPENDIX C

THANK YOU / REMINDER NOTICE
Contact 3 (English)

Dear Parents/Guardian:

A few days ago, you received a Family Involvement Questionnaire to complete. If you completed the survey, thank you for completing the survey. Your input is very important to the study.

If you have not had the opportunity to respond, please take time to complete the survey. A new Family Involvement Questionnaire is attached for your convenience. We value your input and participation in the completion of the study.

Questions about the study should be directed to researcher, LaWanda Williams at lowillia@uncc.edu or study advisor, Dr. Corey Lock at crlock@uncc.edu. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

LaWanda Williams
Graduate Student
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Corey Lock, Ph.D
Study Advisor
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

APPENDIX C (Continued)

THANK YOU / REMINDER NOTICE
Contact 3 (Spanish)

27 de Mayo del 2010

Estimados Padres de Familia:

Unas semanas atras les enviamos unos cuestionarios acerca de un proyecto de investigacion acerca de la participacion de los padres en la escuela. Como les dijimos la participacion de ustedes es voluntaria. Si desea no contestar el cuestionario esto no afectara su relacion con la escuela. Los resultados de esta investigacion seran publicados pero cualquier informacion personal sera confidencialmente guardada.

Les estamos enviando un nuevo cuestionario para los padres que no han podido contestar el anterior. Cualquier pregunta al respecto favor de dirigirla a LaWanda Williams at lowillia@unce.edu a al concejoro estudiantil Dr. Corey Lock a crlock@unce.edu

Gracias por el tiempo que tome para contestar este cuestionario.

Sinceramente,

LaWanda Williams
Universidad de Carolina del Norte- Charlotte

Corey Lock, Ph.D
Universidad de Carolina del Norte - Charlotte

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS
(English)

Please **check the response** which best describes the person completing this questionnaire:

Gender of person completing the questionnaire

male female

Relationship to the child

Parent/Guardian Grandparent Other family member

Foster parent Other

Year you were born 19____

Highest level of education completed

Some high school

Obtained high school diploma/GED

Some higher education (college/university/technical school)

Completed AA degree/technical school

Completed 4 year college/university

Completed graduate school

Current occupation (fill in job title) _____

Total household income

Less than 20,000 20,001 to 40,000 40,001 to 60,000

60,001 to 80,000 80,001 to 100,000 Greater than 100,000

Marital status

Single, never married Married Divorced Widow

Mode of transportation for attending school events

Vehicle owned by me Vehicle owned by someone else Taxi

City bus/train/trolley/lightrail

Ages of other children in the household

Age of child 1: _____

Age of child 2: _____

Age of child 3: _____

Age of child 4: _____

Age of child 5: _____

APPENDIX D (Continued)

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS
(Spanish)

verifican por favor la respuesta que describe mejor a la persona que completa este cuestionario:

El género de persona que completa el cuestionario el macho ____ hembra ____

La relación al niño

El cría/guardián __ Abuelo __ Otro miembro de la familia __ Fomenta a padre __ Otro __

El año que usted nació 19 ____

El nivel más alto de la educación completó

Algún instituto ____

Obtuvo bachillerato/GED ____

Alguna escuela de educación superior (college/university/technical) ____

Completó a AA la escuela ____

que grado/técnico Completó 4 colegial/universidad de año ____

Completó cursos de posgraduado ____

La ocupación actual (llene cargo) _____

Ingresos totales de casa

Menos de 20.000 ____ 20.0001 a 40.000 ____ 40.001 a 60.000 ____

60.001 a 80.000 ____ 80.001 a 100.000 ____ másque 100.000 ____

Estatus marcial

El soltero, nunca casado ____ se Casó ____ Divorció ____ Viuda ____

El modo de transporte para asistir educa acontecimientos

El vehículo poseído por mí ____

Vehículo poseído por otra persona ____

Taxi ____

Autobus urbano/entrena/tranvía/lightrail ____

Las edades de otros niños en la casa

La edad de niño 1: ____

La Edad de niño 2: ____

La Edad de niño 3: ____

La Edad de niño 4: ____

La Edad de niño 5: ____