PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN MIDDLE YEARS SCHOOLING:

A COMPARISON OF STUDENT AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS

by

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TO MY FAMILY

ABSTRACT

Parental involvement has gained rapid momentum in the past decade. Educators realize that they must involve parents to compensate for educational and financial restrictions that affect to existing school programs. Increasingly, both administrators and classroom teachers have encouraged parents to become actively involved in their children's educational endeavors.

While numerous studies have documented the benefits of parental involvement, the same research indicates that, as students move upward through the grades, parental involvement declines. One of the obstacles preventing involvement at middle and upper levels may be attitude, not only on the part of teachers but also on the part of parents and students. This study investigated the perceptions of middle years parents and students regarding parental involvement for the purpose of: (1) providing insight into how parents and their children view the issue; and (2) highlighting how school-home partnerships might be improved.

Selected categories from Epstein's (1995) classification scheme for parent involvement (home support, home/school communication, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making) were used as a framework for developing a questionnaire to survey parents and students in grades 5 to 8 in two K to 9 suburban schools. Out of a total of 190 parents and students, 89 parent and 80 student surveys, respectively, were returned.

Findings revealed that the parents, who responded to the survey, regardless of grade level, were interested in the five different types of parental involvement. Especially at the grade 7 and 8 level, however, students who responded had strong qualifying opinions regarding parental involvement. These opinions seemed to stem from their increasing need to establish independence. Parents, who responded were aware that their middle years children would not be comfortable about their presence in school. Parents wanted to be involved in their children's schooling but needed the right activity to engage them. Time was also a factor.

In view of these findings, it was recommended that schools reassess their current parental involvement practices to build a more collaborative relationship between home and school.

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE STUDY

<u>Two Sculptors</u>

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher: The tools she used
Were books, music and art.
One, a parent who worked with a guiding hand
And a gentle loving heart.
Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent laboured by her side,
And polished and smoothed it over.
And when at last their task was done
They were proud of what they had wrought;
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.
And each agreed he would have failed
If he had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school
And behind the teacher, the home.

Author Unknown
(Fredericks, and Taylor, 1985, p.1).

Awareness of the powerful influence of the family on school achievement has only recently

gained prominence in North America. Increasingly, educators, parents, policy makers, and citizens

from all walks of life are becoming more informed about the importance of parent involvement.

School boards, teachers, administrators and parents realize that they must work together as a team to

benefit all children in the school system. Two Manitoba Department of Education publications,

<u>Renewing Education: New Directions</u> (1995) and <u>Parents and Schools as Partners in Education</u>

(1995) illustrate current commitments that encourage and direct parent involvement at all levels of

schooling.

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The time has passed when educators were considered the fountains of knowledge and parents were seen on the school premises only for pre-arranged, parent-teacher interviews or upon the special request of the administration. Parents are now actively encouraged to participate in the school life, in any capacity, to assist their own children, as well as others.

Currently there are a multitude of parent-child programs that have been initiated in the United States, Canada and Europe. As a means of soliciting input and support for educational programs, Parent Councils and volunteer organizations have gained acceptance and respect from educators.

Parents are their childen's first teachers (Morrow, 1995, p.6). They are also the teachers that children have for the longest time. The parent is an observer, teacher, supporter, and child advocate. Parents teach their children from the time they are babies, and, for as long as children remain in their care, parents continue to teach them what they know (McGilp, 1994). Especially in the field of literacy, research (Duff & Adams, 1981; Topping, 1986; Epstein, 1986; Epstein, 1995; Ziegler, 1987; Morrow,1995) suggests that there is a strong link between the home environment and children's future reading success. Parents can facilitate classroom learning through such activities as shared reading, reading aloud, making print materials available, providing models and promoting positive attitudes toward literacy in the home.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the following typology of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995) was employed as the theoretical framework: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making. Through her extensive research, Epstein (1982a, 1982b, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1995) showed that all parties benefit from parental involvement: children, teachers, the school as a whole, and parents. Epstein stated that parents no longer have to volunteer for just field

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trips or baking cookies, but can offer their help in other areas of the school community. For example, parents can assist with making decisions on school policies, provide leadership and represent their children's interests.

Epstein's studies have demonstrated that parents can be equal partners in their children's education. By focusing on the types of parental involvement, the school as a community can help to bridge the gap between the school and home in order to create a collaborative relationship.

The important role of adults in children's learning is further supported by Vygotsky's work on social learning theory and its impact on cognitive development. Vygotsky believed that learning occurs as a collaborative effort between adults and children, with competence being acquired gradually (Lipson, & Wixson, 1991). The verbal interactions between the adult and child help to develop the child's problem-solving skills. At the same time, verbal interactions between the child and adult help the child to internalize the process until he (she) can perform the task independently.

The Problem

Issues

Currently most parental involvment programs engage parents in the elementary school (Becher, 1984; Berger, 1995, Epstein, 1984; Henderson, 1991; Ziegler, 1987). The high level of parental participation at this level has been partially attributed to parental perceptions that children only need assistance in the early years. Epstein (cited in Brandt, 1989) noted that parental involvement drops off dramatically as early as second or third grade, while Stouffer (1992) suggested that parent involvement declines between the fifth and eigth grade. Similarly, Stevenson and Baker (1987) found that parents of younger children were more likely to be involved in school activities than parents of older children, and they attributed this change in level of parental involvement to the fact that early school settings may offer more opportunities for parents to participate.

Other explanations offered by Stevenson and Baker (1987) are that parents understand the importance of early schooling and also value involvement at this point in their child's school career. Parents may "disengage" from school activities once they feel the child is on the right track. Parents may also feel more competent in helping younger, rather than older children.

Jackson and Cooper (1992) offer a variety of reasons for the decline: children want more autonomy; children want independence from their parents; peer relationships become a priority; values and standards dominate children's lives; parents may exert less and less influence on their children; and parents may perceive schools as unhelpful because they, themselves, may have experienced school failure.

One major reason for the lack of direct parent involvement in schools is that many mothers must work, either as the sole family provider or to contribute to the family income. The phenomenon of working mothers began after World War II and is now institutionalized in our society. The 1993 Labour Force Annual Averages estimated that sixty-nine percent of mothers with school-age children (6-16) were working (Rothwell, 1993).

While working parents present a formidable challenge to schools, there are other reasons for lack of parental involvement. Immigrant parents are often uncertain of what to do, or come from cultures where involvement is not an expectation. These people are untapped resources that need to be reached through innovative strategies that reduce anxiety and apprehension.

Several studies (Unwin, 1995; Moulton, 1995; Botrie and Wenger, 1992) note that some parents, due to their own negative school experiences, cultural differences and values may be reluctant to leave the security of their own homes and enter their children's schools. Botrie and Wenger (1992) echo these findings and sum up the many reasons why parents hesitate to participate in the child's schooling. For example, some parents have other overwhelming responsibilites; use

English as a second language and do not feel competent enough to comunicate freely; have poor self-esteem; are unsure of their own limited or different educational backgrounds; encounter a hostile school atmosphere; recall their own, negative school experiences; find that their own child is having unsuccessful experiences or is unhappy in school; or view education as the school's total responsibility.

Traditionally, parent involvement has been "tokenistic" and has taken the form of volunteering for field trips, baking cookies for Bake Sales, checking out library books and assisting in special activities such as Sports Days and Fairs (Henderson, 1986). Often parent involvement simply meant that some parents came to Open House, while most parents attended parent-teacher interviews. In order to build school-family partnerships that support children's learning, many schools are rethinking their parent-involvement practices.

> Lasting school improvement will prevail only if we, as educators, pursue and encourage parent involvement and get "Beyond the Bake Sale".
>
> > (Lezotte, 1985, p.1)
> > In his foreword to Beyond the Bake Sale
> > (Cited in Henderson, 1985)

Accordingly, most educators now realize that parent involvement can no longer be something that "happens" in accordance with the school calendar. Rethinking parent involvement means, in part, paying careful attention to who becomes involved, why they become involved, and how to reach the disinterested. It also means redefining what schools mean by parent involvement.

A New Concept

Parent involvement is more than volunteering and attending Open House. Parent involvement entails a recognition that parents are a child's first teacher and that schools can help families create home environments that support learning. Parent involvement requires the development of more effective ways of communicating with parents. It means reaching out to the

parents who are unwilling, reluctant, or unable to visit the school by meeting with them in their neighbourhood or home. Parent involvement recognizes the contributions that parents can make as volunteers and supporters of school activities. It also recognizes parents as contributors to, and resources for, the school. Parent involvement is about parents helping their children at home and developing ways for the school to assist and support that effort. Parent involvement is also about providing parents with the opportunity to develop skills in planning and decision-making and then putting those skills to work in the school. The latter type of involvement would encourage parents to become actively involved in helping the school make decisions on school policies and envisions parents assuming leadership roles to promote involvement (Burns, 1993).

The Problem with Middle Years Parental Involvement

In general, however, as suggested, beyond the elementary years, there is a dramatic decline in parental involvement in children's schooling (Epstein, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1984; Stouffer, 1992). Part of the reason for declining parental involvement as children move into the upper grades may be because, in contrast to elementary schools, educators at this level offer fewer programs for parents. Programs for parents in the elementary school include such topics as: parenting, child development, school curriculum, and home learning activities. Parents of middle years students appear to receive less information and guidance about how to help their children (Epstein, 1995; Henderson, 1988; Stevenson and Baker, 1987). Consequently, the issue for study is to discover what educators can do to enhance school-family partnerships, especially at the middle years level where parental participation begins to decline.

The study will focus on determining the perceptions of both middle years parents and students on parental involvement by examining the following research questions:

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1. What is the perspective of middle years parents regarding: home support;

   communication between home and school; volunteering; learning at home; and

   decision-making?

2. What is the perspective of middle years students regarding : home support;

   communication between home and school; volunteering; learning at home; and

   decision-making?

3. Is there a significant difference between the ways middle years parents and students view:

   (a) Home support;
   (b) Communication between home and school;
   (c) Volunteering;
   (d) Learning at home;
   (e) Decision-making.

4. Is there a significant difference in the ways students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 view:

   (a) Home support;
   (b) Communication between home and school;
   (c) Volunteering;
   (d) Learning at home;
   (e) Decision-making.

5. Is there a significant difference in the way parents of grades 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 students view:

   (a) Home support;
   (b) Communication between home and school;
   (c) Volunteering
   (d) Learning at home;
   (e) Decision-making.

6. What suggestions do parents and students offer to improve future parental involvement in the following areas:

   (a) Home support;
   (b) Communication between home and school;
   (c) Volunteering;
   (d) Learning at home;
   (e) Decision-making.

Significance of the Study

An extensive literature review revealed that researchers have focused mainly on studying parental involvement from the school's perspective. The opinions of school board members, teachers and administrators regarding how parents should be involved in their children's education have all been surveyed (Epstein and Dauber, 1991; Becker and Epstein, 1982 ; Stevenson and Baker, 1987). However, very little research has been conducted to seek parent and student perspectives on parental involvement. Research has also focused primarily on parental involvement programs in the elementary grades. This investigator is unaware of any studies which have focused on parents' and students' perceptions of middle years parental involvement. Thus, while there is an abundance of research indicating that parental involvement is beneficial to all parties concerned, the current literature fails to reveal the viewpoints of either parents or students on the issue.

Educators need input from parents and students since the parents and students also have a stake in the implementation of parental involvement programs. This study will provide insight into how parents and students perceive parental involvement during the middle years of schooling and also highlight how school-home partnerships can be further improved based upon the suggestions of parents and students. More specifically, the study will identify:

(1) The types of parental involvement opportunities that already exist within the two
target schools;

(2) Whether there are significant differences between the perceptions of:

(i) Middle years parents versus middle years students;
(ii) Grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students; and
(iii) Grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents; and

(3) The types of parent involvement opportunites that both middle years parents and
students would like to see instituted at the two target schools.

Overview of the Study

Two K to 9 schools were chosen by the division administration to participate in this study. One class was selected from each of the middle year grades (5 to 8) at each of the two schools by the respective school principals. In total, eight classes of students and their parents participated in the study. A questionnaire was developed using five of Epstein's (1995) categories of parental involvement: home support, communication between home and school, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making. Questionnaires were sent home with students for parents to complete and return. The student questionnaires were administered by the researcher during school hours.

Both a quantitative and qualitative data analysis were carried out. The quantitative data analysis consisted of frequency counts, percentages and two tailed t-tests to determine if there were significant differences between the perceptions of: middle years parents versus middle years students; grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students; and finally, grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents. For the qualitative data analysis, all returned surveys were analysed through repeated searches (Kamil, Langer & Shanahan, 1985) to gain the perspectives of parents and students on the issue of parental involvement and how school-family partnerships might be strengthened.

Limitations

There were several confounding factors that may have influenced the results of the study:

(1) the willingness of eligible participants to respond to the questionnaire;

(2) the relatively short time frame provided by the researcher to complete the questionnaire, especially in respect to the students;

(3) the veracity of the responses; and

(4) the impersonal approach inherent in survey research due to the anonymity of respondents.

The results of this study are based on the participation of four classes from each of two schools, one class and the respective parents from each of the grades: 5, 6, 7 and 8. This is still a relatively small sample size for making broad generalizations.

Definition of Terms

Parental Involvement: Any adult who takes a special interest in and helps a child develop and understand life values and build self-confidence (Wheeler, cited in Rothwell, 1995, p.4).

Middle Years: Children attending school in grades five through eight.

Collaboration: A partnership in which an adult and a child work together as a team to create and provide a more supportive learning environment.

Empowerment: An intentional, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cochran, M & Dean, C., 1991, p. 265-266).

Zone of Proximal Development: The distance between the actual development level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Epstein's Typology of Parental Involvement: Epstein (1995) defines six different ways that parents might become involved with their children's schooling:

> **Type 1: Parenting** - to help families establish positive home environments which would be conducive for students as learners;
>
> **Type 2: Communicating** - to improve lines of communication from home-to-school and vice versa about school programs/student progress;
>
> **Type 3: Volunteering** - to recruit/organize parents for a variety of programs offered at the school;

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Type 4: Learning at home - to offer parents information, tips, ideas and enrichment activities, which could be carried out in the privacy of the home;

Type 5 : Decision-making - to allow parents to be actively involved in the decision-making process as well as represent other parents' viewpoints;

Type 6 : Collaborating with community - to use community resources in order to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THEORY AND RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter highlights the major studies on parental involvement and provides examples of parental involvement programs. Before discussing and reviewing the literature, the investigator: (1) provides a historical overview regarding the role of parents in educating children over the ages; (2) describes Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) which posits that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development; and (3) reviews the physical, social, emotional and moral needs of middle years students.

Historical Overview

> Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. During the first 18 years of life, children spend only about 13 percent of their waking hours in school and 87 percent of their waking time under the control of their families.
> - One very important type of parent involvement takes place before a child ever sets foot in a school. By creating a positive learning environment at home, and establishing high expectations for their children, parents lay the groundwork for subsequent achievement in school.
>   (Amundson, 1988, p.2)

Since the beginning of civilization, parents have been regarded as their children's most important educators. Parents nurture and instruct their children informally through modelling, care-giving and guidance. The earliest records (Berger, 1991) of formal education outside the home emerged in Egypt during the Middle Kingdom, 3787 to 1580 B.C. The Greeks perceived children as the future bearers of the Greek culture. Children in Greek society were to be raised carefully in order to benefit the state and not the family. In other words, the children were to be molded to fit society's needs. Roman society mirrored Greek society. The mother was perceived to be the child's first educator (Berger, 1991).

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During the Middle Ages, 400-1400 A.D., children were considered to be "miniature adults" and expected to participate in daily, adult work activities. In Western societies, however, by the seventeenth century, childhood was beginning to be perceived as a special period (Berger, 1991). As documented by Berger (1991), Comenius and Locke identified the important role played by the interaction between children and their parents. Comenius also emphasized the importance of shaping young children's education through infant schooling. He believed that children were born naturally good and could be easily molded like a ball of wax, when soft. Comenius emphasized that the education of children should begin in the home (Berger, 1991).

Locke's views (Berger, 1991) were similar. He believed that, while children were born with a blank slate, they required experiences to develop ideas. Locke emphasized the important role of the family in the education of children. The family was to encourage valuable experiences and provide an optimal learning environment (Berger, 1991).

The current emphasis on parent involvement has its origins in the writings of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel (cited in Berger, 1991) who recognized the important role of the family in a child's education. Pestalozzi viewed the mother as the child's first educator. He stated that, "as the mother is the first to nourish her child's body, so should she, by God's order, be the first to nourish his mind"(cited in Berger, 1991, p.211).

Like Comenius, Pestalozzi believed in the natural goodness of children. In his view, children should be encouraged to explore their environment through the use of concrete objects, group instruction and self-activity. Froebel (Berger, 1991), who became known as the "father of kindergarten", also perceived the mother as the central figure in the development of the child's learning. As a result, Froebel wrote a book "Mother play and nursery songs with finger plays" for mothers to use with their young children at home. Pestalozzi and Froebel believed that parents were

the key to children's emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Berger, 1991). Vygotsky (1978), however, helped to provide an understanding of how parent-child interactions facilitate the process of learning.

Vygotsky's Perspective

There are two important and related themes in Vygotsky's writings: (1) the social foundations of cognition and (2) the importance of instruction in development. Vygotsky (1978) stated that children begin learning long before they begin formal schooling. Learning to read, for example, does not begin when the child enters school; the child brings a history of preschool learning experiences that, to a greater or lesser extent, have prepared the way for a gentle transition from emergent to conventional literacy. These experiences have taken place in social settings that share common features with other school learning activities.

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life. During both preschool and school years, the conceptual abilities of children are stretched through play and the use of imagination. While imitating their elders in culturally patterned activities, children create opportunities for intellectual development. At first, their games are merely recollections and reenactments of real situations, but, through the dynamics of their imagination and the recognition of implicit rules governing the activities they have reproduced in their games, children achieve an elementary mastery of abstract thought (cited in Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p.57). A second feature of Vygotsky's theory is that the potential for cognitive development is limited in scope and restricted to an area which he labelled the zone of proximal development, defined as the difference between

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independent learning or problem-solving capabilities and what can be completed with adult or peer mediation. Thus, according to Vygotsky, learning functions at optimal levels when the child is interacting with people in his(her) environment or in cooperation with his(her) peers. This learning is later internalized. In all of Vygotsky's writings (1978), the social relationship referred to as "teaching" is the one-to-one relationship between one adult and one child. The implication is that, in order to guide children to higher levels of accomplishment, adults (or peers) first need to scaffold or mediate learning (Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

The zone of proximal development highlights how the more competent can assist both the young and the less competent to reach a cognitive level from which to reflect more abstractly about the nature of things. Scaffolding, provided by the teacher or an adult or peer, acts as a support frame for elevating students so that they are able to achieve something that otherwise would not be possible (Bruner, 1990). Scaffolding enables a student to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal that he(she) could not have accomplished alone. But scaffolding also involves the gradual release of responsibility from adult to child or from child to child. The gradual release model of learning and instruction (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) draws heavily on Vygotsky's view of the relationship between instruction and cognitive development.

Instruction is most effective when adults identify the zone or levels at which children can perform with some assistance and then guide them to the point of independence. The last step of scaffolded instruction is helping the student to generalize what he (she) has learned to other situations. Such generalization is facilitated by the gradual withdrawal of scaffolding as learners demonstrate increased competence (Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

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Summary and Implications

While Comenius. Locke, Pestalozzi and Froebel explained the role that families play in the education of the young. Vygotsky describes the process in which learning becomes internalized. Vygotsky's work has implications for middle years learners since the middle years is a period marked by the search for a personal identity and the drive to become independent from family. However, middle years learners are still at a stage in their lives where they need the guidance of their parents and other adults. Through parental involvement programs, families can provide the necessary social learning supports that children require to function in the school environment.

Parent-Child Interactions

Certain parent-child interactions are ideal grounds for subsequent teacher-child activities that are of central importance in the early grades (Tough. 1976; Ninio and Bruner, 1978; Brown, 1995). It is evident from the review of Vygotsky (1978) that a great deal of learning occurs in social settings. Children first experience a particular set of problem-solving activities in the presence of others and only gradually come to perform these functions for themselves. First, the adult (parent, teacher, etc.) or peer guides the child's activity and does much of the cognitive work, but gradually the adult and child come to share the cognitive functions with the child taking the initiative and the adult correcting and guiding as the child falters. Finally. the adult allows the child to take over the major thinking role and becomes a supportive and sympathetic audience (Brown, 1995).

Language Learning

This developmental process from social to individual cognitive processing is most evident in parent-child dyads that facilitate language acquisition. Ninio and Bruner (1978) observed one mother-infant dyad longitudinally. from the age of 8 to 18 months. Ninio and Bruner noted that the

mother accepted a variety of responses as acceptable turn-taking behavior, interpreting any utterance on the part of the child as having a "specific, intelligible content".

However, a dramatic shift in responsibilty came when the child began to label pictures for himself. The mother seemed to increase her level of expectation, first persuading the child to substitute a vocalization for a nonvocal sign and, later, a well-formed word for babble. Gradually, the responsibility for labeling was transferred from mother to child as a response to his (her) increasing store of knowledge. The mother was seen functioning repeatedly in the child's "region of sensitivity to instruction" or "zone of proximal development" (Brown, 1995). The mother not only provided an optimal learning environment, but she also modeled appropriate meaning making and questioning strategies. Tough (1976) emphasized that parents can play a very important role in their children's language development by creating a positive, nurturing and supportive environment which will, in turn, allow children to become empowered and willing to take risks in their own learning.

It has been argued that parent-child interactions, such as the social reading experiences, are important preparations for early school success. Feuerstein (1980) contends that mediated learning experiences are an essential aspect of development, beginning when the parent selects significant objects for focus and systematically continues to shape the child's learning experiences. By interacting with an adult, who models and guides problem-solving activities and structures learning environments, children gradually come to adopt structuring and regulating activities of their own.

Mediated Learning Needs

Feuerstein (1980) believed that the principal reason for the poor academic performance on the part of many disadvantaged students was the lack of consistent instruction in their earlier development because of parental apathy, ignorance, or overcommitment. In addition, interactive styles of continually questioning and extending the limits of knowledge that are considered typical of

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middle-class social-interaction patterns may be even alien or considered inappropriate in some cultures. Mediated-learning activities, however, are exactly what occur in schools, and the middle-class child comes well prepared to take part in these rituals (Feuerstein, 1980).

Summary and Implications

Vygotsky (1978), Brown (1995), Feuerstein (1980), Ninio and Bruner (1978) and Tough (1976) have all highlighted the importance of adult-child interactions in students' social, emotional, cognitive and psychological development. During the middle years, children need the adults in their lives so that they can continue to dialogue on various issues that may be of interest to them and develop and clarify their own ideas. Middle years learners (Middle Years Programming Committee, 1994) become very conscious about moral issues and feel the need to discuss them with an adult to justify or develop their own viewpoints. The key to success is in the quality of interaction that takes place between the adult and child. Such personalized interaction is not always possible in the classrooms, however, because teachers have to manage large groups of students.

One answer to the dilemma is to provide more parental involvement programs so that schools can create a more supportive and conducive learning environment. Parental involvement programs also enable middle years students to take a more active role in their learning. When a middle years learner can work with an adult in one-to-one or small group instruction, there are more oppportunites for dialogue to clarify tasks and to scaffold learning. Scaffolding is extremely beneficial for middle years learners who require a hands-on approach rather than a teaching style which consists mainly of imparting information through a lecture and question and answer format. Many middle years students do not feel comfortable asking questions in front of their peers due to awkwardness and the desire to fit in with the group. Thus, adults, in general, can play a very

important role in middle years children's social, emotional, psychological and intellectual development.

Middle Years Curriculum and Middle Years Learners

Educators and parents alike need to be familiar with the middle years curriculum and the main characteristics of middle years learners to gain a better understanding of why parental involvement is beneficial. The following discussion of middle years characteristics provides useful insight.

Middle Years Curriculum

In Manitoba, students in grades five through eight are required by provincial mandate to take language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, health, and physical education. Students in grades 5 and 6 are also required to take music and art. In addition to the mandated curriculum, the students are required by divisional mandate to take basic French in grades 4 through 8. In the schools in which they are offered, subjects such as art, musical theatre, and band are elective options in grades 7 through S1 (grade 9).

A committee was formed in 1994 by the school division in which this study was conducted to determine whether current educational practices were meeting middle years educational objectives. The following recommendations were made as a result of the efforts of the division's Middle Years Programming Committee:

1) Develop a sense of community at all middle years schools.

2) Adopt decision-making models that allow the active involvement of all parties concerned through creating and validating channels of communication among the following groups: students, staff, parents and community.

3) Adopt interactive models and norms which recognize the potential, dignity, and uniqueness of each individual.

4) Assist all students to develop healthy and constructive lifestyles and an appropriate level of physical fitness.

5) Create and maintain a safe and positive school climate for all children (Middle Years Programming Commmittee, 1994).

At the same time, the Middle Years Programming Committee at the divisional level was requested to identify the developmental characteristics of typical Middle Years students. The Committee determined that there were five major characteristics of middle years students: (1) physical; (2) social; (3) emotional; (4) moral ; and (5) intellectual. These characteristics are further elaborated upon in the next section.

Characteristics of Middle Years Students

The major physical characteristics of students as they grow from childhood include: the onset of puberty, rapid physical growth and metabolic changes. These are accompanied by erratic eating habits and an increased concern and sensitivity with regard to appearance and body development. Socially, middle years students are beginning to perceive peer relationships as being more important than family. Preteens and teens need peer approval and seek independence from their parents. Their emotional needs are characterized by an inner conflict. Students in the middle years may experience difficulty coping with or discussing sexuality. Their behavior is often attention-seeking with emotional outbursts being common. Often they are unable to handle criticism and exhibit rebellious behavior towards authority figures. The moral characteristics of middle years students further reflect their inner conflicts as they try to determine their own personal code of ethics. Many will exhibit an increased sense of right and wrong, indicating that young adolescents are

developing a social conscience. Intellectually, adolescents are moving from the stage of concrete operations to abstract thinking. They prefer active rather than passive involvement during learning, enjoy discussions with adults, are concerned with social issues in life, and able to evaluate issues critically but not objectively.

It is at this time in children's academic life that educators are providing new concepts and expecting students to learn large quantities of new information. However, the growth of brain cells increases at a very slow rate between the ages of twelve and fourteen (Middle Years Programming Committe, 1994). Due to the slow growth of brain cells, middle years learners have difficulty grasping all the new information imparted in the classroom environment.

Summary and Implications

The Middle Years Programming Committee (1994) helped highlight that middle years students are experiencing turmoil and inner conflict. While their attention span may be somewhat limited during this period of schooling, they are still expected to meet traditional learning standards and acquire new knowledge.

For middle years learners, the family and school are the templates of society, miniatures and models of the world in which that they must function as adults (Comer, 1978). Through interaction with children, adults stimulate children's psychological, social, moral and intellectual development which is consistent with the expectations of a given society. Ninio and Bruner (1978) have indicated that the verbal interaction which takes place between parent and child helps to scaffold the child's learning.

Middle years learners need one-to-one instruction or face-to-face dialogue in order to help them ultimately learn how to perform tasks independently. Parents can engage in more advanced levels of thought during verbal interactions with their children and model problem-solving strategies.

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The school division in which this study was being conducted is a strong proponent of parental involvement programs. The division encourages teaching staff to institute collaborative learning in their classrooms. During the researcher's visits to school R, it was noted that the teachers in the middle years were encouraging small group or dyad work within their classrooms. However, this type of support for middle years learners requires considerable teacher planning and adult support. Teachers must determine how to group or pair students with adult volunteers to maximize learning.

Current Parent Involvement Practices

For many years, schools and families have understood themselves as having separate and distinct roles in children's lives (Henderson, 1985). Children were expected to learn the three Rs at school. The home was responsible for children's physical well-being and for instilling values such as "doing your best". Schools had little reason to interact with families on a regular basis. As long as schools did their job (teaching), and families did their job (nurturing), everything went fairly smoothly. The school was thought to know what was "best" for children educationally and provided parents with limited information.

Under this paradigm of school-home relationships, the flow of information was limited and often unidirectional. When parents offered suggestions, they perceived that the school did not take them seriously. Convinced that teaching was best left to the professionals, the school may have reacted to parents' suggestions as an attempt to "take over".

With both society and the family undergoing major changes, families and schools can no longer afford the luxury of considering themselves "separate but equal". Each needs the other in partnership. Stresses on the family have never been greater. In many families, both parents work.

Many children are being raised by single parents or by grandparents. There are more "blended" families (Burns, 1993).

Epstein (1990) states that most schools leave it up to individual families to decide whether and how to become involved with their children's schools. This, in turn, means that some families participate in their children's education and provide the necessary guidance, whereas other families are not involved at all. Epstein believes that more students would be successful if their schools and families provided them with consistent messages about the importance of education. Epstein also contends that students would learn more if their schools and families combined all available resources to provide students with varied, intensive and coordinated learning.

Gordon and Breivogel (1976) state that "not only are all parents teachers of their children, but that all parents are learners in improving their ways of working with their own children" (p.7). However, Gordon and Breivogel note that all parents need support and help in the following areas: (1) the demonstration of instructional procedures and activities; (2) support for what they are doing that is soundly-based according to theories of child-development; (3) encouragement to use and expand upon what they know; and (4) opportunities to share their ideas with other parents regarding what has worked well for them.

Several research studies (Berger ,1991; Olmsted, 1991; Bastness, 1992) stress that both the school and home should be involved as a team to maximize the child's chances for success in later life. Children are more successful at all grade levels if their parents, regardless of educational background or social class participate actively in school and encourage education and learning at home (Dauber and Epstein, 1991). Bastness (1995) emphasizes the importance of cooperation, which must exist before a successful relationship can be established. The child needs to see consistency as well as cooperation between home and school. Owen (1992) states that:

In these times, if you care for the child, you have to care for the family. If you care for the family, you have to reach out to the community. We can't reach our academic goals unless we help our community address social and economic needs. (p.5)

Epstein (1990) mentions that "all the years that children attend school, they also attend home" (p.99). There has been a gradual realization by educators and parents that not only are schools important to parents and their children, but also that schools need the support of parents to enhance student learning (Berger, 1991). Comer (1978) defines the relationship between school and the family as the "backbones of society" upon which the foundation of learning thrives or collapses. The family and school, as "miniature societies," enable children to learn how to function and interact in social settings and to develop their social, cognitive and moral skills.

Early Years Parental Involvement

Stevens and her colleagues (1993) emphasize that parent involvement in early childhood education has a major influence on both the behaviour of parents and the development and education of their children. The Sheffield Early Literacy Development Project in England (Weinberger, Hannon, and Nutbrown, 1990) explored ways of working with parents to promote early literacy through a collaborative research study between the University and the City of Sheffield. Many parents' responses indicated that they were unaware of the important role that they, as parents, could play in their children's early literacy development. Darling (1988) noted that:

Parents act as role models for the literacy behaviors of their children. The children of parents who are poor role models find that each year their children slip further behind. For their children, school is not the key to opportunity but to failure.(p.3)

Support for Beginning Readers

At early years levels, parental support for beginning readers is especially important, although Duff and Adams (1981) agree that some parents are often poor reading models due to unrealistic expectations about reading behaviors for their own children.

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My mother read, when I was small
Of Humpty Dumpty on the wall
Of Goldilocks, Babar, Bo Peep,
And of a princess deep in sleep,
Of Curious George, and Ping, and Pooh,
And Cinderella, and Boy Blue,
And, oh, so many marvelous folk.
I still can hear the way she spoke
In cadences that, fast or slow,
Or loud or soft, or high or low,
Made all things she was reading of
Something I could know and love-
Something that, in prose or rhyme,
Is my own "Once upon a time."

(Jacobs, 1981, p.898).

The above poem depicts how a simple act, such as a mother's reading and listening to her child read, can have such a major impact on the child's school achievement. Becker and Epstein (1982) note that teachers value parents' reading with their children as the most important activity for future school success. "The secret of it all lies in parents reading aloud to and with the child"(Huey, 1968, p.332). While Hewison and Tizard (1980) observe that the factor which determined reading success was whether or not the mother read to the child, Flood (1977) found that the reading style which results in the most benefits for a child is the one in which there is verbal interaction between parent and child.

Family Literacy Programs

Handel (1992) offers a program for both parents and grandparents of kindergarten and early years children to encourage them to read and discuss books with their children. The program, known as "Partnership for Family Reading," helps parents support their children's literacy development and, at the same time, improve their own literacy. The author perceives reading as an active process and the reader as an active constructor of meaning. The program consists of the following: introductory activities; presentation of a children's book; demonstration of a reading strategy; practice in pairs;

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group discussion; preparation for reading at home; and book borrowing. Handel reports that the program is highly successful in terms of improving family reading relationships; increasing family closeness; fostering an enjoyable reading relationship between parent and child; enhancing quantity and quality of reading in the home; and increasing use of public and school libraries. At the same time, participants learn ways to work with their children; to appreciate reading; to value working with their children; and finally, to develop ideas about their educational role. Children benefit from the program when they see their parents as role models; become more excited and knowledgeable about story structure ; and develop a sense of community. For the school and its teaching staff, there is an increase in positive perceptions of school and staff by the participants; and respect for professional viewpoints. Zakaluk and Wynes (1995) adopted this approach in a program for immigrant women and their children but added a creative writing component. Both of these programs operated outside of school jurisdictions, however.

Hayden (1995) uses a "Paired Reading" approach to train parents as reading facilitators. Briefly, the reading cycle moves from duet to solo and back to duet and solo reading. Parents make a commitment to use the paired reading strategies with their child five times a week for ten minutes a day for a period of eight to twelve weeks.

The HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) was originally developed in 1969 in Jerusalem by a team of educators at the Hebrew University to prepare immigrant students to enter the highly competitive Israeli education system. In 1985, Hillary Rodham Clinton decided to explore the possibility of bringing the program to the United States. HIPPY is a home-based program that helps parents of preschoolers to prepare their children for success upon entering school. Twice a month, a paraprofessional, who must be a parent from the same community, visits a parent in the community and works with him/her on biweekly lessons. The

instructional program is made up of packets of preprogrammed materials that focus on language, problem solving, and discrimination skills. The mothers and fathers gather on alternating weeks for group meetings with their paraprofessionals and share experiences and ideas with other parents. The HIPPY program has been successful in terms of increasing parent involvement. Parents have become more involved in their children's school work and have been motivated to further their own education (Morrow, Tracey, and Maxwell, 1995).

Parents as Tutors (PAT) serves the families of Limited-English-proficiency (LEP) students in kindergarten through second grade. The program has three goals to: to increase parent involvement, improve self-concept, and enhance children's academic achievement. In the first year, tutoring focuses on generic activities (language arts and mathematics) for all parents to conduct at home. During the second year, parents participate in discussion sessions that alternate between informational topics and the development of activities for home tutoring. During the third year, continued parent training takes place. A training manual is available for the PAT program. The success of the program is monitored through questionnaires completed by the parents. Many of the parents who participate in PAT go on to study English as a second language, and some have received their high school diplomas (Morrow, Tracey, and Maxwell, 1995).

Even though many of these programs exist outside of the school system, there are a number of community programs that foster parent involvement in the early years. Parent involvement programs for middle and senior years students are more limited, however, as suggested in the following discussion.

Middle Years Parent Involvement Programs

A program known as Parents Sharing Books aims to help parents become involved in reading with their middle-school children (Morrow, Tracey, and Maxwell, 1995). This program is

designed as an intervention to keep preteens interested in reading and to increase interaction between these youngsters and their parents.

In a later program, and perhaps as an outgrowth of her work with early years parents, Handel (1995) uses an interactive, social model based on the foundations of Vygotsky who believed that the more experienced adult could assist the child to learn beyond his (her) cognitive abilities through scaffolding. The program consists of a series of workshops in children's literature, reading comprehension strategies, and how to read and discuss books using cognitive strategies. Handel's goal is to develop the literacies of two generations (intergenerational) through preparatory workshops and reading sessions at the elementary levels.

Secondary Level Parental Involvement Pograms

Cairney (1995) employs a program known as EPISLL (Effective Partners in Secondary Literacy Learning) to increase parent participation at the secondary level. The program is designed to increase community awareness of literacy learning, develop positive attitudes towards reading and writing, strengthen and maintain educational programs, encourage parents, teachers and students to work together in order to provide all parties easy access to literacy practices and increase parent involvement for greater mutual understanding.

There are many benefits for everyone involved in the EPISLL program. Parents indicate that they gain new strategies to assist their teens, improve communication with their children, obtain new knowledge about literacy and learning, and gain confidence in their ability to help their children. Parents and teaching staff note that students demonstrate new skills as a direct result of the program, have higher expectations and show more confidence. The school staff gain a better understanding of parent perceptions and expectations of schooling, change their attitudes and expectations of parent involvement, obtain a better understanding of students' needs, and realize the need for better

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communication between school and the local community. The goal of the program is to build a valuable partnership and develop a stronger focus on building partnerships between parents and the local community. A drawback to programs such as these, however, is the inordinate amount of time required to organize them. Outside help or new staff positions may have to be created to run them. The following programs may be more realistic because they can be operated with the help of existing school resources and parental input.

Minority Parental Involvement Programs

Jones (1991) states that, while all children benefit, children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Understanding and respecting the diversity of families is essential when developing programs to strengthen the bond between the school and families.

Shanahan and his colleagues (1995) demonstrate that linguistic minority parents can play an active role in developing their children's literacy skills. The authors base their FLAME program on four assumptions: (1) A supportive home environment is essential to literacy learning; (2) Parents can have a positive effect on children's literacy learning; (3) Parents who are confident and successful learners are the most effective teachers of their children and (4) Literacy is most likely to be influenced by the social and cultural contexts of the family. The program draws on the social, cultural and linguistic strengths of the Latino community to develop home literacy centres and increase book sharing and selection, library visits, community literacy, homework helping skills, and parent-teacher get togethers.

Buchoff (1995) points out that "Family Stories" programs can serve as an effective tool for encouraging parental involvement, whereby students learn more about their cultural heritage from the presentations of community experts, acquire and refine literacy skills, and develop a greater respect

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for the multicultural differences that make them unique. The Family Stories program can also help to promote the values of the home, neighbourhood and community. At the same time, a unique bond is fostered between the adult who posseses these treasured tales and the listener who feels powerfully intimate with the material being described. With practice in retelling, children come to assimilate the concept of story structure. The children learn to introduce a story, recount its plot episodes and resolution, and demonstrate the ability to organize details sequentially. Through the retelling of family stories, children experiment with words and develop confidence in communication through oral language.

Akroyd (1995) organized a parent reading and writing class for minority parents in which parents could get together, create a writing piece for their child, share the piece with the class, and later share it with their own child. The parent writers provided an effective role model for the children because they were still exploring and discovering their own reading and writing skills.

Botrie and Wenger (1992) suggest a broader role for minority parents who can be an extremely valuable asset in enriching school activities. Parents can act as:

a) facilitators in writing - translate directions and written language, help students

write in their first language; interpret students' writing in other languages; and

create dual language story books;

b) facilitators in reading - read to children in their language; hear children read in

their own language; help them with English script;

c) a buddy with a child or family from the same country; and

d) contacts for families speaking the same language and welcome them to the

neighbourhood and the school (p.26).

Brandt (1989) states that parents can be useful as school partners when they are given useful and clear information on how to help their children especially at home. Parents from most economically depressed communities do want to help their children to succeed and want to help them at home, but need the school's assistance. Chavkin and Williams (1993) support Brandt's viewpoint that all parents, regardless of ethnicity or minority status, want to take an active role in their children's education. Gordon and Breivogel (1976) suggest that parents respond when the school reaches out to them in a positive, non-threatening, non-scolding and non-manipulative manner.

Comer (1978) initiated a parent involvement program to reach low-income, black parents in Connecticut. The school ranked 32nd of the 33 New Haven elementary schools in Meteropolitan Achievement Test scores in reading and math for the year 1969. Comer noted that there was a high rate of absenteeism among students and teachers, and high degrees of high conflict between children, children and staff, and parents and staff. After two years, reading and math scores reached grade level for those students whose parents were part of the program. In terms of attendance, the school had the third best city-wide attendance in 1976 and second best in 1977.

In a 1968 joint project with the school system, Comer and Haynes (1991) developed "The Parent Program" (later known as the School Development Program) to promote parental involvement in two elementary schools. The program consists of: (1) three mechanisms: a School Planning and Management Team; Mental Health Team; and Parent Program; (2) three operations which developed and monitored the implementation of a comprehensive school plan that focused on: the school climate and academic program; staff development based on the plan; and assessment and modification of the school program and (3) three guidelines: a "no-fault" problem-solving approach; consensus decision-making based on child development principles; and collaborative management. The success of the program lies in its design which allows parents to participate at a level at which

they are comfortable and effective. All of the levels allow parents to play meaningful roles with

school staff approval and support as well as providing clear direction and purpose.

Comer and Haynes (1991) note that parents are primarily interested in activities that involve

their children. They consider providing for the following as essential: (1) general participation; (2)

classroom involvement or sponsorship and support of school programs; and (3) participation in the

decision-making process.

> If schools treat parents as powerless or unimportant, or if they
> discourage parents from taking an interest, they promote the
> development of attitudes in parents, and consequently their
> children, that inhibit achievement.

(Henderson, 1981, p.10 cited in Ziegler)

Various research studies (Auerbach, 1989; Brandt, 1989; Edwards, 1995; Purcell-Gates,

1995; Moulton, 1995; Seeley, 1989; Ollilia & Mayfield, 1992; Shanahan, 1995; Unwin, 1995) have

demonstrated that low-income, single and minority parents can be empowered to enrich their

children's literacy activities and skills. Come and Fredericks (1995) believe that parents, no matter

what their social or economic standing, have the potential for making an educational difference in

their children's lives when offered sincere opportunities for becoming important members of the

educational team.

Low-Income Parental Involvement Programs

Research (Botrie and Wenger, 1992; Cochran and Dean, 1991; Edwards, 1995; Huey, 1968;

Seeley, 1989; Stevenson and Barker, 1987) indicates that supportive, empowered parents can make a

teacher's work easier, not harder. Edwards (1995) developed a program which would help to

empower low-income mothers and fathers to share books with their young children. The program,

known as "Parents as Partners in Reading," involved three phases: group discussion, group feedback,

and parent-child interaction. What was particularly interesting about this approach was that the

researcher had designated four parent leaders who would lead the discussions as well as train other low-income parents in the neighbourhood after her departure from the program. The success of the program was based on the personal interpretations of the parent participants. The parents' perspective was, "Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I may remember. But involve me and I'll understand" (p.17).

Unwin (1995) involved the whole family in their children's education. This author presents a case study in which she visited the home of a young, single mother whose children were in danger of failing or repeating a grade. The young mother welcomed the investigator's support, information and suggestions designed to help enrich her children's literacy. Sometimes, parents, as in the case of this young mother, are uncertain about what they should be doing to help their children. Bookmates (Zakaluk & Silver, 1994), an innercity program for preschoolers, had a simliar intent.

The Intergenerational Reading Project was introduced by France and Hager (1993) to assist African-American, low-income parents with limited reading skills on how to read aloud to their children and use such reading strategies as: choral reading; echo reading; paired reading; storytelling; Reader's Theatre and chanting. A series of workshops were conducted in six weekly, one-hour sessions in which parents and their prekindergarten children read predictable pattern books aloud. The researchers noted that an improved environment for literacy at home and cooperation between the parents and school enhanced preparation for formal reading instruction. France and Hager state that parents who are recruited, respected, and provided with a program that is appropriate in its response to their needs enjoy a sense of shared responsibility with teachers in setting the stage for success in reading.

Philliber and his colleagues (1996) conducted a study on the consequences of family literacy for adults and children. The project, funded by Toyota and known as the Toyota Families for

Learning Project, was conducted at thirty-two locations in ten cities to work with three to four year old preschoolers and their under-educated, low-income African-American parents. The program consisted of early childhood education, parent literacy training, support groups for parents and parent-child interaction activities. The authors noted that participants in the family literacy component of the program gained the most in terms of reading skills, but perhaps reading gains were the easiest to measure. Children involved in the family literacy programs performed better on tests than did participants in programs focusing primarily on either adults or children.

Auerbach (1989) suggests early in the rationale for his research that family literacy programs are ideal since such programs include direct parent-child interactions around authentic literacy tasks: reading with and or listening to children; talking about, giving and receiving support for homework and school concerns; and engaging in other literacy activities with children. Benefits include parents working independently on reading and writing; using literacy to address family and community problems; addressing child-rearing concerns; supporting home language and culture and lastly, interacting with the school system. Auerbach uses a socio-contextual approach in his implementation of family literacy programs with bilingual parents through reading and writing in a variety of ways: investigating home language use, validating family literacy practices, exploring cultural issues, modeling whole language activities that parents might do with children, validating culture-specific literacy forms, exploring parenting issues, using literacy to explore issues of learning and teaching, addressing community, workplace, and health care issues, practicing advocacy in dealing with schools, and finally exploring political issues.

In the words of Ira Gordon:

> Working with parents is not a missionary but a cooperative program,
> one we have learned can be done. We believe, with good evidence,
> that virtually all parents want a better life for their children than they
> have had... We know that parents, when properly approached, want to
> be involved in the education of their children. They will become
> involved in a variety of ways when approached as equal partners
> on their own territory in ways that make sense to them.
>
> (cited in Olmsted, 1991, p.231)

Cairney (1995) states that parents must be perceived as equal partners in education in order for a reciprocal relationship to exist.

> It is family literacy practices which determine young
> children's experiences with print in the home, and these
> experiences cannot be assumed simply by virtue of
> common belief.
>
> (Purcell-Gates, L'Allier, and Smith, 1995, p.31).

This statement emphasizes the importance of educators looking at children as individuals within unique family settings. Socio-economic status should not be used to make assumptions about a child's literacy environment since parents, despite their low-income, can still enrich their children's literacy skills. The key point is whether parents are interested in their children's school performance.

Summary

Rather than being school driven, the parental involvement programs described either are or have been funded by colleges or private organizations such as Toyota Corporation. All of these programs are made possible as long as funding is available. Only two programs were conducted in collaboration with local school divisions, "The Sheffield Early Literacy Development Project" (Weinberger, Hannon and Nutbrown, 1990), and "The School Development Program" (Comer and Haynes, 1991). All of the other programs identified may terminate at any time due to discontinued funding. Also, the isolated nature of such programs is a concern. The programs may be working outside of, rather than in collaboration with, local schools.

Another issue to consider is the practicality of the parental involvement programs. Schools are experiencing major funding reductions. Any implemented programs may have to rely totally on teaching staff and administration to train parents as facilitators. Conflict may arise as teachers have increasing demands placed upon them. Schools need to determine in which areas parents are interested and focus on developing programs which require low maintenance and low overhead costs.

Schools require parental support to provide active, enriched programs without the cost of additional educational support (Botrie and Wenger, 1986). When parents view the school's climate as "inviting", they become good public relations advocates for that school. Educators need to remember that all parents are individuals with personal views, experiences, and attitudes (Ollilia and Mayfield, 1992; Wheeler, 1992; Greenwood and Hickman, 1991; Duff and Adams, 1981; Brandt, 1989; Dauber and Epstein, 1993). Nonetheless, Botrie and Wenger (1992) recommend that the common threads between teachers and parents should be their interest, advocacy, and support for children.

Parental Involvement Approaches

Parent involvement programs have been primarily designed to improve children's literacy development (Morrow, 1995). Literacy programs are being offered by a variety of organizations including schools, libraries, and community services groups (Morrow, 1995).

But Auerbach (1989) argues that such literacy programs function under a deficiency hypothesis in which educators assume that parents lack the necessary skills to promote school success. The author suggests that educators should focus on the family's strengths rather than their shortcomings. For example, educators should not look at language-minority students as lacking a rich literacy home environment, suffering from parental apathy, or lacking educational aspirations. Another misconception of language-minority students is that they only succeed because their parents do specific school-like activities at home. In reality, the real impact is what parents do with their

children: frequency of outings, emotional climate of the home, amount of time spent together as a family, level of financial stress, enrichment activities and level of parent involvement with their children's schools (Auerbach, 1989).

Auerbach proposes a socio-contextual approach towards family literacy in which community concerns and cultural practices are taken into consideration for curriculum development. This approach would allow literacy activities to become more meaningful to the students since the activities would relate to daily tasks. By weaving the social context into daily literacy activities, students can benefit from the rich resource that can inform rather than impede learning. By incorporating community cultural forms and social issues into the context of literacy activities, educators can increase the social significance of literacy in the family.

Comer and Haynes (1991) propose an ecological approach to encourage parent involvement. Using the ecological approach would allow parents to contribute their insights and knowledge to complement the teachings of the school as well as strengthen academic programs. However, Comer and Haynes stress that, for parent involvement initiatives to be successful, the school and parents must create positive relationships that will support the children's full development: social, cultural, educational and emotional. This approach would allow flexibility in which parents and school staff work together at different levels, ranging from the general support of educational programs, and active participation in daily activities to becoming involved in planning and management tasks. These different types of parent involvement initiatives allow parents to offer their perspectives on matters that help to serve all children.

Ollilia and Mayfield (1992) favor an interactive approach in literacy programs to increase the depth of knowledge processing and imbue learning with purpose and meaning. Through an interactive approach, parents can help their children to enjoy reading as a process of self-exploration

(ie. relating their own experiences through stories) and teach concepts introduced in the story, making them more meaningful in terms of their own experience and developmental levels. Epstein (1990) also proposes an interactive approach towards parent involvement in which there are shared responsibilities between families and schools as a set of overlapping spheres of influence that: (1) alter the interactions of parents, teachers, students and other members of the two institutions; as well as (2) affect student learning and development.

Summary

Three types of approaches, socio-contextual, ecological and interactive, were discussed to highlight different ways that the school community can promote parental involvement. The type of approach initiated depends partially on the school and its surrounding community. With the parents, schools need to determine which approach would be suitable before proceeding.

Parental involvement programs are most effective when they are based on child development concerns and when they are implemented within the larger context of improving relationships. At the same time, if the programs are well constructed and implemented, they can provide the critical link between home, community and school.

Types of Parental Involvement

The work of Epstein(1995), Rothwell (1993) and the Manitoba Education and Training (1994) identifies six different ways that parents might become involved in their children's schooling:

Basic Parental Obligations Toward Children

This type of parent involvement enables parents to consider their child's social, emotional and psychological well-being. Parents learn how to use effective parenting and child-rearing skills, and supervise, discipline, and guide their child throughout the school year. Parents act as their

children's advocate through encouragement and praising their children's efforts to acquire new skills (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Educationa and Training, 1994).

Communication Between Schools and Parents

This type of parent involvement involves a two-way communication between school and parents. The school is expected to keep parents informed about their children's school progress as well as information about school programs. Phone calls, newsletters, report cards and parent conferences are the most frequently used forms of communication (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994).

Parent Involvement at School

Parent volunteering is the most common form of parental involvement. The school offers a variety of activities for parents wishing to volunteer such as: assisting in the office, the classroom, the library, and with field trips and fundraising. The problem with volunteering is that parents who work full-time or do shift work during school hours are unable to volunteer for these kinds of school activities (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994).

Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

A large majority of parents work with their children at home in some capacity. This work consists of parents reading to or listening to their children read, providing emotional support, talking about schoolwork, answering questions, providing family outings and helping to organize and structure homework (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994).

Parent Involvement in Governance

Only a very small number of parents are actively involved at this level of involvement. Although all parents can participate in their local parent-teacher organization, most choose not to and

only a small number of parents assume leadership roles in these kinds of organizations (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994).

Collaboration with Community Organizations

This component of parental involvement consists of schools helping families gain access to support services offered by community agencies. In this approach, education becomes part of a service delivery model that views the needs of children from a holistic perspective. This approach involves: 1) helping families provide a home environment that supports learning and; (2) creating partnerships between the school and social, business or cultural agencies to enrich both the school curriculum and student experiences (Epstein, 1995; Rothwell, 1993; Manitoba Education and Training, 1994).

Predictors of Parental Involvement

Mother's Level of Education

Stevenson and Baker (1987) conducted a study with 179 children, parents and teachers to examine factors that influence parental involvement. They found that educated mothers tended to know more about their children's school performance, had more contact with teachers, and were more likely to discuss their concerns in order to manage their children's academic careers. Stevenson and Baker explained that the main reason for this finding was that the educated mothers had first-hand experience and knowledge of the educational system. On the other hand, less educated mothers were not likely to address their children's school problems due to lack of experience with the school system. According to Stevenson and Baker, the mother's level of education mediated the child's school performance. At the same time, they hypothesized that, although the educational level was a good predictor of parental involvement, it only had an impact on the child's performance when the actual parent involvement occurred. In other words, a parent's education alone, without parental

involvement, will not predict academic success. However, these authors note that better-educated mothers are more likely to be involved in their child's schooling, which, in turn, becomes an educational advantage for their children's academic achievement.

Reading Support

Hewison and Tizard's (1980) research on reading attainment in the London, England area demonstrated that parental help with reading was a better predictor of a child's reading success than was intelligence, and that this effect was sustained across socioeconomic groups and was independent of home language.

Becker and Epstein (1982) conducted a survey of teaching practices to determine which types of parent involvement influence not only student achievement but also social development. Of all the types of parent involvement, supervision of learning activities, especially reading with children at home, was considered to be the most educationally significant by teachers.

The Teacher's Role

Harrison (1995) stated that "today's teachers acknowledge that the role of parents is crucial, and many actively support each parent's unique and valuable contribution to the partnership of developing his or her child's literacy"(p. 234). Teacher practices and school programs can also have an indirect effect on levels of parent involvement within the school (Brandt, 1989).

Epstein (1986) observed that the parents of teachers who incorporated parent involvement into their teaching practices were: (1) more aware of teachers' efforts; (2) received more ideas from teachers; (3) knew more about their child's instructional programs; and (4) rated the teachers higher in both interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality. Epstein and Dauber (1991) noted that teachers who were perceived as "leaders" by parents and students did not prejudge less educated,

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poor or single parents. The teachers rated all parents as helpful and provided learning activities for parents to carry out with their children.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) indicated that when classroom teachers make parent involvement a part of their regular teaching practice, parents: (1) increased their interactions with their children at home, (2) felt more positive, and (3) rated teachers as better teachers overall. Students improved their attitudes and achievement. These authors advocated further research into the area of teacher practices and parent involvement in "disadvantaged" inner-city schools in order to change the perceptions and practices of educators who may still adhere to the stereotype that the less educated, the socio-economically disadvantaged, and single parents do not wish to become involved in their child's schooling.

> Children in today's world need much more guidance and support from adults, and when they can see the adults in their lives as partners in positive ways, whether it's through conferences or parents stopping by or meeting casually with a teacher, those kinds of interactions are very powerful statements to children.
> (Burns, 1993, p.9)

Another study conducted by Dauber and Epstein (1991) to establish the effects of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools further supports school programs and teacher practices that involve parents. Such programs had positive effects on: parents' abilities to help their children across the grades; parents' ratings of teachers' skills and teaching quality; teachers' opinions about parents' abilities to help their children with schoolwork at home; students' attitudes toward school and homework; and students' reading achievement.

Benefits of Parental Involvement Programs

As suggested in the foregoing, parent involvement has beneficial effects. Numerous other studies (Tizard, Schofield and Hewison, 1982; Epstein and Dauber, 1982; Epstein, 1986; Epstein, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Henderson, 1988; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Binford & Newell, 1991;

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Comer and Haynes, 1991; Olmsted, 1991; Padak & Rasinski, 1994; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Gordon, 1979; Clark, 1993; Henderson, 1994; Hardwick, McCreath & Ziegler, 1992; Harrison, 1995; Hewison & Tizard, 1980; Ziegler, 1987; Brantlinger, 1991) which also demonstrate that parent involvement has positive outcomes. Anne Henderson's annotated bibliographies (1988 and 1994) on how parent involvement improves student achievement describes 49 and 66 studies respectively that clearly demonstrate the positive impact of meaningful parent involvement.

Greenwood and Hickman (1991) reinforce positive aspects of parent involvement: higher academic achievement, enhanced student sense of well-being, increased attendance, improved perceptions of classroom/school climate, positive student attitudes/ behaviours, readiness to do homework, increased student-parent interaction, better student grades, increased educational aspirations among students and parents, and finally, greater parent satisfaction with teachers. Jones (1991) states that the close home-school relationship can be one of the most positive and enduring influences in the lives of children. Involving parents early, and continuing that involvement throughout the school years, is one of the challenging tasks educators face, but close home-school relationships hold "the greatest potential for significantly increasing children's social, affective, and academic growth and achievement "(p.7). Working together, schools and families can create a partnership of suppport for children that recognizes and depends on the positive influences of each partner (Burns, 1993, p.88).

Manitoba Training and Education (1994) elaborated further on the benefits of parent involvement. For students, these benefits include: improved academic performance; improved behavior; greater motivation; regular attendance; lower dropout rates and more positive attitudes towards homework and school. In turn, parents benefit from parent involvement by: acquiring knowledge and skills to help children at home; developing positive rapport with the school; and

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increasing communication. The schools benefit not only through strengthened educational programming, but also through increased commitment, communication, and programming resources. Working as a team, the school administration and teaching staff can build rapport with parents and the local community. "One parent is worth a thousand teachers". This ancient Chinese proverb illustrates what many specialists in the educational field have always known: the family influences the learning of the child. Rich and her colleagues (1979) indicate that parents should be tutors of their own children. In order to involve parents in the education of their children, educators must build a program from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted theories and research pertinent to parental involvement and its importance for children's academic performance. A brief historical overview revealed that parental involvement is not a new concept but has somehow been forgotten along the way. Another aspect of the chapter outlined the characteristics of middle years learners. Finally, a variety of parental involvement programs and their limitations as well as benefits were discussed.

What is meant by parental involvement needs to be redefined. While the most common type of parental involvement is volunteering, the school can build better relationships with parents by: sponsoring special parenting classes, increasing the number of communication channels, supporting parents' efforts to help their children at home; and involving parents in school decision-making. The literature review has shown that there is a need to study middle years parent involvement where participation drops off.

Although there is a drive to promote parental involvement at home and at school, the question is, do parents and students realize the benefits of parent involvement for children's social, psychological, emotional, moral and cognitive development? This study is timely in the sense that the

School Division in which this study was conducted is actively searching for new perspectives on parental involvement. The School Division wants to increase the level of parental involvement in the middle years, a time during which middle years learners could benefit from working in collaboration with adults to learn new skills through scaffolded learning.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

Research by Epstein (1995), Gordon (1979), Henderson (1988), Comer (1991), Stevenson and Baker (1987) has suggested that parental involvement is beneficial throughout a child's schooling. Yet, the literature review indicates that parents become less involved as their children progress through the grades. By the time children reach the middle year grades (5 to 8), there is a rapid decline in parental involvement (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995; Stouffer, 1992). Using a survey approach, this study investigated how both middle years parents and students perceive parental school involvement.

Subjects and Setting

Middle years students and their parents were selected as research subjects after an extensive literature review indicated that parental involvement declines in the middle years. Previous research has concentrated on obtaining educators' perspectives regarding parent involvement rather than asking the students and parents themselves.

Two kindergarten to grade 9 schools in a large suburban school division were selected for this study. These two schools were chosen because they had a similiar organizational structure, being the only two schools in the division containing kindergarten to grade 9 classes. The schools were located in middle and upper middle class neighbourhoods. Four classes (one from each middle years grade) were randomly selected to participate by the principal of each school. Only students in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 and their respective parents took part.

Method

There were two main foci in this study: (1) to seek the viewpoints of parents and their children in regard to how they perceive parental involvement; and (2) to discover whether there were

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significant differences between the perceptions of middle years parents and students, grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students and finally grade 5 and 6 compared to grades 7 and 8 parents. A survey or questionnaire, rather than personal interviews, was chosen as the main data gathering methodolgy for several reasons. Surveys can: (1) be administered to a large population at the same time; and (2) be sent home and returned with students.

Developing the Questionnaires

Epstein's typology (1995) of parental involvement was used as a framework to develop the questionnaires. Applying the categories in Epstein's typology, the survey was divided into the following five sections: home support; communication between home and school; volunteering; learning at home; and decision-making. One section of Epstein's typology of parental involvement, collaborating with the community, was omitted since the focus in this study was not community involvement.

A set of questions was developed for each section and reviewed both by a group of peers in a graduate class and the investigator's committee. For each question, with the exception of questions 7, 8, 11, 16 and 17, participants were invited to respond on a descending 5-point scale: agree a lot, agree a little, neither agree nor disagree, disagree a little and disagree a lot. For questions 7, 8 and 11, these distracters became: very important, important, neutral, unimportant and very unimportant. Instead of the midpoint being neutral for question 16, participants were invited to respond as undecided so that the 5-point scale for that question became: very important, important, undecided, unimportant and very unimportant. Question 17 required participants to respond on a different 5-point scale: very certain, certain, undecided, somewhat uncertain and very uncertain. Only one question required participants to respond on a 2-point scale: yes or no. Another two questions

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required participants to respond on a 3-point scale: yes, no and I don't know. Questions 9 and 25 were qualitative in nature.

A pilot study was conducted using five parents and five students in two separate groups to determine the clarity of the questions. The questionnaires were then finalized, taking into account the feedback from each of the ten participants. Appendices A and B, respectively, contain the Parent and Student surveys.

In order to obtain qualitative data, an optional section titled "comments" was provided after each question. Since the researcher was not conducting personal interviews, this approach allowed parents and students to make additional comments and clarify their responses if they wished.

Data Collection

Once respective administrators and homeroom teachers agreed to participate in the study, students both distributed the questionnaires to their parents and returned them to the school when they were completed. The letters of consent and a one-page summary of the study's findings, which was distributed to parents upon completion of the research, are found in Appendix C.

Parent Surveys

A date was set for the researcher to visit each school to distribute (1) the student letters of parental consent and (2) the parent questionnaires, both of which were to be taken home by the middle years students. Students were asked to return all signed letters of consent and the completed parent questionnaires within the following week. An envelope was left in each participating classroom for students to submit all consent letters and completed parent questionnaires. To avoid disrupting daily classroom routines, the researcher collected all the envelopes at the end of the week outside of school hours.

Student Surveys

Arrangements were made with the principal and classroom teacher for a suitable time for the investigator to administer the student survey to those students who had received consent from their parents (guardians) to participate. Students completed the survey in the school library. The survey took approximately 30 minutes of class time to administer.

Rate of return. By the end of April, a total of eighty-nine parents from both schools had completed the questionnaires. Eighty students completed the student questionnaires at school. The researcher used the following codes to distinguish the data from the two participating schools: "R" and "L". The break-down was as follows:

Table 3.1

Questionnaire Returns

SCHOOL R					SCHOOL L			
PARENTS		STUDENTS		GRADE	PARENTS		STUDENTS	
Returns	%	Returns	%		Returns	%	Returns	%
13 / 22	59	13 / 22	59	Grade 5	9 / 22	41	10 / 22	45
15 / 25	60	15 / 25	60	Grade 6	16 / 26	62	15 / 26	58
9 / 24	38	8 / 24	33	Grade 7	9 / 29	31	4 / 29	31
7 / 16	44	8 / 16	50	Grade 8	11 / 26	42	7 / 26	27
44 / 87	51	44 / 87	51	Totals	45 / 103	44	36 / 103	35

For school "R", the rate of return for parent surveys was 44 out of a possible 87 or 51%. The total return rate for parents at school "L" was 45 out of a possible 103 or 44%. At school "R", 44 students out of a possible 87 or 51% participated in the survey. The total return rate for students at school "L" was 36 out of a possible 103 or 35%. Some students neglected to return their permission slips. There was, therefore, a discrepancy between the number of parents and students

who completed the surveys and the parent and student responses were not equal. In addition, two families had more than one child in the middle year grades.

Table 3.2

Total Number of Questionniare Returns

PARENTS			STUDENTS	
RETURNS	Percentage (%)		RETURNS	Percentage (%)
44 / 87	51	School R	44 / 87	51
45 / 103	44	School L	36 / 103	35
89 / 190	47	Totals	80 / 190	42%

For the parent surveys, the total return rate for both schools combined was 89 out of a possible 190 (for parents) or 47%. The total return rate for students was 80 out of a possible 190 or 42%.

Data Preparation

All responses were tallied on four different sheets. At first, the parent responses were tallied separately (by grade) for each school before combining the total number of responses. The same procedure was applied to student responses. This procedure was employed to avoid error.

Data Analysis

First, a quantitative analysis was conducted. Frequency counts and percentages were tallied for each question. After the data were quantified, two tailed t-tests on each questionnaire item were carried out to determine whether there were significant differences between how:

(1) parents and students responded;

(2) students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 responded; and

(3) parents of students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 responded.

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(See Appendix D for a more detailed account of how the t-tests were calculated.)

Second, the qualitative data were analyzed. The comments made by students and parents in each category were analyzed by making repeated searches through the data (Kamil, Langer, & Shanahan, 1985) to obtain the following information:

1. Perspective of parents on: Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering
   Learning at home
   Decision making

2. Perspective of students on : Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering
   Learning at home
   Decision making

3. Suggestions made by parents: Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering
   Learning at home
   Decision making

4. Suggestions made by students: Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering
   Learning at home
   Decision making

5. Differences in perception between parents and students:
   Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering
   Learning at home
   Decision making

6. Differences in perception between students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8:
   Home support
   Communication between home and school
   Volunteering

   Learning at home
   Decision making

7. Differences in perception between parents of grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 students:
                              Home support
                              Communication between home and school
                              Volunteering
                              Learning at home
                              Decision making

The results of the data analyses are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The questionnaire for surveying parent and student perceptions on parental involvement was divided into the following categories: home support, communication between home and school, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making. Data analysis followed the organizational pattern of the questionnaire, beginning with findings related to: (1) home support; (2) communication between home and school; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; and (5) decision-making.

For each question, tables showing frequency counts and percentages for each point in the scale (agree a lot, agree a little, neither agree nor disagree, disagree a little, and disagree a lot or very important, important, neutral, very unimportant and unimportant or very important, important, undecided, unimportant, very unimportant or very certain, certain, undecided, somewhat uncertain and very uncertain or yes and no or yes, no or I don't know) were compiled with parent and student data being reported in separate columns. Two-tailed t-tests were carried out to determine whether there were significant differences between how:

(1) parents and students responded;

(2) students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 responded; and

(3) parents of students in grade 5 & 6 and 7 & 8 responded .

The exception to this pattern was reporting the responses to questions 9 and 25, which were qualitative in nature. In each category, the open-ended comments were summarized and reported in conjunction with the data analysis for each respective question. Questions 18 and 19 were omitted from the final data analysis since both questions pertained to whether a Parent Council was in existence and if one was not, would respondents like to establish one. Since there was a Parent

Council in both schools, these questions were not applicable. Only frequency counts were compiled

for questions 20, 21 and 22. In reporting findings, the parent and parallel student questions which

serve as headings have been followed with the letters (P) and (S) respectively.

In reviewing the ensuing quantitative and qualitative results, readers need to be cautioned

that the degree of confidence in the results is influenced by the return rate. Also, reader should note

that questions 11, 12, 16, 17, 19 and 21 have a lower number of respondents ($\underline{N}$) because questions

10, 15, 18 and 20 ask respondents to answer a subsequent question if they have made a particular

choice on the scale.

Home Support

1. As a parent, it is my job to support my child's school activities at home (P).
I think it is important for my parents to support my school activities at home (S).

Table 4.1

Support for school activities at home: parents versus (vs) students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$=89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$=80	Percentage (%)
83	93	Agree a lot	29	36
5	6	Agree a little	24	30
1	1	Neither disagree/agree	23	29
–	–	Disagree a little	3	4
–	–	Disagree a lot	1	1

There were significant differences between parents and students' perceptions on whether

parents should be supportive of their child's school activities $t\,(167) = 8.92,\ p < .05$). As shown

in the above table, 93% of the parents, compared to 36% of the students, agreed a lot that parents

should be supportive of their children's school activties. Thirty percent of students agreed a little and

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29% neither agreed nor disagreed. While parents were highly confident about their view, students were somewhat ambivalent.

Parental comments suggested that most parents were supportive of their child's school work. However, students' comments were somewhat evasive, indicating that they did not want parental support with school activities because they felt quite capable of doing the school activities on their own.

Table 4.2

Support for school activities at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 & 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$=53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$=27	Percentage (%)
22	42	Agree a lot	7	26
16	30	Agree a little	8	29
13	24	Neither disagree/agree	10	37
2	4	Disagree a little	1	4
-	-	Disagree a lot	1	4

When the responses of students were examined separately, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding whether parents should be supportive of school activities (t (78) = 1.74, p > .05). As shown in the above table, 42% of grades 5 and 6 students, compared to 26% of grades 7 and 8 students agreed a lot that parents should be supportive of school activities at home, while 30% and 29% respectively agreed a little and 24% and 37% neither agreed nor disagreed. On the other hand, 4% of grade 5 and 6 students disagreed a little and 4% of grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a little but another 4% of grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot.

Grade 5 and 6 students' comments indicated that they wanted some parental support at home for school activities, while some of the responses of grade 7 and 8 students suggested that they believed they were quite capable of doing their school activties without parental support or guidance.

Table 4.3

Support for school activities at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
49	92	Agree a lot	34	94
4	8	Agree a little	1	3
-	-	Neither disagree/agree	1	3
-	-	Disagree a little	-	-
-	-	Disagree a lot	-	-

Similarly, as shown in the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the two groups of parents (t (87) = .12, p > .05). Ninety-two percent of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 94% of grade 7 and 8 parents indicated that they agreed in regard to supporting their child's school activities.

Summary. There were significant differences between parents and students regarding the provision of parental support at home. Parents believed that they should be supportive of their children's school endeavours but students in grades 5 and 6 and grades 7 and 8 seemed less convinced. Comments made by some students suggested they liked being independent.

**2. I think it is important to provide a separate place for my child to do school work (P).
I think it is important for my parents to provide a separate place at home for me to do schoolwork (S).**

Table 4.4

Providing separate place for schoolwork at home: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
55	62	Agree a lot	23	29
19	21	Agree a little	21	26
13	15	Neither disagree/agree	23	29
1	1	Disagree a little	6	7
1	1	Disagree a lot	7	9

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether to provide a separate place for school work to be completed (t (167) = 5.11, p < .05). As reflected by the frequency counts in the above table, parents believed more strongly (62%) than middle years students (29%) that a separate place should be made available for completing school work.

Parental comments indicated that, although a separate space was provided for their child to complete his/her school work, the child prefered to work near family members if help were required. Student comments intimated that most students preferred to work in the kitchen where parental help was readily available.

Table 4.5

Providing separate place for schoolwork at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=27$	Percentage (%)
17	32	Agree a lot	6	22
16	30	Agree a little	5	19
13	24	Neither disagree/agree	10	37
2	4	Disagree a little	4	15
5	10	Disagree a lot	2	7

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and a subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of grades 5 and 6 students and grades 7 and 8 students regarding whether a separate place should be provided for school work (t (78) = 1.33, $p > .05$). Thirty-two percent of grade 5 and 6 students and 22% of grade 7 and 8 students respectively suggested that they preferred Mom or Dad to be nearby for help if needed. However, the comments of some grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they preferred to work away from their parents' watchful eye with some music in the background.

Table 4.6

Providing separate place for schoolwork at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
29	55	Agree a lot	26	72
13	24	Agree a little	6	17
9	17	Neither disagree/agree	4	11
1	2	Disagree a little	-	-
1	2	Disagree a lot	-	-

As shown in the frequency counts in table 4.6 and subsequent t-test results, there were no significant differences between parents in the respective grade levels regarding whether to provide a separate place for school work (t (87) = 1.78, $_{\text{++}}$p > .05). The percentages show that 55% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 72% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed a lot that a separate place should be made available for their child to do school work.

Comments made by parents suggested that children must be prepared to work in any area of the home if a separate space cannot be made available.

Summary. There were significant differences between parents' and students' perceptions regarding the provision of providing a separate place for completing school work, but no statistical differences in the perceptions of students or parents at the respective grade levels. Parents thought that a study place was advantageous, but noted that their children seemed to prefer to work near the family rather than in isolation. While there were no statistical differences between students' perceptions according to grade level, comments showed that many grade 5 and 6 students preferred to work in close proximity to Mom or Dad whereas many older students liked to be in a separate place.

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3. I think it is important to talk with my child about his/her school day on a regular basis (P).
I think it is important for my parents to talk with me regularly about how things are going at school (S).

Table 4.7

Communicating about the school day on a regular basis: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
88	99	Agree a lot	29	36
1	1	Agree a little	24	30
-	-	Neither disagree/agree	14	18
-	-	Disagree a little	6	7
-	-	Disagree a lot	7	9

As reflected in the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on the importance of discussing how school was going (t (167) = 9.04, p < .05). Only 36% of the students compared to 99% of parents agreed a lot that it was important to talk about their school day.

One parent commented that whenever she asked her child about his school day, his usual comment was: " I forget". Student comments indicated that they did not wish to be "bugged" about how things went at school. If they had a problem or needed help with school work, then they would assume the initiative and ask their parents.

Table 4.8

Communicating about the school day on a regular basis: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
23	43	Agree a lot	6	22
16	30	Agree a little	8	29
8	15	Neither disagree/agree	6	22
5	10	Disagree a little	1	4
1	2	Disagree a lot	6	23

As shown in the frequency counts in the above table and the subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students (grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8) on the importance of talking with parents about their school day ($t (78) = 2.71$, $p < .05$). Students in the earlier grades agreed a lot at a higher level (43%) than students in the older grades (22%) that they should talk on a regular basis about their school day.

Comments made by grade 5 and 6 students suggested that they liked the idea of their parents talking about their school day. On the other hand, the grade 7 and 8 students did not want to ask or talk to their parents about how their day went at school.

Table 4.9

Communicating about the school day on a regular basis: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
53	100	Agree a lot	35	97
-	-	Agree a little	1	3
-	-	Neither disagree/agree	-	-
-	-	Disagree a little	-	-
-	-	Disagree a lot	-	-

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and the subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to grade 7 and 8 parents on the importance of talking with their child about the school day (t (87) = 1.22, $p > .05$). All of the grade 5 and 6 parents (100%), compared to 97% of grade 7 and 8 parents, agreed a lot that it was important to discuss the school day with their child.

Parental comments suggested they believed it was very important, regardless of grade level, that they should show their children that they were interested in their school activities. At the same time, the comments made by parents suggested that they were sensitive and well aware that they should sometimes wait for their child to approach them rather than bring up the topic themselves.

Summary. Significant differences were found between parents compared to students, and between grade 5 and 6 students and grade 7 and 8 students regarding the issue of parents talking with their children about their school day on a regular basis. There were no significant differences noted between the two groups of parents, regardless of grade level. Parents realized that it was critical for them to discuss how things were going at school on a regular basis. Parents were also sensitive to the

fact, however, that their children were growing up and should assume responsibility for introducing

the topic themselves.

4. I think it is important to help my child (children) with homework (P).
   I think it is important for my parents to help me with homework (S).

Table 4.10

Helping with homework: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 80$	Percentage (%)
44	49	Agree a lot	28	35
38	43	Agree a little	41	51
5	6	Neither disagree/agree	6	7
1	1	Disagree a little	2	3
1	1	Disagree a lot	3	4

As shown in the frequency counts in the above table and in the subsequent t-test analysis,

there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether parents

should support their children with homework (t (167) = 2.09, p <.05). There were more parents

(49%) who agreed a lot compared to students (35%), but 51% of the students still responded

positively (agreed a little). The response of "agree a little" was made by 43% of the parents,

suggesting that, in qualifying their responses, they were mindful that their children needed to develop

independence. Parents did not want to do all the work for their children. The main comment on the

part of parents was that their child needed to learn to be responsible for his (her) homework.

Another important point made by one of the parents was that teachers must become more

aware of the fact that, when students are given several homework assignments to complete for the

next day, they have little time for socializing with the family or participating in other recreational

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activities. The amount of homework given to his(her) child was also considered unreasonable by this parent since it left little time for anything else. Comments made by students suggested that they only wanted help from parents when requested. Students perceived that it was their responsibility to complete their own homework. As one student put it: "My parents do have a life! They can't spend every minute with me".

Table 4.11

Helping with homework: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)
24	45	Agree a lot	4	15
24	45	Agree a little	17	63
4	8	Neither disagree/agree	2	8
-	-	Disagree a little	2	7
1	2	Disagree a lot	2	7

As reflected by the frequency counts in the above table and the subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences (t (78) = 2.95, $p < .05$) between the perceptions of the two groups of students regarding the question of whether parents should help with homework (45% for grade 5 and 6 students but only 15% for grade 7 and 8 students, respectively).

The comments made by grade 5 and 6 students suggested that they enjoyed parents helping them with homework, whenever they needed help. Comments made by grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they did not want their parents to help with homework since homework was their responsibility. There seemed to be some ambivalence, however, because 63% of the students in grades 7 and 8 "agreed a little" that parents should help with homework.

Table 4.12

Helping with homework: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
27	51	Agree a lot	17	47
21	40	Agree a little	17	47
4	7	Neither disagree/agree	1	3
-	-	Disagree a little	1	3
1	2	Disagree a lot	-	-

A comparison of parent responses in the two grade level categories showed that there were no significant differences (t (87) = .07, p > .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on helping their child with homework (51% for grades 5 and 6 parents compared to 47% for grades 7 and 8 parents, respectively).

Comments made by parents suggested that they wanted to help their child with homework regardless of grade level. One parent commented that it was important for parents to support their child's efforts to complete homework assignments and to encourage and give guidance whenever asked. However, parental comments also suggested that parents wanted their children to learn to be responsible and take ownership of their schoolwork.

Summary. The researcher discovered that there were significant differences between parents and students, and grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the question of parental help with homework. It was interesting to note that parents, regardless of grade level, were strong proponents of providing help with their children's homework. Students' opinions differed, however. While students in grades 5 and 6 agreed a lot on the question of homework help,

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students in grades 7 and 8 still were somewhat dubious and "agreed a little".

5. I think it is important to keep the house quiet while my child is doing school work (P).
   I think it is important that my parents keep the house quiet while I am doing homework (S).

Table 4.13

Keeping the house quiet: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
26	29	Agree a lot	28	35
37	42	Agree a little	21	26
14	16	Neither disagree/agree	17	21
11	12	Disagree a little	8	10
1	1	Disagree a lot	6	8

As shown in the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences (t (167) = .81, p > .05) between the perceptions of parents and students on keeping the house quiet during schoolwork (71% of parents compared to 61 % of students respectively agreed either a little or a lot).

Some parental comments suggested that children have to learn to work under different situations. As one parent said: "There is a quiet place provided for my child but we don't creep around like mice!" Another parent said that keeping the house quiet depended on the individual child and what worked best for him (her). One parent mentioned that keeping the house quiet depended on their child's learning style.

Student comments suggested that it was unfair to expect their parents to keep the house quiet while they did schoolwork. As one student put it, "They cannot keep everyone quiet for me to do schoolwork. One person cannot inconvenience everybody else in the family. They do have a life!"

Table 4.14

Keeping the house quiet: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)
21	40	Agree a lot	7	26
14	26	Agree a little	7	26
10	19	Neither disagree/agree	7	26
5	9	Disagree a little	3	11
3	6	Disagree a lot	3	11

As shown in the above table, there were no significant differences (t (78) = 1.37,

p > .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of students on keeping the house quiet while

doing schoolwork (40% of grade 5 and 6 students agreed a lot compared to only 26% of grade 7 and

8 students, however).

Some students in grade 5 and 6 commented that they needed the house quiet while doing

schoolwork, while some grade 7 and 8 students did not mind whether the house was quiet or not.

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Table 4.15

Keeping the house quiet: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
16	30	Agree a lot	10	28
22	42	Agree a little	15	42
9	17	Neither disagree/agree	5	14
5	9	Disagree a little	6	16
1	2	Disagree a lot	-	-

As noted in the frequency counts in the above table, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents (t (87) = .37, p > .05) on keeping the home quiet while their children were doing schoolwork (30% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 28% of grade 7 and 8 parents).

However, more parents agree a little (42% and 42% respectively) that the house should be kept quiet while the child does schoolwork. A large number of parents indicated that their child should get used to working in different environments.

Summary. The results for this question did not reveal significant differences among the respective groups of participants regarding the issue of keeping the house quiet while the children do school work. A large number of parents (71%) and more than half of the students agreed it was important to keep the house quiet. Some parents and students did not want family members to be inconvenienced while students were doing homework.

6. I think it is important to provide a variety of experiences at home (eg. family trips, library visits, discussion about current issues) to support learning at home (P).
I think it is important to have lots of different experiences at home (eg. Family trips, library visits, discussion about current issues) to support my learning at school (S).

Table 4.16

Providing a variety of experiences: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
75	84	Agree a lot	30	38
13	15	Agree a little	25	31
1	1	Neither disagree/agree	15	19
-	-	Disagree a little	4	5
-	-	Disagree a lot	6	7

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences $(t\ (167) = 7.19,\ p < .05)$ between the perceptions of parents and students concerning providing a variety of experiences to support learning at school. While 84% of parents agreed a lot, only 38% of students agreed at the same level.

Parental comments suggested that parents were more than willing to provide a variety of extra-curricular activities to help their child at school. However, parents did not want to do school-like activities at home. To name the most common examples given by parents, they were prepared to offer their child (children) different enrichment activities such as trips to museums, or art galleries and to ensure that they participated in sports and games.

Table 4.17

Providing a variety of experiences: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)
24	45	Agree a lot	6	22
18	34	Agree a little	7	26
6	11	Neither disagree/agree	9	33
3	6	Disagree a little	1	4
2	4	Disagree a lot	4	15

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences (t (780) = 2.73, p < .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of students on whether a variety of experiences should be provided outside of school hours to support learning at school (45% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to only 22% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed a lot). At the same time, more grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot, 15% compared to 4% of grade 5 and 6 students. Thirty-three percent of grade 7 and 8 students neither agreed nor disagreed.

Table 4.18

Providing a variety of experiences: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
46	87	Agree a lot	29	80
7	13	Agree a little	6	17
-	-	Neither disagree/agree	1	3
-	-	Disagree a little	-	-
-	-	Disagree a lot	-	-

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences (t (87) = 1.03, p > .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on whether a variety of home experiences should be provided to enrich school activities (87% of grades 5 and 6 parents compared to 80% of grades 7 and 8 parents agreed a lot respectively).

Parental comments suggested that most parents were prepared and eager to provide a variety of experiences to enrich their children's learning. One parent mentioned that the family had memberships for the art gallery, the museum, and recreational groups. Another parent commented that he (she) was quite willing to provide a variety of experiences as long as the school was not telling him (her) what kinds of activities to arrange. Also, comments revealed that parents did not want to do school-type or school-centered activities at home with their children.

Summary. It was noted that there were significant differences between parents and students, and grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the question of providing additional activities at home for children. Grade 5 and 6 students enjoyed and appreciated spending time with their families whereas grade 7 and 8 students were less eager or willing to spend

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time doing family-oriented activities to support school learning. Parents, regardless of grade level, wanted to offer a variety of non-school-directed activities to help their children gain different learning experiences.

Summary of Home Support

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 students and grade 7 and 8 students regarding home support. In general, parents were very supportive at home. The younger students (grades 5 and 6) enjoyed having supportive parents. In general however, grade 7 and 8 students did not reciprocate this view.

Communication between Home and School

Each question in this section required respondents to rate the effectiveness of each of the following means of communication: letter, telephone call, parent/teacher interview, report card, three-way conference, open house, and home visit. Question 7 focused on the value of each of these communication modes for learning about school achievement.

7. How important are each of the following regarding how you can learn about your child's progress (P).
How important are each of the following examples regarding how your parents can learn about how you are doing at school (S).

Letter

Table 4.19

Letter as a means of informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
30	34	Very important	22	28
31	35	Important	27	34
21	24	Neutral	12	15
5	5	Unimportant	11	14
2	2	Very important	8	9

As shown by the frequency counts in the previous table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences $(t\ (167) = 2.09\ , p\ < .05)$ between the perceptions of parents and students on whether a letter is the best way to find out about a child's progress (34% of parents compared to 28% of students rated a letter as very important). Thirty-five percent of the parents and 34% of the students believed that a letter was an important communication device. Twenty-four percent of the parents were neutral, however, compared to 15% of the students. There were 14% and

9% of students who considered the letter as either unimportant or very unimportant.

Table 4.20

Letter as a means of informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
20	38	Very important	2	7
18	34	Important	9	33
7	13	Neutral	5	19
6	11	Unimportant	5	19
2	4	Very unimportant	6	22

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences (t (78) = 3.69, p < .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of students regarding whether the letter was an important way for educators to communicate with parents about their child's progress (38% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to only 7% of grade 7 and 8 students). However, more grade 7 and 8 students (22%) opposed the letter as a means of communication regarding their school progress (very unimportant) compared to only 4% of grade 5 and 6 students.

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Table 4.21

Letter as a means of informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
18	34	Very important	12	33
21	40	Important	10	28
11	20	Neutral	10	28
2	4	Unimportant	3	8
1	2	Very unimportant	1	3

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents (t (87) = .90, p > .05) on whether a letter is the best means of communicating about school progress (34% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 33% of grade 7 and 8 parents). Comments by parents suggested that parents would appreciate the school mailing the letter directly to their home rather than sending the letter in care of the student because student-delivered letters sometimes become lost.

Summary. Perceptions on using the letter as a form of communicating students' progress at school were mixed. Significant differences were discovered for the following: parents versus students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students. Grade 7 and 8 students did not feel that a letter was an appropriate vehicle for communicating about school progress. There were no significant differences noted for the two groups of parents. In general, parents regarded using letters as a form of communication as vital in remaining informed regarding their children's school progress.

Telephone Call

Table 4.22

Telephone call for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
55	62	Very important	5	6
22	25	Important	15	19
11	12	Neutral	20	25
1	1	Unimportant	15	19
-	-	Very unimportant	25	31

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether the telephone is the best means to relay information about their child's progress, as shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis (t (167) = 12.32, $p < .05$). More middle years parents (62%) believed telephoning to be very important compared to only 6% of middle years students.

Parental comments suggested that the telephone was an excellent way to keep parents informed about their child's progress. One parent added that it would be nice if the teacher could contact parents by telephone immediately rather than wait until the parent-teacher interview to inform them that his (her) child: had not been completing his (her) homework assignments; was tardy; or showed disrespect to teaching staff or peers.

Table 4.23

Telephone call for informing parents about school progress: Grade5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 27	Percentage (%)
4	8	Very important	1	4
12	23	Important	3	11
16	30	Neutral	4	15
8	15	Unimportant	7	26
13	24	Very unimportant	12	44

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences (t (78) = 2.37, p < .05) between the perceptions of the two groups of students on whether the telephone was the best way to inform parents about their school progress. More grade 7 and 8 students (44%) perceived the telephone as very unimportant for keeping parents informed about their school progress than grade 5 and 6 students.

Table 4. 24

Telephone call for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 36	Percentage (%)
33	62	Very important	22	61
14	26	Important	8	22
5	10	Neutral	6	17
1	2	Unimportant	-	-
-	-	Very unimportant	-	-

As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 24 and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the two groups of parents on whether the telephone was suitable for informing parents about their child's school progress (t (87) = .28, $p > .05$). The figures show that parents, regardless of grade level, rank the telephone as a very important means of school-home communication.

Parental comments indicated that parents would appreciate the school and teaching staff contacting parents if their children were acting up in school or not completing school tasks. One parent commented that it was most annoying to have the teacher complain about his (her) child's behavior or poor test marks at the parent-teacher interview. The parent had not been contacted by the teacher throughout the school term and was not expecting to hear that his (her) child was having difficulties in school. He (she) had believed that his (her) child was doing well at school until the interview. This parent said that he (she) would have been more than willing to come and meet with the teacher to discuss how they could work together to help the child improve his school performance. He (she) did not like waiting until the parent-teacher interview to become informed about such an important issue.

Summary. There were significant differences for parents versus students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students regarding the use of the telephone as a means of communicating with parents about their children's school progress. No significant differences were found between grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 parents. A large number of parents were in favour of teaching staff contacting them by telephone to discuss their children's school progress. However, in general, students were less than eager for teachers to call home regarding their school progress.

Parent and Teacher Interview

Table 4.25

Interviews for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
66	74	Very important	31	39
17	19	Important	24	30
4	5	Neutral	10	12
-	-	Unimportant	6	8
2	2	Very unimportant	9	11

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students regarding whether parent-teacher interviews were important for communicating with parents about their child's progress in school (t (167) = 5.14, p < .05). More parents agreed (74%) than students (39%) that it was very important to have parent-teacher interviews to discuss children's school progress. Parental comments suggested that they would prefer a structured interview in which they would know what to expect. Some parents commented that they had been very upset to hear that their children were not meeting grade requirements at parent-teacher interviews. They regretted not being informed sooner.

Table 4.26

Interviews for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
25	47	Very important	6	22
16	30	Important	8	30
5	9	Neutral	5	19
3	6	Unimportant	3	10
4	8	Very unimportant	5	19

As shown by the above table and t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students on the importance of parent-teacher interviews (t (78) = 2.54, p < .05). Forty-seven percent of grade 5 and 6 students considered parent-teacher interviews as very important compared to only 22% of grade 7 and 8 students. More grade 7 and 8 students (19%) than grade 5 and 6 students (8%) viewed parent-teacher interviews as very unimportant.

Table 4.27

Interviews for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
37	70	Very important	29	80
12	23	Important	5	14
3	5	Neutral	1	3
-	-	Unimportant	-	-
1	2	Very unimportant	1	3

As shown in the previous table (4. 27), there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on whether parent-teacher interviews were important for keeping parents informed about their child's progress in school (t (87) = .65, $p > .05$).

Parental comments suggested that they found the parent-teacher interviews informative. Parents wanted teaching staff to inform them that certain areas of the child's school work would be discussed in more detail at the parent-teacher interview if he (she) were having problems in (a) particular area (s).

Summary. Significant differences were found between the perceptions of: parents versus students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students regarding the value of parent-teacher interviews as a medium for communicating students' school progress. There were no significant differences among the respective parents according to grade placement. However, in general, parents were content with the format of the parent-teacher interviews and indicated that, through interviews, they gained important perspectives regarding their children's school progress.

Report Card

Table 4.28

Report cards for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 80$	Percentage (%)
58	65	Very important	54	67
22	25	Important	9	11
7	8	Neutral	11	14
1	1	Unimportant	2	3
1	1	Very unimportant	4	5

As shown by the frequency counts in the preceding table and the subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences (t (167) = 1.21, $p > .05$) between the perceptions of parents and students on the use of report cards as a means for informing parents about children's school progress (65% of parents compared to 67% of students agreed that report cards were informative).

Parental comments suggested that parents would prefer that teaching staff use less technical language in writing report cards. Some parents mentioned that they felt overwhelmed by the language used by the teacher because they were not educators themselves.

Table 4.29

Report cards for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$=53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
39	74	Very important	15	56
4	8	Important	5	18
8	14	Neutral	3	11
1	2	Unimportant	1	4
1	2	Very unimportant	3	11

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students (t (78) = 1.73, $p > .05$) on the importance of report cards for keeping parents informed about their school progress (82% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 74% of grade 7 and 8 students rated the issue as either very important or important).

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Table 4.30

Report cards for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
36	68	Very important	22	61
10	19	Important	12	33
6	11	Neutral	1	3
1	2	Unimportant	-	-
-	-	Very unimportant	1	3

The case was simliar for the two groups of parents. As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents about the use of report cards to keep parents informed about their children's school progress (t (87) = .17, p > .05). Both groups believed that report cards were an important form of communication.

Parental comments suggested that some parents did not fully understand how their child compared to other children in his (her) grade and would welcome a different report card grading system. For example, one year a child received all A's on his (her) report card and the next year, with a different teacher, the same student received C's. The parent wanted to know how his (her) child was being graded. In their responses, parents indicated that they preferred a percentage system to a letter grading system for report cards. They believed that the percentage system allowed them to compare their child's progress with his (her) peer group. Also, parents, regardless of grade level, wanted teachers to use everyday language while writing report cards.

Summary. In regard to report cards for communicating school progress, the researcher was unable to find significant differences between the following: parents and students, grade 5 and 6 and

grade 7 and 8 students, and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Both students and parents perceived that report cards were important for conveying information about school progress. Parents, however, expressed concerns about report cards regarding: (1) the prevalence of technical terms; (2) what they perceived as being subjective grading criteria; and (3) the use of letter grades rather than percentages. In their view, letter grades did not help them compare their child's progress with his (her) peers.

Three-way Conferences

Table 4.31

Three-way conferences for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
25	28	Very important	21	26
31	35	Important	20	25
26	29	Neutral	14	17
4	5	Unimportant	7	9
3	3	Very unimportant	8	23

As indicated by the frequency counts and subsequent t-test analysis in table 4.31, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether a three-way conference was useful for informing parents about their child's school progress (t (167) = 2.87, $p < .05$). Twenty-three percent of students rated three-way conferences as very unimportant.

One parent commented that he (she) found the whole process a waste of time since the onus was placed on the child rather than the teacher. This parent viewed the three-way conference as the teacher shirking her responsibilites as an educator. He (she) did not want his (her) child making all the decisions and rating his (her) own progress in school.

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Table 4.32

Three-way conferences for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8
students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)
30	57	Very important	4	15
9	17	Important	6	22
8	14	Neutral	5	19
3	6	Unimportant	2	7
3	6	Very unimportant	10	37

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant

differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students on the relevance of three-way

conferences as a way for parents to become informed about their child's progress (t (78) = 4.55,

$p < .05$). More grade 5 and 6 students (74%) agreed than grade 7 and 8 students (39%) that a

three-way conference was either very important or important. However, more grade 7 and 8 students

(44%) than grade 5 and 6 students (12%) perceived that three-way conferences were either

unimportant or very unimportant.

Comments made by grade 5 and 6 students suggested that they enjoyed taking the driver's

seat during the conference. They appreciated the chance to show their parents the kinds of work they

had done in class and to explain why they selected each piece of work. At the same time, they felt

they were in control of their own learning. Grade 7 and 8 students did not want or enjoy three-way

conferences.

Table 4.33

<u>Three-way conferences for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
16	30	Very important	9	25
19	36	Important	12	33
15	28	Neutral	11	31
3	6	Unimportant	1	3
-	-	Very unimportant	3	8

For the two groups of parents, as shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences regarding whether a three-way conference was an important way to keep parents informed about school progress (t (87) = 1.22, p > .05).

However, comments indicated that some parents did not care for three-way conferences because the child was orchestrating the event rather than the teacher. One parent said that it was fine to see his (her) child set goals for himself but the conference did not indicate how his (her) child was doing in comparison to the rest of the class. After all, his (her) child would have to compete with other students for employment, and only the ones with the best qualifications would be considered.

Summary. It was found that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents compared to students and grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students but no significant differences between the two groups of parents regarding the value of three-way conferences as a medium to keep parents informed of their children's school progress. More students in grades 5 and 6 compared to students in grade 7 and 8 thought that three-way conferences were

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either important or very important.   A number of parents, regardless of grade level, (6% and 11% for grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8, respectively) did not care for three-way conferences since they believed that the teacher was shirking his (her) responsibilities as an educator.

Open House

Table 4.34

Open House for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
10	11	Very important	11	14
23	26	Important	21	26
41	46	Neutral	20	25
11	12	Unimportant	11	14
4	5	Very unimportant	17	21

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether an open house was suitable for informing parents about the progress of their child (t (167) = 1.64, p > .05).

More students (21%) as opposed to parents (5%) considered open house as very unimportant. Many parental comments suggested that they were quite open to the idea of discussing their child's school progress at open house, however.

Table 4.35

Open House for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
18	34	Very important	1	4
13	24	Important	5	18
11	21	Neutral	8	30
4	8	Unimportant	3	11
7	13	Very unimportant	10	37

As shown by the frequency counts and subsequent t-test analysis in the above table, there were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students on whether parents should learn about their child's progress at an open house (t (78) = 3.70, p < .05). More grade 5 and 6 students (34%) than grade 7 and 8 students (4%) agreed that it was very important for parents to learn about their progress at open house.

Table 4.36

Open House for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
5	9	Very important	5	14
16	30	Important	7	19
23	43	Neutral	18	50
7	14	Unimportant	4	11
2	4	Very unimportant	2	6

As indicated by the previous table (4. 36) and subsequent t-test analysis, when the perceptions of the two groups of parents regarding whether it was important to discuss their child's progress at open house were compared, there were no significant differences (t (87) = .16, #P > .05).

Parental comments indicated that they would prefer a more formal occasion in which to discuss their child's progress, such as an individual apppointment, for example.

Summary. There were only significant differences between the two groups of students' regarding Open House as an opportunity for parents and teachers to commmmunicate about school progress. Students in grades 7 and 8 were mostly either undecided or opposed to the idea. Some parents indicated that they preferred individual appointments with homeroom teachers to discuss their child's progress rather than discuss performance in an informal setting. Other parents were quite receptive to the idea of discussing how their child was doing at open house because concerns could be addressed early.

Home Visits

Table 4.37

Home visits for informing parents about school progress: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
9	10	Very important	1	1
6	7	Important	2	2
45	50	Neutral	14	18
8	9	Unimportant	12	15
21	24	Very unimportant	51	64

As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 37 and subsequent t-test analysis, there were

significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether home visits would be suitable for discussing school progress ($t(167) = 6.47$, $p < .05$). Ten percent of parents compared to 1% of the students agreed that it was very important to have home visits. However, more parents (24%) compared to 64% of middle years students considered home visits as very unimportant.

Parental comments suggested that they had never heard of or were never given the option of home visits. One parent commented that the investigator was "dreaming" to even consider home visits. How would teachers manage to do home visits when they could not seem to telephone to let parents know that their child was having problems was the question posed by one parent.

Table 4.38

Home visits for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)
-	-	Very important	1	4
2	4	Important	-	-
11	21	Neutral	3	11
11	21	Unimportant	1	4
29	54	Very unimportant	22	81

When the responses of the two groups of students were compared, as highlighted in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences in regard to whether home visits would be suitable for informing parents about their child's progress ($t(78) = 1.48$, $p > .05$). More grade 7 and 8 students (81%) than grade 5 and 6 students (54%) were opposed to home visits, but these differences were not statistically significant. In general, both groups of students did not seem to appreciate the value of home visits.

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Table 4. 39

Home visits for informing parents about school progress: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
2	4	Very important	7	19
6	11	Important	-	-
27	51	Neutral	18	50
8	15	Unimportant	-	-
10	19	Very unimportant	11	31

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents regarding the relevance of home visits for informing parents about their child's progress (t (87) = .45, p > .05). Parental comments suggested that some parents were cynical and did not believe that home visits were a realistic option.

Summary. Significant differences between parents and students about teachers visiting parents' homes to discuss school progress were identified. Some parents were cynical about the idea of teachers actually conducting home visits. There were no significant differences noted between the following: grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents. A large number of students were opposed to having teaching staff visit their homes.

Summary of Question 7.

Responses. While parents perceived letters, telephone calls, parent-teacher interviews and three-way conferences as important ways for the school to inform them about school progress, students at upper levels did not. Report cards, on the other hand, were seen by both groups at both grade levels as important for communicating information about school progress. Some parents were critical of the

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technical language, subjective grading and use of letter grades, however. More than one-half of the

parents wanted a more formal occassion than open house for discussing school progress (Table 4.36),

and both groups were wary of home visits.

The next question required participants to identify the importance of the following means of

communication for informing parents about special school events: letter, telephone, open house and

parent council meetings.

8. How important are each of the following regarding how you like to find out about special speakers, events, workshops and presentations at your child's school (P). How important are each of the following examples regarding how your parents can find out about special speakers, events, workshops and presentations at your school (S).

Letter

Table 4.40

Letter for informing parents of upcoming school events: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=$	Percentage (%)
67	75	Very important	45	56
15	17	Important	27	34
5	6	Neutral	6	7
-	-	Unimportant	-	-
2	2	Very unimportant	2	3

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there

were no significant differences (t (167) = 1.73, $p > .05$) between the perceptions of parents and

students on whether using a letter to inform parents about events at school was suitable or not.

Ninety-two percent of parents compared to 90% of the students regarded letters as being very

important or important.

Table 4.41

Letter for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 27	Percentage (%)
33	62	Very important	12	44
17	32	Important	10	37
2	4	Neutral	4	15
-	-	Unimportant	-	-
1	2	Very unimportant	1	4

When students' perceptions for each set of grade levels were compared, results were similar. As indicated by the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students (t (78) = 1.76, p > .05) regarding whether a letter was useful in communicating with parents about special school activities.

Table 4.42

Letter for informing parents of upcoming school events: grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 36	Percentage (%)
41	77	Very important	26	72
9	17	Important	6	17
2	4	Undecided	3	8
-	-	Unimportant	-	-
1	2	Very unimportant	1	3

Again, as shown by the frequency counts in the above table and the t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on whether a

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letter was important for informing parents about school events (t (87) = .72, $_{H}$p > .05). Seventy-seven percent of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 72 % of grade 7 and 8 students agreed that a letter was very important in communicating about special school events.

Summary. The researcher was unable to find any significant differences between the following: parents compared to students; grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students; and grade 5 and 6 parents compared to grade 7 and 8 parents regarding whether a letter was useful in communicating with parents about upcoming school events. Most respondents were satisfied that a letter was either very important or important in communicating with the home about upcoming school events.

Telephone Call

Table 4. 43

Telephone call for informing parents of upcoming school events: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
21	24	Very important	9	11
25	28	Important	15	19
30	34	Neutral	17	21
7	8	Unimportant	16	20
6	6	Very unimportant	23	29

As indicated in the above table, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on the use of the telephone for communicating with parents about school events. (t (167) = 4.67, $_{H}$ p < .05). More parents (24%) compared to students (11%) agreed that the telephone was very important for informing parents about school events.

Parental comments suggested that they would like a telephone call because their child did

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not always bring the letters home until the event had passed or lost the letter on the way home.

Table 4. 44

Telephone call for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8
students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
8	15	Very important	1	4
12	23	Important	3	11
12	23	Neutral	5	19
10	19	Unimportant	6	22
11	20	Very unimportant	12	44

The two groups of students differed significantly in their perceptions regarding informing

parents about school events by telephone, as shown in the above table (t (78) = 2.73, p < .05).

More grade 5 and 6 students (15%) than grade 7 and 8 students (4%) considered the telephone as

very important for informing parents about school events. However, 44% of grade 7 and 8 students

compared to 20% of grade 5 and 6 students considered the telephone as a very unimportant way to

communicate with the home.

Table 4. 45

Telephone call for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
11	21	Very important	10	28
14	26	Important	11	31
21	40	Neutral	9	25
5	9	Unimportant	2	5
2	4	Very unimportant	4	11

There were no significant differences between the the two groups of parents on whether the telephone would be useful for informing parents about school events (t (87) = .30, p > .05). A high percentage of parents, regardless of grade level, considered the telephone as either a very important or important way to learn about upcoming school events.

Summary. There were significant differences discovered between the viewpoints of the following: parents versus students and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students regarding the use of the telephone as a means of informing parents about such school events as speakers, workshops and special presentations. It was noted that parents (regardless of grade level) and grade 5 and 6 students were more receptive than grade 7 and 8 students to the idea of receiving a telephone call to inform them of upcoming school events.

Open House

Table 4. 46

Open house for informing parents of upcoming school events: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}= 80$	Percentage (%)
10	11	Very important	17	21
25	28	Important	19	24
41	46	Neutral	23	29
7	8	Unimportant	10	12
6	7	Very unimportant	11	14

As shown by the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between parents and students regarding the use of open house for communicating about upcoming school events (t (167) = .17, p > .05). Many parents were neutral (46%) about the issue compared to students (29%).

Parental comments indicated that they wished to be warned in advance of upcoming school events so that they could plan accordingly. Sometimes previously planned home or community activities conflicted with school events.

Table 4. 47

Open house for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
16	30	Very important	1	4
13	25	Important	6	22
16	30	Undecided	7	26
3	6	Unimportant	7	26
5	9	Very unimportant	6	22

There were significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students on whether open house was suitable for informing parents about upcoming school events, as shown in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis (t (78) = 3.49, p < .05). More grade 5 and 6 students (55%) agreed that it was either very important or important to use open house as to inform parents about school events. The corresponding figure for grade 7 and 8 students was 26% (either very important or important). Almost one-half (48%) of grade 7 and 8 students considered open houses as either unimportant or very unimportant.

Table 4. 48

Open house for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8
parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
6	11	Very important	4	11
17	32	Important	8	22
25	47	Neutral	16	44
4	8	Unimportant	3	8
1	2	Very unimportant	5	15

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, the two groups of parents did
not differ in their opinion regarding use of the open house for informing them about school events
($t (87) = 1.64, p > .05$). A large number of parents, regardless of grade level, agreed that it was
either very important or important to use Open House as an opportunity for communication.

Summary. While the researcher was unable to find any significant differences between
parents and students overall regarding the use of Open House as an alternative for informing parents
about upcoming school events, there were significant differences between the two groups of students.
The older students qualified their ratings on the value of Open House for communicating about
upcoming events (22% important, 26% neutral, 26% unimportant and 22% very unimportant).

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Parent Council Meetings

Table 4. 49

Parent council meetings for informing parents of upcoming school events: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=80$	Percentage (%)
18	20	Very important	23	29
28	32	Important	14	18
32	36	Neutral	21	26
7	8	Unimportant	9	11
2	4	Very unimportant	13	16

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between middle years parents and students on whether parent council meetings would be suitable for informing parents about school events (t (167) = 1.25, p > .05). Parents rated council meetings as either very important or important (52%) compared to students (47%) that parent council meetings would be an appropriate means for informing parents about school events.

Table 4. 50

Parent council meetings for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
19	36	Very important	4	15
10	19	Important	4	15
15	28	Neutral	6	22
5	9	Unimportant	4	15
4	8	Very unimportant	9	33

For grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students, there were significant differences regarding the use of parent council meetings for relaying information to parents about school events (t (78) = 3.25, $\pm$ $\underline{p}$ < .05). From the above table, it can be noted that 36% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to only 15% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed that parent council meetings were very important for informing parents of upcoming school events. More grade 7 and 8 students (33%) compared to grade 5 and 6 students (8%) considered parent council meetings as very unimportant for giving information to parents about upcoming school events.

Table 4. 51

Parent council meetings for informing parents of upcoming school events: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7
and 8 students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$=53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
9	17	Very important	9	25
19	36	Important	9	25
21	40	Neutral	11	31
4	7	Unimportant	3	8
-	-	Very unimportant	4	11

On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two

groups of parents (t (87) = .79, p > .05), although, as indicated in the above table, more grade 7

and 8 parents (25%) compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (0%) considered parent council meetings

very unimportant for informing parents about school events. On balance, 40% of grade 5 and 6

parents compared to 31% of grade 7 and 8 parents were neutral regarding the issue. Parental

comments suggested that parents were quite open to alternative forms of communication on the part

of the school staff to keep them informed about upcoming school events.

Summary. Parent Council meetings, as a means of informing parents of upcoming school

events including guest speakers, workshops and special presentations revealed:

a) no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students; b) a significant

difference between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 students versus grade 7 and 8 students; and

c) no significant difference between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 parents versus grade 7 and 8

parents. Many grade 7 and 8 students considered that parent council meetings were either

unimportant or very unimportant as a means of communciation.

<u>Summary of Question 8</u>

<u>Responses</u> The researcher noted that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students regarding the use of the telephone, open house and parent council meeting for informing parents about school events. Students in grade 7 and 8 generally considered these forms of communication either as neutral, unimportant or very unimportant. No significant differences were found between parents and students and grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students on the issue of using letters as a means for communicating with parents about upcoming school events.

Only comments, not ratings, were required regarding communicating with parents on the following items which might cause difficulties for students: class assignments, school activities, conflicts with peers, or other school-related problems in general.

9. **If your child is having difficulties, what do you do when you have concerns in the following areas (P):**
    If you are having difficulties, how do your parents deal with concerns in the following areas (S):

A. <u>Class assignments:</u> Parental comments suggested that the most frequent strategy used by parents regarding assignments was to listen, explain the question and ask the child to try the problem again. One parent said that he (she) had to reteach the work before attempting to help his (her) child. Another parent said that the family used a tutor to help their child with school assignments since they were not as well educated and could not help their child in the upper grades.

Student comments suggested that they usually asked Mom for help with homework since she was nearby in the kitchen. Occasionally they would ask Dad if he were available to help with homework.

B. <u>School activities</u> (eg. Science fairs): Comments made by parents suggested that they hated to help with certain school projects, especially science fairs. Although parents encouraged and

supported their children with the intial preparation of the science fair project, they found that the children were scrambling until the end to complete all of the requirements. Parental comments suggested that they were tired of projects in which children had little school guidance to complete them successfully. They wanted their children to be responsible for their own work and did not want to be doing the work for them.

The comments of grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they liked to get their parents' help if they were having difficulties in completing school projects. These students indicated that their parents would help them with the work through questioning or give them ideas on how to solve problems. The students at upper levels indicated that they preferred to wait until they had completed school projects before seeking parents' help on how to improve their work.

C. His/her peer group (classmates): Parental comments suggested that they usually discussed the problem with their child, focusing on how he (she) might deal with the problem rather than trying to solve or intervene for the child. Once the child had a list of options, both the child and parent worked out the best solution. If the problem persisted, parents said that they would arrange a meeting with the teacher to discuss the issue. However, if this proved unsuccessful, parents said that they would talk to the principal and, as a last resort, to the school division office.

Student comments indicated that they would try to solve the problem themselves at first, but, if the problem persisted, they would talk to their parents. Quite a few students did not want their parents solving their problems for them. In particular, grade 7 and 8 students did not want any guidance from their parents on how to deal with their peer group. One student that he (she) was "sick and tired" of his (her) parents interfering in his (her) life. He (she) didn't want his (her) parents meddling.

D. Other school-related concerns: Parental comments suggested that parents would pursue the

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following options if their child had a problem:

    1) Talk with their child to find out if he (she) could deal with the problem;

    2) Arrange a meeting with the classroom teacher to discuss the concern;

    3) Arrange a meeting with the principal to discuss the concern;

    4) Talk to the school division office and arrange a meeting with the superintendent.

Please note that parents indicated that they would follow the above procedures only if there were no action by the classroom teacher or the concern was not handled in a satisfactory manner for the parent. Comments made by grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they would talk to their parents if they had any problems at school. However, grade 7 and 8 students wanted to solve their own problems without any parental interference. The latter group of students indicated that they wanted to be left alone to solve their own problems. If they needed help with a problem, they would assume the initiative and talk with their parents.

Summary of means of Communicating between Home and School

School progress. Parents' and students' perceptions of ways to communicate with the school indicated significant differences. The source of the difference was the perceptions of grade 7 and 8 students, which differed compared to those of grade 5 and 6 students. Parents and grade 5 and 6 students generally favored telephoning, parent-teacher interviews and personal letters/notes over other alternatives such as home visits, open house, and three-way conferences for discussing school progress. Grade 7 and 8 students were not in favor of letters, telephone calls, interviews, three-way conferences, or open house. Both groups of students disliked the idea of home visits. Report cards were perceived by both groups as important for communciating about school progress.

Upcoming events. The pattern of findings regarding ways to inform parents of upcoming school events was similiar. That is, there were significant differences between the perceptions of

parents and grade 5 and 6 students and the perceptions of grade 7 and 8 students. The adolescents were generally opposed to the following forms of communciation: the telephone, open house and parent council meetings. No groups were opposed to letters as a means for informing parents about upcoming events.

Communicating about concerns. Generally, parents resolved conflicts regarding class assignments, school projects and peer conflicts by discussing them with their children. Negative feelings were expressed about science fair projects. Grade 7 and 8 students seemed to resent parental interference in dealing with peer conflicts. Parents indicated that they would resolve concerns by first discussing them with the classroom teacher, but, if these efforts were unsuccessful, they would approach the school principal and then the superintendent.

Volunteering

Issues addressed in this section on volunteering include: whether it is important to volunteer at school at all and in what capacity (clerical or supervisory role, sharing expertise or serving as an instructional support); whether members of the extended family should volunteer; and whether it is advisible to volunteer only in one's own child's classroom or in other classrooms.

10. I think it is important to volunteer now that my child is in the middle years (P).
   I think it is important for my parents to volunteer now that I am in the middle years (S).

Table 4.52

Volunteering at school: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 80$	Percentage (%)
38	43	Agree a lot	5	6
27	30	Agree a little	35	44
17	19	Neither disagree/agree	21	26
3	3	Disagree a little	8	10
4	5	Disagree a lot	11	14

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students regarding volunteering in the middle years ($t (167) = 4.93, p < .05$). Forty-three percent of parents compared to 6% of the students agreed a lot that parents should volunteer at the school.

Parental comments suggested that parents would like to volunteer but that lack of time was a factor. In many cases, both parents were working, and due, to financial restrictions, volunteering at their child's school was difficult. Some parents made the point that their child did not want Mom or Dad as a volunteer. Other parents commented that they were quite willing to help by volunteering at

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the school outside of work time if asked. Another parent said that he (she) was quite upset that the school has never asked him (her) to volunteer although he (she) has offered to help on numerous occasions in different areas.

Student comments indicated that they did not mind parents volunteering at their school as long as Mom or Dad did not come to their classroom.

Table 4.53

<u>Volunteering at School: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students</u>

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count <u>N</u>= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count <u>N</u>= 27	Percentage (%)
4	8	Agree a lot	1	4
25	47	Agree a little	10	37
17	32	Neither disagree/agree	4	15
4	7	Disagree a little	4	15
3	6	Disagree a lot	8	29

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students on whether parents should volunteer at school (t (78) = 2.80, p < .05). More grade 7 and 8 students disgreed a lot (29%) compared to grade 5 and 6 students (6%).

Comments made by grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they would like their parents to volunteer. However, many grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they did not mind parents volunteering as long as their parents did not have personal contact with them in the classroom.

Table 4.54

Volunteering at school: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
23	43	Agree a lot	15	42
17	32	Agree a little	10	28
9	17	Neither disagree/agree	8	22
2	4	Disagree a little	1	3
2	4	Disagree a lot	2	5

There were no significant differences between the views of the two groups of parents as highlighted in the preceding table (t (87) = .44, p > .05). Most parents agreed either a lot or a little that it was important for parents to be involved in their child's school during the middle years. Only 4 % of grade 5 and 6 parents disagreed a lot compared to 5 % of grade 7 and 8 parents.

Summary. It was noted that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents versus students and grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the importance of parents volunteering during the middle years. Most parents agreed that volunteering in the middle years was important, but many grade 7 and 8 students disagreed with the idea. There were no significant differences recorded between the two groups of parents. Comments made by parents suggested that parents would like to volunteer, but time was a limiting factor due to work and personal family commitments.

Question 11 addressed the various ways in which parents might serve as volunteers: fulfilling a clerical or supervisory role, sharing expertise, or providing instructional support.

11. How important are each of the following regarding how you would like to be involved in your child's school (P).
   How important are each of the following examples regarding how you would like to see your parent(s) involved in your school (S).

<u>Clerical Role</u>

Table 4.55

<u>Fulfilling a clerical role: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=65$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=40$	Percentage (%)
5	8	Agree a lot	5	12
19	29	Agree a little	9	23
31	48	Neutral	10	25
2	3	Disagree a little	5	12
8	12	Disagree a lot	11	28

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students about parents adopting a clerical role (t (103) = 1.54, p > .05). Eight percent of parents compared to 12% of the students agreed that it was very important for parents to be involved in clerical duties at school.

Parental comments indicated that some parents were prepared to help the school and its teaching staff with clerical duties since their children were not eager to have Mom or Dad in the actual classroom volunteering.

Table 4.56

<u>Fulfilling a clerical role: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students</u>

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 29$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 11$	Percentage (%)
4	14	Agree a lot	1	9
7	24	Agree a little	2	18
6	21	Neutral	4	37
3	10	Disagree a little	2	18
9	31	Disagree a lot	2	18

There were no significant differences between the two groups of students on the perceptions of whether parents should volunteer in a clerical capacity in their child's school, as indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis (t (38) = .05, p > .05). However, it was interesting to note that there were more grade 5 and 6 students (31%) than grade 7 and 8 students (18%) who disagreed a lot. Many grade 7 and 8 students were neutral (37%).

Student comments suggested that grade 5 and 6 students did not want their parents to volunteer for clerical duties since they preferred to see their parent volunteer in their classroom.

Table 4.57

Fulfilling a clerical role: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=40$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=25$	Percentage (%)
3	7	Agree a lot	2	8
9	23	Agree a little	10	40
24	60	Neutral	7	28
-	-	Disagree a little	2	8
4	10	Disagree a lot	4	16

As demonstrated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis (t (63) = .06,

$p > .05$), there were no significant differences between the two groups of parents regarding

whether parents should be involved in clerical duties during the middle years. There were more grade

7 and 8 parents (48%) compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (30%) who either agreed a lot or a little

regarding the issue of volunteering for clerical duties. Sixty percent of the parents in grades 5 and 6

compared to 28% of grade 7 and 8 parents were neutral on the issue of volunteering for clerical

duties.

Comments made by grade 7 and 8 parents indicated that their children would prefer if their

parents not volunteer in their classroom. Quite a few parents commented that they were aware that

their teenage child would feel less self-conscious and awkward in front of his (her) friends if they

(parents) volunteered for clerical work at the school.

Summary. In regard to volunteering in a clerical capacity, the researcher was unable to

find significant differences between the perceptions of: a) students and parents; b) grade 5 and 6

students compared to grade 7 and 8 students; and c) grade 5 and 6 parents compared to grade 7 and 8

parents. Many responses were neutral.

Comments from parents suggested that they would be prepared to help with clerical work at their children's school; however, many grade 7 and 8 students were not receptive to the idea, especially if their friends saw their parents.

Supervisory Role

Table 4.58

Fulfilling a supervisory role: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 65	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 40	Percentage (%)
9	14	Agree a lot	6	15
31	48	Agree a little	8	20
14	21	Neutral	8	20
2	3	Disagree a little	7	17
9	14	Disagree a lot	11	28

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, and subsequent t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on supervisory duties for parents (t (103) = 2.58, p < .05). As can be noted from the above table, more parents (48 %) agreed a little regarding supervisory duties compared to students (20%). Twenty-eight percent of the students, compared to 14% of parents, disagreed a lot regarding parents' assumption of supervisory duties.

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Table 4.59

Fulfilling a supervisory role: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 29	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 11	Percentage (%)
4	14	Agree a lot	2	19
8	28	Agree a little	-	-
5	18	Neutral	3	27
6	20	Disagree a little	1	9
6	20	Disagree a lot	5	45

As shown in the above table and t-test analysis, there were no significant differences

between the two groups of students regarding supervisory duties for parents (t (38) = 1.16,

p > .05). More grade 5 and 6 students (28%) agreed a little regarding supervisory duties

compared to grade 7 and 8 students (0%). However, grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot regarding

supervisory duties (45%) compared to grade 5 and 6 students (20%).

Table 4.60

Fulfilling a supervisory role: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 40	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 25	Percentage (%)
7	18	Agree a lot	2	8
20	50	Agree a little	11	44
7	18	Neutral	7	28
1	2	Disagree a little	1	4
5	12	Disagree a lot	4	16

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents

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on whether parents should be involved in supervisory duties as part of parental involvement

$(t (63) = 1.10, _{+\!+}p > .05)$. Regardless of grade level, parents ranked supervisory work as either very important or important.

Summary. There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students regarding parents volunteering for supervisory duties. At the same time, there were no significant differences found between the perceptions of the following: grade 5 and 6 students compared to grade 7 and 8 students and grade 5 and 6 parents versus 7 and 8 parents. Parental comments suggested that parents would enjoy supervising at their children's school if asked. Many students were either neutral, or disagreed a little or a lot about having their parents volunteer for supervisory duties.

Sharing Personal Expertise

Table 4. 61

Sharing personal expertise: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 65$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 40$	Percentage (%)
13	20	Agree a lot	7	17
22	34	Agree a little	13	33
21	32	Neutral	15	38
4	6	Disagree a little	2	5
5	8	Disagree a lot	3	7

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students regarding whether parents should share personal expertise ($t (103) = .22, _{+\!+}p > .05$). Perusal of the above table shows that there was little difference between parents and students who agreed a lot or a little (54% and 50%, respectively)

regarding sharing expertise at school.

Table 4.62

Sharing personal expertise: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 29$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 11$	Percentage (%)
7	24	Agree a lot	-	-
10	34	Agree a little	3	27
8	28	Neutral	7	64
1	3	Disagree a little	1	9
3	11	Disagree a lot	-	-

As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant

differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of students regarding parents sharing expertise

with the school ($t (38) = 1.05$, $p > .05$). However, more grade 5 and 6 students (24%) agreed a

lot compared to grade 7 and 8 students (0%) about having their parents share their expertise at

school.

Table 4.63

Sharing personal expertise: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 40$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 25$	Percentage (%)
7	18	Agree a lot	6	24
16	40	Agree a little	6	24
13	33	Neutral	8	32
3	7	Disagree a little	1	4
1	2	Disagree a lot	4	16

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There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents regarding sharing expertise with the school as highlighted in table 4. 63 and subsequent t-test analysis (t (63) = .93, $p > .05$). Forty percent of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 24% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed a little regarding parents sharing their expertise.

Summary. No significant differences were observed regarding sharing personal expertise with the school between: a) the parents and students; b) grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students; and c) grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents. Several parents indicated that they would volunteer to share and discuss their occupational expertise at their children's school. The views of grade 7 and 8 students fell in the middle, that is, they were mostly neutral about the idea or agreed or disagreed a little. None agreed or disagreed a lot.

Instructional Support Role

Table 4.64

Instructional support: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 65	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 40	Percentage (%)
34	52	Agree a lot	10	25
17	26	Agree a little	12	30
11	17	Neutral	11	28
1	2	Disagree a little	3	7
2	3	Disagree a lot	4	10

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on the issue of parents participating in an instructional capacity as shown by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis (t (103) = 3.21, $p < .05$). Seventy-eight percent of the parents compared to 55% of the students agreed either a lot or a little that it was important for parents

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to work in an instructional capacity at their child's school.

Table 4.65

Instructional support: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 29	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 11	Percentage (%)
8	28	Agree a lot	2	18
9	31	Agree a little	3	27
7	24	Neutral	4	37
1	3	Disagree a little	2	18
4	14	Disagree a lot	-	-

There were no significant differences between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students on the issue of whether parents should work in an instructional position (t (38) = .22, p > .05). As indicated in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, 28% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 18% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed a lot regarding having parents assume instructional roles. However, more grade 7 and 8 students (18%) disagreed a little compared to grade 5 and 6 students (3%) regarding the value of parents in instructional roles and 14% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 0% of grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot.

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Table 4.66

Instructional support: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=40$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=25$	Percentage (%)
22	55	Agree a lot	12	48
10	25	Agree a little	7	28
8	20	Neutral	3	12
-	-	Disagree a little	1	4
-	-	Disagree a lot	2	8

As indicated, there were no significant differences (t (63) = 1.23, p > .05) between the two groups of parents on the issue of parents in instructional roles at their child's school. Frequency counts indicated that 55% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 48% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed a lot regarding fulfilling an instructional role at school. Parent comments indicated that they would be willing to volunteer in instructional capacities at their child's school.

Summary. There were significant differences overall between parents and students' perceptions of parents volunteering in instructional capacities at their children's school. The researcher was unable to find any significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents, although students were somewhat ambivalent.

Comments made by parents, regardless of grade level, indicated that they were willing to work in an instructional capacity with children, provided they, the parents, received guidance from the teaching staff.

Some younger grade students indicated that they would enjoy having their parents in an instructional capacity rather than having them fulfill clerical or supervisory roles. Grade 7 and 8

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students did not care where their parents volunteered as long as they did not work in their classroom.

12. **Besides myself, I would like other extended family members or friends to volunteer in my child's school (P).**
Besides my parents, I would like other extended family members (eg. grandparents) or friends to volunteer in my school (S).

Table 4.67

Extended family members as volunteers: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=65$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=40$	Percentage (%)
9	14	Agree a lot	5	13
19	29	Agree a little	9	22
31	48	Neither disagree/agree	9	22
3	5	Disagree a little	7	18
3	4	Disagree a lot	10	25

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students $(t (103) = 2.77, p < .05)$ regarding whether other extended members of the family should volunteer in the school. As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, more students (25%) disagreed a lot compared to parents (4%) that other members of the extended family should volunteer.

Parental comments suggested that some parents did not feel comfortable asking extended members of the family to volunteer at their child's school. Other parents mentioned that they did not wish to speak on someone else's behalf. Comments by students also indicated that they did not want to speak on their extended family's behalf.

Table 4.68

Extended family members as volunteers: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$=29	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 11	Percentage (%)
4	14	Agree a lot	1	9
9	31	Agree a little	-	-
5	17	Neither disagree/agree	4	36
6	21	Disagree a little	1	9
5	17	Disagree a lot	5	46

As shown in the above table, there were no significant differences between the viewpoints of

the two groups of students on extended members of the family volunteering in their school

(t (38) = 1.79, p > .05). Student comments (especially grade 7 and 8 students) indicated that they

did not wish or expect their extended family members to volunteer at their school.

Table 4.69

Extended family members as volunteers: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 40	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 25	Percentage (%)
5	12	Agree a lot	4	16
10	25	Agree a little	9	36
21	53	Neither disagree/agree	10	40
2	5	Disagree a little	1	4
2	5	Disagree a lot	1	4

There were no significant differences between the two groups of parents (t (63) = .86,

p > .05) although, as highlighted by the frequency counts in the previous table, fewer grade 5 and

6 parents (25 %) compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (36 %) agreed a little that extended family

members could volunteer at their child's school.

Summary. It was found that there were significant differences between the viewpoints of

parents versus students regarding having extended family members volunteering at the school. Most

parents neither agreed nor disagreed with the premise. The researcher was unable to find significant

differences between grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7

and 8 parents. Parents and students alike seemed uncomfortable with volunteering the time of

extended family members without their consent. Most students and parents stated that they did not

wish to speak on someone else's behalf.

13. I would like to volunteer only in my child's classroom (P).
I would like my parents to volunteer in my classroom (S).

Table 4.70

<u>Volunteering only in child's classroom: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count <u>N</u>= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count <u>N</u>= 80	Percentage (%)
11	12	Agree a lot	11	14
16	18	Agree a little	18	23
35	39	Neither disagree/agree	17	21
15	17	Disagree a little	8	10
12	14	Disagree a lot	26	32

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there

were no significant differences between the parents and students regarding whether parents would

like to volunteer only in their child's classroom (t (167) = 1.17, $_{\text{H}}$p > .05).

Student comments suggested that they did not want their parents in their classroom, perhaps because it is a critical time for them in terms of being accepted by their peer group. Thirty-two percent of the students disagreed a lot on the issue.

Comments made by parents suggested that they would prefer to volunteer in their child's classroom but would be quite willing to volunteer elsewhere if needed. Several parents indicated that they would prefer to volunteer in their child's classroom since they do not have the opportunity to see their child in a classroom setting on a regular basis due to work schedules. One parent offered the following comment: "Why should I volunteer in my child's school ? Does anyone come into my home to help me with my children?"

Table 4.71

Volunteering only in child's classroom: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
11	21	Agree a lot	-	-
13	25	Agree a little	5	19
15	28	Neither disagree/agree	2	7
6	11	Disagree a little	2	7
8	15	Disagree a lot	18	67

There were significant differences between the two groups of students on whether parents should volunteer in their children's classroom (t (78) = 4.80, $_{\text{H}}$p < .05). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, there were more grade 7 and 8 students (67%) compared to grade 5 and 6 students (15%) who disagreed a lot that parents should volunteer in their child's

classroom. It is interesting to note that 21% of grade 5 and 6 students agreed a lot that parents should volunteer in their classroom compared to 0% for grade 7 and 8 students.

The comments made by grade 5 and 6 students suggested that they enjoyed having Mom or Dad volunteer in their classroom. Most of the student comments indicated that they did not mind Mom coming to their classroom, but students seemed a little apprehensive about Dad volunteering. No reasons were given for the view that Mom was better than Dad as a volunteer. The grade 7 and 8 students seemed self-conscious and wanted to be treated like adults in front of their peer group. They did not want to be embarrassed by parents or shown up in front of their friends.

Table4.72

Volunteering only in child's classroom: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
8	15	Agree a lot	3	8
10	19	Agree a little	6	17
22	41	Neither disagree/agree	13	36
9	17	Disagree a little	6	17
4	8	Disagree a lot	8	22

In regard to volunteering in their children's classrooms, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents (t (87) = 1.77, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 15% of grade 5 and 6 parents, compared to 8% of grade 7 and 8 parents, agreed a lot that it was important for parents to volunteer in their child's classroom. However, more grade 7 and 8 parents (22%) disagreed a lot compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (8%).

Parental comments suggested that they would prefer to help own their child, but, if asked,

would work with other children in the classroom. The grade 7 and 8 parents were well aware of their children's feelings about their volunteering in their classrooms, sensitive to their adolescent's need to be independent, and to their embarrassment in front of their peers. One parent preferred to help and support her middle years child at home to avoid school embarrassment.

Summary. There were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students on parents volunteering in their children's classroom. Grade 7 and 8 students were opposed to the idea (67%). No significant differences were found between the perceptions of parents versus students, and grade 5 and 6 versus grade 7 and 8 parents.

Parental comments suggested that parents would prefer to volunteer in their own children's classrooms. The main reason given by parents was that they had little time to volunteer at the school, and, therefore, when they had time to volunteer, they (parents) preferred to work with their own children.

14. I would like to volunteer in another classroom (other than my own child's classroom) (P). I would like my parents to volunteer in a classroom other than my own (S).

Table 4.73

Volunteering in another classroom: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
8	9	Agree a lot	4	5
19	20	Agree a little	14	18
49	55	Neither disagree/agree	25	31
4	6	Disagree a little	12	15
9	10	Disagree a lot	25	31

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As indicated by the t-test analysis, there were significant differences between the viewpoints of parents and students on whether it was important for parents to volunteer in another classroom besides that of their own children (t (167) = 3.73, p < .05). The frequency counts in table 4. 73 show that there were more students (31 %) compared to parents (10%) opposed to parents volunteeering in another classroom beside their own.

Parental comments suggested that some parents would volunteeer in any classroom despite the fact that they would prefer to work in their child's classroom. One parent was willing to volunteer anywhere in the school, but indicated that he (she) had never been asked.

Table 4.74

Volunteering in another classroom: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
3	6	Agree a lot	1	4
9	17	Agree a little	5	19
21	40	Neither disagree/agree	4	15
7	13	Disagree a little	5	19
13	24	Disagree a lot	12	43

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students on parents volunteering in another classroom beside their own classroom (t (78) = 1.63, p > .05). Very few students agreed a lot on this issue. The frequency counts in the above table indicate that more grade 7 and 8 students (43%) disagreed a lot compared to grade 5 and 6 students (24%). The grade 7 and 8 students had some strong opinions about parents volunteering in another classroom. Several students did not want their parent volunteering in their school at all. The same students had

no problem with their parents working on committees such as the Parent Council, however.

Table 4.75

Volunteering in another classroom: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
1	2	Agree a lot	7	19
14	26	Agree a little	5	14
32	60	Neither disagree/agree	17	47
3	6	Disagree a little	1	3
3	6	Disagree a lot	6	17

There were no significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of parents

regarding parents volunteering in another classroom beside their own child's (t (87) = .16,

p > .05). Many parents neither agreed nor disagreed (60% and 47%, respectively).

Parental comments suggested that when they had time to volunteer at their child's school,

then they would prefer to work in their own child's rather than in another classroom. One parent

indicated that he (she) had the perfect opportunity to observe how his (her) child interacted with his

(her) peers, if he (she) were volunteering in the child's classroom but would miss out on this if he

(she) was in another room. A large number of parents stated that, due to working full-time during the

day, they preferred to use this valuable time volunteering in their child's classroom.

Summary. There were significant differences between the viewpoints of parents and

students on the issue of parents volunteering in other classrooms beside that of their own children.

Students seemed to disagree with the idea while many parents were neutral. There were no

significant differences between the viewpoints of: grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students, and

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grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Parents were reluctant to volunteer in another clasroom beside their own children's since they preferred to spend time with their own children. However, some parents were prepared to volunteer in other classrooms beside their own children's if there was a need. Several students were opposed to the idea.

Summary of Volunteering

Significant differences were noted between parents and students and grade 5 and 6 students and grade 7 and 8 students regarding the general issue of parent volunteering at school. Grade 7 and 8 students took exception to the idea. There were no significant differences among any of the participants on the importance of parents serving as clerical volunteers. Most responses were neutral. Compared to students, parents were more in favor of volunteering in a supervisory capacity. There were no significant differences between students at the two sets of grade levels, although the responses for grade 7 and 8 students fell mostly within the parameters of neutral, agree or disagree a little.

Although parents indicated they were willing to fulfill instructional roles, students' views were significantly different. Neither parents nor students were comfortable with the idea of having extended family members volunteer at school. Grade 5 and 6 students liked the concept of their parents volunteering in their own classroom rather than in another classroom. On the other hand, overall grade 7 and 8 students were strongly opposed to the idea of having their parents volunteering at school. The latter group of students seemed concerned about their peer group's reaction. Parents' comments indicated, in general, that since time was a major issue they were in favor of helping in their child's classroom only.

Learning at Home

15. I prefer to help only at home and not at school (P).
    I prefer that my parents help only at home and not at school (S).

Table 4.76

<u>Preference for helping only at home: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 80$	Percentage (%)
19	21	Agree a lot	26	33
25	28	Agree a little	29	36
14	16	Neither disagree/agree	15	19
9	10	Disagree a little	4	5
22	25	Disagree a lot	6	7

On the issue of parents helping only at home and not at school, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students ($t(167) = 3.36$, $p < .05$). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, 21% of the parents compared to 33% of the students agreed a lot regarding the preference to help at home rather than at school. However, more parents (25%) disagreed a lot compared to students (7%). Several parents did not agree with this question because it implied that they had to choose one or the other. They wanted to do both: help at home and at school. Students seemed to prefer that parents work with them at home and not at school.

Table 4.77

Preference for helping only at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
16	30	Agree a lot	10	37
20	38	Agree a little	9	33
10	19	Neither disagree/agree	5	19
2	4	Disagree a little	2	7
5	9	Disagree a lot	1	4

There were no significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of students (t (78) = .62, $_{+\!\!+}$ p > .05) in regard to parents helping at home only, rather than at school. While students were generally in agreement in regard to receiving help at home, comments by some students suggested that students would like to take responsibility for their own school work. They wanted help only if they could not understand class assignments. These students did not want parents trying to interfere with their school work.

Table 4.78

Preference for helping only at home: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)
11	21	Agree a lot	8	22
16	30	Agree a little	9	25
10	19	Neither disagree/agree	4	11
5	9	Disagree a little	4	11
11	21	Disagree a lot	11	31

Similarly, there were no significant differences between the views of the two groups of parents about helping at home rather than at school (t (87) = .73, p > .05). There were more grade 7 and 8 parents (31%) who disagreed a lot compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (21%). One parent suggested that he (she) preferred to help at home because his (her) junior high child did not want Mom or Dad helping at school. This parent suggested that, by helping at home, he (she) was able to keep the lines of communication open with his (her) child as well as be informed about school in general.

Summary. The results revealed that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students regarding parents helping only at home and not at school. The results did not, however, reveal any significant differences between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students, or grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Compared to students, parents disagreed a lot because the question implied they had to choose between helping either at home or at school. In general, students seemed in favor of receiving parental help at home.

Parental comments indicated that, if time permitted, they would like to help at home as well

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as at school. Some parents of grade 7 and 8 students indicated that their children no longer wanted

Mom or Dad volunteering at the school since they were trying to become more independent or were

embarrassed by their parents' presence.

The following question required participants to respond specifically on each of the

following: class assignments, studying for exams and tests, class projects, school-related tasks, certain

subjects only, and reading.

16. How important are each of the following means regarding how you <u>like</u> to help your child at home (P).
   How important are each of the following examples regarding how you <u>like</u> your parents to help you at home (S).

<u>**Class Assignments**</u>

Table 4.79

<u>Help with class assignments: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
19	43	Very important	17	31
19	43	Important	18	33
4	10	Undecided	12	22
1	2	Unimportant	4	7
1	2	Very unimportant	4	7

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table and analysis, there were significant

differences between the parents and students on the issue of parents helping with class assignments

(t (97) = 2.32, p < .05). Forty-three percent of the parents compared with 31% of students agreed

that it was very important to have parents help at home with class assignments. In contrast, very few

parents (2%) and students (7%) considered parent help with class assignments as very unimportant. Students were somewhat ambivalent with 22% being undecided and 7% rating the issue as either unimportant or very unimportant, respectively.

Parental comments suggested that parents wanted to be supportive and encourage their child in completing class assignments. Some of the student comments indicated that they enjoyed receiving help with class assignments.

Table 4.80

Help with class assignments: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 19	Percentage (%)
14	39	Very important	3	16
10	28	Important	8	42
7	19	Undecided	5	26
4	11	Unimportant	-	-
1	3	Very unimportant	3	16

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of students about parental help with class assignments at home (t (53) = 1.40, p > .05). It is interesting to note from the frequency counts shown in the above table that there were more grade 5 and 6 students (39%) compared to grade 7 and 8 students (16%) who agreed that it was very important to have parental help with class assignments. Forty-two percent of grade 7 and 8 students rated parental help as important, however.

Table 4.81

Help with class assignments: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
13	48	Very important	6	35
14	52	Important	5	29
-	-	Undecided	4	24
-	-	Unimportant	1	6
-	-	Very unimportant	1	6

As noted by the frequency counts in the above table, 52% of grades 5 and 6 parents compared to 29% of grades 7 and 8 parents perceived parental help with class assignments as very important or important. Consequently, there were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents (t (42) = 2.55, p < .05) with grade 5 and 6 parents having strong, positive convictions. The responses of grade 7 and 8 parents regarding helping with class assignments ranged from very important (35%) to very unimportant (6%). Twenty-four percent were undecided.

Summary. Significant differences were noted regarding the perceptions of parents versus students. While students, in general, regarded parental help with class assignments to be important, grade 5 and 6 parents seemed to have strong, positive convictions compared to grade 7 and 8 parents, many of whom were undecided on the issue.

Parental comments suggested that parents were aware of the importance of assisting their children with class assignments and were prepared to help if asked. Comments made by grade 7 and 8 students revealed that some students were uncomfortable with their parents' help on class assignments.

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Studying for Exams and Tests

Table 4.82

Help studying for exams and tests: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADED 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
26	59	Very important	26	47
13	30	Important	15	27
3	7	Undecided	8	15
1	2	Unimportant	2	4
1	2	Very unimportant	4	7

As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences (t (97) = 1.71, p > .05) between the views of parents and students about parental help with studying for exams and tests. Both groups were mainly supportive and ranked helping with studying for exams and tests as very important or important.

Table 4.83

Help studying for exams and tests: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 19	Percentage (%)
21	58	Very important	5	26
10	28	Important	5	26
4	11	Undecided	4	21
-	-	Unimportant	2	11
1	3	Very unimportant	3	16

There were significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 students and grade 7 and 8 students (t (53) = 3.25, $_{++}$p < .05) regarding parental assistance with studying for exams and tests. As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 83, 58% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 26% of grade 7 and 8 students considered receiving parental assistance for studying for exams and tests important.

The comments of the grade 5 and 6 students suggested that they enjoyed having Mom or Dad help them with studying for exams or tests. However, the grade 7 and 8 students did not want parents' help.

Table 4.84

Help studying for exams and tests: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 17	Percentage (%)
17	63	Very important	9	52
10	37	Important	3	18
-	-	Undecided	3	18
-	-	Unimportant	1	6
-	-	Very unimportant	1	6

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 100% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 70% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed that parental assistance in studying for exams and tests was either very important or important. There were significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of parents, however (t (42) = 2.14, $_{++}$p < .05). While the parents of grade 5 and 6 students had strong, positive responses, those of grade 7 and 8 parents ranged across the continuum, suggesting that parents of students at this level had reservations about assisting their children with studying for tests and exams.

Summary. While there were no significant differences between parents and students on the issue of receiving parental help for studying tests and exams, differences were significant between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students, as well as between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Both grade 5 and 6 students and parents considered the issue as important or very important.

Parental comments revealed that grade 7 and 8 parents wanted their children to take more responsibility for their own learning but would be prepared to review material or give mock quizzes. On the other hand, grade 5 and 6 parents believed that it was still necessary to provide their children with guidance at this stage of their schooling. These parents did not think that their children had fully developed a set of study skills to help them to prepare for tests or exams.

Class Projects

Table 4.85

Help with class projects: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
17	39	Very important	20	36
18	41	Important	13	24
7	16	Undecided	14	25
1	2	Unimportant	5	9
1	2	Very unimportant	3	6

The t-test analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on receiving help with class projects ($t(97) = 1.59$, $p > .05$). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 41% of parents agreed with 24% of the students that it was important to receive parental help with class projects, while 39 % of parents and 36% of students rated this issue as very important.

Comments suggested that parents would like the students to have all the information before being assigned projects to complete at home. Student comments indicated that they wanted parental help with class projects but did not want their parents to complete the work for them.

Table 4.86

Help with class projects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 19$	Percentage (%)
17	47	Very important	3	16
6	17	Important	7	37
10	28	Undecided	4	21
2	5	Unimportant	3	16
1	3	Very unimportant	2	10

There were significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of students on receiving help with class projects ($t(53) = 2.07$, $p < .05$). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table (4.86), 47% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 16% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed that it was very important to receive parents' help with class projects. Thirty-seven percent of grade 7 and 8 students still rated this item as important. Thirty-six percent of the grade 7 and 8 students, however, considered parental help with class projects to be either unimportant or very unimportant.

Student comments by the grade 7 and 8 students suggested that they did not want their parents helping them with class projects unless they requested it.

Table 4.87

Help with class projects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $N=27$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $N=17$	Percentage (%)
11	41	Very important	6	35
14	52	Important	4	24
2	7	Undecided	5	29
-	-	Unimportant	1	6
-	-	Very unimportant	1	6

There were significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on giving help with class projects ($t(42) = 2.07$, $p < .05$). As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 87, 52% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 24% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed that it was important to help their child with class projects, but more grade 7 and 8 parents (29%) were undecided.

Comments suggested that grade 7 and 8 parents did not want to offer their help because they were aware that their child needed to become independent. The grade 5 and 6 parents indicated that their children were still learning and, therefore, needed more guidance in completing class projects.

Summary. While there were no significant differences between the parents' and students' perceptions of parental help with class projects, further analysis showed that, on this issue, there were significant differences between the perceptions of: grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students; and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Both students and parents at the grade 5 and 6 level rated the issue as very important or important.

Parental comments indicated that, with younger children, parental guidance for class projects was still necessary whereas older children needed less help. Grade 7 and 8 students'

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responses seemed to confirm this sentiment.

School-related Tasks

Table 4.88

Help with school-related tasks: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
7	16	Very important	12	22
18	41	Important	13	24
11	25	Undecided	14	25
6	14	Unimportant	11	20
2	4	Very unimportant	5	9

There were no significant differences between the viewpoints of middle years parents and students on receiving parental help with school-related tasks (t (97) = .87, p > .05). As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 41% of parents compared to 24% of students agreed that it was important to receive parental help with school-related tasks. Sixteen percent of the parents and 22% of the students rated the issue as very important.

Table 4.89

Help with school-related tasks: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 19	Percentage (%)
10	28	Very important	2	10
10	28	Important	3	16
10	28	Undecided	4	21
5	13	Unimportant	6	32
1	3	Very unimportant	4	21

When the ratings of grade 5 and 6 students were compared with the ratings of grade 7 and 8 students, there were significant differences regarding receiving parental help with school-related tasks (t (53) = 2.99, p < .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 28% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 10% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed that it was very important to receive help from parents with school-related tasks. It is interesting to note that there were more grade 7 and 8 students (21%) compared to grade 5 and 6 students (3%) opposed to parental help with school-related tasks.

Comments made by grade 7 and 8 students suggested that they did not feel comfortable with parents helping them with school-related tasks since they wanted to be independent.

Table 4.90

Help with school-related tasks: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
3	11	Very important	4	24
13	48	Important	5	29
7	26	Undecided	4	24
3	11	Unimportant	3	17
1	4	Very unimportant	1	6

When the views of the two groups of parents were compared, there were no significant differences on the issue of giving assistance to their children on school-related tasks (t (42) = .14, p > .05). As indicated by the frequency counts in table 4.90, 11% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 24% of grade 7 and 8 parents considered giving assistance with school-related tasks very important. However, there were more grade 5 and 6 parents (48%) compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (29%) who ranked helping their children with school-related tasks as important. Overall, however, these differences were not significant.

Summary. The following results were obtained regarding the perceptions of parents and students on providing parental help with school-related tasks. There were no significant differences between: parents and students, and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. There were significant differences between the grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students, however. Grade 7 and 8 students seemed to be striving to assert their independence while grade 5 and 6 students indicated that parental help was welcome.

Comments provided by the parents revealed that they believed that school success was important and they were prepared to provide advice and help their children with school-related tasks.

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However, they did not want to do all the work for their children but to guide them as they began to assume more responsibility for their own learning. While grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they appreciated parent help, the perceptions of grade 7 and 8 students were noticeably different. They rated parental help at home as unimportant (32%) and very unimportant (21%).

Certain Subjects Only

Table 4. 91

Help with certain subjects only: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
15	34	Very important	16	29
16	36	Important	18	33
7	16	Undecided	11	20
4	9	Unimportant	3	5
2	5	Very unimportant	7	13

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the middle years parents and students on receiving help with certain school subjects (t (97) = 1.05, p > .05). Responses seemed to be similiarly distributed across the continuum. As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, there were more students (13%) than parents (5%) who were opposed to receiving help with certain school subjects. Some parental comments suggested that they wanted to help with certain subjects up to a certain grade level.

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Table 4.92

Help with certain subjects only: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 19$	Percentage (%)
13	36	Very important	3	17
11	31	Important	7	37
6	17	Undecided	5	26
1	3	Unimportant	2	10
5	13	Very unimportant	2	10

When the views of students were compared, there were no significant differences between the two groups (t (53) = .95, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 67% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 54% of grade 7 and 8 students considered parents' help with certain subjects as either very important or important.

Table 4. 93

Help with certain subjects only: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 17$	Percentage (%)
9	33	Very important	6	35
10	37	Important	6	35
4	15	Undecided	3	18
3	11	Unimportant	1	6
1	4	Very unimportant	1	6

Similarly, as indicated by the frequency counts in table 4. 93 and subsequent t-test analysis, there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups of parents on giving

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help to their children with certain subjects (t (42) = .09, $_{++}$p > .05). Responses seemed to be evenly distributed across the continuum for both groups. Parental comments suggested that parents, regardless of grade level, were prepared to help their children .

Summary. The researcher was unable to find any significant differences between the viewpoints of any of the following on parental help with certain content area subjects only: parents and students; grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students; and grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 parents. Responses in each case seemed to be similarly distributed across the continuum. Comments made by parents revealed that parents did not mind helping their children with certain subjects. They were showing an interest in their children's learning.

Reading Activities

Table 4. 94

Help with reading activities: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count N= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 55	Percentage (%)
24	55	Very important	10	18
14	32	Important	6	11
4	9	Undecided	14	25
1	2	Unimportant	5	9
1	2	Very unimportant	20	37

There were significant difference between the perceptions of parents and students regarding parental help with reading activities (t (97) = 6.49, $_{++}$p < .05). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, 55% of parents as opposed to 18% of students agreed that it was very important to have parents helping with reading activities. Thirty-seven percent of the students rated help with reading activities as very unimportant.

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Comments revealed that parents, in general, wanted to help their children with reading activities since they believed that their children's reading skills were not strong and needed to be improved upon. Several parents indicated that their children needed to work on reading comprehension activities since they did not always understand the reading assignments. However, students, in general, did not agree that parents had to guide their reading activities since they believed that they were able to read well enough to do the work assigned.

Table 4. 95

Help with reading activities: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 19$	Percentage (%)
9	25	Very important	1	5
6	17	Important	-	-
8	22	Undecided	6	32
2	5	Unimportant	3	16
11	31	Very unimportant	9	47

When the perceptions of students were compared, there were significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups on the issue of receiving parental help with reading activities (t (53) = 2.43, p < .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 25% of grade 5 and 6 compared to only 5% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed that it was very important to have parental help with reading activities. However, there were more students, especially at the grade 7 and 8 level, opposed to the idea of having parents helping with reading activities.

The grade 7 and 8 students commented that they did not want help unless they were having a lot of difficulty understanding the reading activity. One student commented that if his (her) parents helped him (her) with reading activties, then he (she) felt as if he (she) were still in the elementary

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grades. Many grade 5 and 6 students stated that they could read well enough and did not appreciate Mom or Dad helping with reading activities.

Table 4. 96

Help with reading activities: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
19	70	Very important	5	29
8	30	Important	6	35
-	-	Undecided	4	24
-	-	Unimportant	1	6
-	-	Very unimportant	1	6

The comparison of parental responses indicated that there were significant differences regarding giving help to their children with reading activities (t (42) = 3.85, p < .05). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, 70 % of grade 5 and 6 parents as opposed to 29 % of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed that it was very important to help their children with reading activities.

Comments made by grade 7 and 8 parents indicated that they would help their child if asked. Many of the grade 7 and 8 parent comments indicated that the parents were sensitive to the fact that their young teen may need space and independence while doing reading activities.

Summary. The results regarding this question highlighted that there were significant differences between the following on receiving parental help with reading activities: parents and students; grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students; and grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 parents.

Some very strong viewpoints were expressed by the grade 7 and 8 students that they did want parents helping them with reading activities since they were old enough to read by themselves.

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The students did not want parental input unless they asked. They felt that it was embarrassing to have Mom or Dad helping them at their age, especially when younger brothers or sisters were around.

Summary of Question 16.

Responses. Findings revealed that, while students were in favor of receiving help only at home, parents wanted to support their children both at home and at school.

Both groups of students rated receiving parental help with class assignments as important, but grade 7 and 8 parents were somewhat undecided. A pattern emerged in the responses of grade 5 and 6 students and parents compared to grade 7 and 8 students and parents in regard to receiving help as students studied for exams and tests, completed class projects and engaged in reading activities. On each of these issues, grade 5 and 6 students and parents considered parental help important.

On the issue of helping with school-related tasks, grade 5 and 6 students still seemed to want parental help while parent responses at this level fell across the continuum. There were no significant differences between parents and students on the issue of giving help with certain subjects. In general, both groups felt that parental help was important. Nonetheless, overall findings in this category suggested that, while parents of grade 7 and 8 students were prepared to support learning at home, they realized the need for their children to become independent learners. The grade 7 and 8 students, themselves, indicated a growing need to become independent.

Question 17 required participants to respond to the same topics used in question 16: class assignments, studying for exams and tests, class projects, school-related tasks, certain subjects only, and reading activities. Question 17 focused on whether parents and students thought they were capable of giving help, however.

17. **How important are each of the following regarding how you <u>think</u> you can help your child at home (P).**
How important are each of the following regarding how you <u>think</u> your parents can help you at home (S).

<u>Class Assignments</u>

Table 4. 97

<u>Confidence regarding helping with class assignments: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count <u>N</u>= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count <u>N</u>= 55	Percentage (%)
24	55	Very certain	19	35
15	34	Certain	15	27
3	7	Undecided	16	29
1	2	Somewhat uncertain	3	5
1	2	Very uncertain	2	4

There were significant differences between the viewpoints of the parents and students on whether parents think they can help their child with class assignments (t (97) = 2.60, p < .05). As shown by the frequency counts, 55% of parents compared to 35% of students agreed that they think parents can help with class assignments. Many more students (29%) as opposed to parents (7%) were undecided regarding whether they thought that parents were able to help with class assignments.

Parental comments indicated that parents were willing to try and help their child with class assignments, despite being unfamiliar with the subject. Comments made by students indicated that

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they were less confident regarding their parents' abilities to help with class assignments.

Table 4. 98

Confidence regarding helping with class assignments: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}=36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}=19$	Percentage (%)
17	47	Very certain	2	11
8	22	Certain	7	37
7	19	Undecided	9	47
3	9	Somewhat uncertain	-	-
1	3	Very uncertain	1	5

When the ratings of the two groups of students were compared, there were no significant

differences regarding whether students thought parents could help with class assignments or not

(t (53) = 1.84, $_{\text{++}}$ p > .05). As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, more grade 5

and 6 students (47%) compared to grade 7 and 8 students (11%) were very certain that their parents

could help them with their class assignments. However, 37% of grade 7 and 8 students as opposed to

22% of grade 5 and 6 students qualified their responses. Thirty-seven percent as opposed to 11% of

grade 7 and 8 students were certain rather than very certain that their parents could help them with

their class assignments. Almost one-half (47%) of the grade 7 and 8 students were undecided,

however, regarding confidence in their parents' abilities to help them with class assignments at home.

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Table 4. 99

Confidence regarding helping with class assignments: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
14	52	Very certain	10	59
13	48	Certain	2	12
-	-	Undecided	3	17
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	1	6
-	-	Very uncertain	1	6

A comparison of parental responses for the two groups showed that there were no significant differences regarding whether they thought they could help with class assignments or not (t (42) = 1.47, p > .05). As noted in the above table, more grade 5 and 6 parents (48%) compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (12%) were certain that they could help their child with class assignments. But 52 % and 59% of grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents, respectively, were very certain they could offer help with class assignments. Seventeen percent of grade 7 and 8 parents qualified their response somewhat, being undecided regarding whether they could help with school assignments.

Comments suggested that some parents were unfamiliar with some of the class assignments, especially at the upper grades (7 and 8), and did not want to confuse their children by helping them. Other parents were uncomfortable and preferred to leave it to the teacher to explain the assignment to their child. However, on the whole, parents were very confident that they could assist their children with class assignments.

Summary. The results reflected that there were significant differences between parents and

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students regarding the issue of whether parents could actually help their children with class assignments. However, no significant differences were discovered between the grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students or the grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents. Parents' comments revealed that they had a higher confidence in their abilities than the students. The grade 7 and 8 students, in general, thought that their parents could not assist them with their class assignments. The younger grade students (5 and 6) were more confident of their parents' abilities. Some grade 7 and 8 students were undecided.

Studying for Tests and Exams

Table 4. 100

Confidence with regards to giving studying assistance: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
28	64	Very certain	29	53
13	30	Certain	13	24
2	4	Undecided	8	14
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	2	4
1	2	Very uncertain	3	5

There were no significant differences between the views of the parents and students on the issue of parents helping with studying for exams and tests (t (97) = 1.86, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, more parents (64%) compared to students (53%) were very certain that parents could help with studying for exams and tests. Only a small percentage of parents (2%) and students (5%) were very uncertain about parents being able to help with studying for exams and tests.

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Table 4. 101

Confidence with regards to giving studying assistance: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADE 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 36	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 19	Percentage (%)
23	64	Very certain	6	32
9	25	Certain	4	20
3	8	Undecided	5	26
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	2	11
1	3	Very uncertain	2	11

When the views of students were compared, however, there were significant differences between the perceptions of students at the two sets of grade levels (t (53) = 3.14, $_{++}$p < .05). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, a larger percentage of grade 5 and 6 students (64%) compared to grade 7 and 8 students (32%) were very certain that they thought their parents could help them with studying for exams and tests.

Table 4. 102

Confidence with regards to giving studying assistance: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 17	Percentage (%)
16	37	Very certain	12	70
11	63	Certain	2	12
-	-	Undecided	2	12
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	-	-
-	-	Very uncertain	1	6

When the ratings of the two sets of parents were compared, there were no significant differences between the two groups (t (42) = .73, p > .05). As indicated by the frequency counts in the previous table, more grade 7 and 8 parents (70%) as opposed to grade 5 and 6 parents (37%) were very certain that they could help with studying for exams and tests. However, there were more grade 5 and 6 parents (63%) compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (12%) who were certain that they, as parents, could help their children with studying for tests and exams.

Summary. While there were no overall significant differences between the ratings of parents and students and the two sets of parents, there were significant differences between the opinions of grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students regarding confidence in parental ability to help with studying.

Parental comments suggested that they were confident that they could help their children with studying for tests and exams since they had prior experiences on how to study and do well. The grade 5 and 6 students had confidence in their parents' abilities to help them study for tests while the grade 7 and 8 students did not hold parents in high regard for assistance with studying for tests and exams. The latter group of students believed that it was their responsibility, rather than their parents', to study for tests and exams.

Class Projects

Table 4. 103

Confidence with regards to giving help with class projects: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$ = 55	Percentage (%)
18	41	Very certain	22	40
20	46	Certain	12	22
4	9	Undecided	15	28
1	2	Somewhat uncertain	3	5
1	2	Very uncertain	3	5

The t-test analysis indicated that there were no significant differences between the perceptions of the parents and students on whether they thought parents could help with class projects ($t(97) = 1.64$, $p > .05$). As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 46% of parents compared to 22% of the students were certain that parents could help with class projects, while 41% and 40% respectively were very certain.

Table 4. 104

Confidence with regards to giving help with class projects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 19$	Percentage (%)
19	53	Very certain	3	16
7	19	Certain	5	26
7	19	Undecided	8	42
2	6	Somewhat uncertain	1	5
1	3	Very uncertain	2	11

A comparison of the ratings of the two groups of students indicated that there were significant differences on the issue of whether they thought parents could help with class projects ($t(53) = 2.59$, $p < .05$). As highlighted by the frequency counts in table 4. 104, 53% of grade 5 and 6 students, as opposed to 16% of grade 7 and 8 students, thought that parents could help with class projects.

Table 4. 105

Confidence with regards to giving help with class projects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 27$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 17$	Percentage (%)
10	37	Very certain	8	47
16	59	Certain	4	23
1	4	Undecided	3	18
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	1	6
-	-	Very uncertain	1	6

There were also no significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of parents on whether they thought they could help with class projects or not (t (42) = 1.23, $_{H}$p > .05). As shown by the percentages in the preceding table, more grade 7 and 8 parents (47%) compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (37%) were very certain that they could help with class projects. However, more grade 5 and 6 parents (63%) were certain about being able to help with class projects compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (23%).

Summary. It was highlighted that, while there was no statistical evidence to support significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents on whether parents or students thought that parents could help with class project, there were significant differences between the two groups of students.

Comments indicated that, on the one hand, parents were sure of their ability to help their children with class projects but that this viewpoint was not upheld by grade 7 and 8 students who were mostly undecided (42%) or did not think parents could assist with class projects compared to grade 5 and 6 students (19%).

School-related Tasks

Table 4. 106

Confidence with regards to giving help with school-related tasks: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
12	27	Very certain	12	22
17	39	Certain	11	20
9	20	Undecided	18	33
3	7	Somewhat uncertain	8	14
3	7	Very uncertain	6	11

There were no significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether parents could help with school-related tasks or not (t (97) = 1.85, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts and percentages in table 4. 106, 66% of parents compared to 42% of the students were either certain or very certain that parents could assist with school-related tasks. Twenty percent of the parents and 33% of the students were undecided, however.

Parental comments suggested that they were willing and confident in their abilities to help their children. Overall, students' comments indicated that they were less confident of their parents' abilities and wished to work out the difficulties on their own before asking for help.

Table 4. 107

Confidence with regards to giving help with school-related tasks: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8
students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}= 36$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}= 19$	Percentage (%)
11	31	Very certain	1	5
7	19	Certain	4	21
12	33	Undecided	6	32
5	14	Somewhat uncertain	3	16
1	3	Very uncertain	5	26

When the two groups of students were compared, findings indicated that there were

significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of students (t (53) = 2.90,

p < .05). As highlighted by the frequency counts in the above table, 31% of grade 5 and 6

compared to 5 % of grade 7 and 8 students were very certain that their parents could help them with

their school-related tasks. However, more grade 7 and 8 students (26%), as opposed to grade 5 and 6

students (3%), were very uncertain that their parents could help.

Comments made by grade 7 and 8 students reinforced the statistical finding. Students did

not think their parents could help them with all of their school-related tasks.

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Table 4. 108

Confidence with regards to giving help with school-related tasks: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8
parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
6	22	Very certain	6	34
13	48	Certain	4	24
5	19	Undecided	4	24
1	4	Somewhat uncertain	2	12
2	7	Very uncertain	1	6

There were no significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of parents (t (42) = .10, p > .05). The percentage column showed that 70% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 58% of grade 7 and 8 parents were either very certain or certain that they could help their children with school-related tasks. Only 4% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 12% of grade 7 and 8 parents were uncertain that they would be able to help their children with school-related tasks.

Summary. Findings in this analysis were similiar to the findings on the previous issues. While there were no significant differences regarding whether parents and students thought that parents were able to help with school-related tasks for the following groups: parents and students and grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 parents, significant differences existed between grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students.

The comments of grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they did not think their parents could help them with school-related tasks. However, parents, in general, were optimistic.

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Certain Subjects Only

Table 4. 109

Confidence regarding giving help with certain subjects: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count N= 44	Percentage (%)		Frequency count N= 55	Percentage (%)
17	39	Very certain	18	33
20	45	Certain	13	24
3	6	Undecided	15	27
2	5	Somewhat uncertain	4	7
2	5	Very uncertain	5	9

There were no significant differences between parents and students regarding their perceptions on whether parents were able to assist their children with certain school subjects (t (97) = 1.92, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts, there was a higher percentage of parents (45%) compared to students (24%) who agreed that parents were capable of helping with certain school subjects, but, in general, responses in both cases were distributed across the continuum.

Comments suggested that parents were comfortable helping up to a certain grade level, after which they preferred outside input either from teaching staff or tutors that they hired.

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Table 4. 110

Confidence regarding giving help with certain subjects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)		Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 19	Percentage (%)
16	44	Very certain	2	11
8	22	Certain	5	26
8	22	Undecided	7	37
1	3	Somewhat uncertain	3	15
3	9	Very uncertain	2	11

When the views of the two sets of students were compared, significant differences were found (t (53) = 2.35, p < .05). As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, more grade 5 and 6 students (44%) compared to grade 7 and 8 students (11%) were very certain that their parents could help them with certain subjects. On the other hand, 15% of grade 7 and 8 students as opposed to 3% of grade 5 and 6 students were somewhat uncertain that their parents would be able to assist in certain subjects.

Table 4. 111

<u>Confidence regarding giving help with certain subjects: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
10	37	Very certain	8	47
14	52	Certain	3	18
-	-	Undecided	4	23
2	7	Somewhat uncertain	1	6
1	4	Very uncertain	1	6

Parents did not differ in their perceptions about being able to assist their children with certain school subjects (t (42) = .50, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 111, more grade 7 and 8 parents (47%) compared to grade 5 and 6 parents (37%) were very certain that they could help their children with certain subjects. However, there were more grade 5 and 6 parents (52%) as opposed to grade 7 and 8 parents (18%) who were certain that they would be able to help their children with certain school subjects.

Summary. The researcher was unable to find any significant differences between parents and students in general or grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents regarding whether parents were able to assist their children with certain subjects. There were significant differences between the viewpoints of the two groups of students, however. Just over one half of the grade 7 and 8 students (52%) were either undecided or uncertain about whether their parents could help with certain subjects. Some parents commented that they could help up to a certain grade level, but, beyond that grade level, their children would need to get assistance from the teaching staff or a tutor.

Reading Activities

Table 4. 112

<u>Confidence regarding giving assistance with reading activities: Parents vs students</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 44	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 55	Percentage (%)
28	64	Very certain	14	25
10	23	Certain	5	9
4	9	Undecided	13	24
1	2	Somewhat uncertain	6	11
1	2	Very uncertain	17	31

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students about whether they thought parents could help with reading activities (t (97) = 5.81, p < .05). As highlighted by table 4. 112 , 64% of parents compared to 25% of the students were very certain that parents were capable of assisting with reading activities. More students (31%) as opposed to parents (2%) were very uncertain that parents could help them with reading activities.

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Table 4. 113

Confidence regarding giving assistance with reading activities: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count N= 36	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count N= 19	Percentage (%)
12	33	Very certain	2	11
5	14	Certain	-	-
8	22	Undecided	5	26
2	6	Somewhat uncertain	4	21
9	25	Very uncertain	8	42

When the views of the two sets of students were compared, results were also statistically significant (t (53) = 2.57, $p < .05$). As can be noted from the percentage column in the above table, 33% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to 11% of grade 7 and 8 students were very certain that their parents would be able to help them with reading activities. Grade 7 and 8 students (42%), as opposed to grade 5 and 6 students (25%), were very uncertain that parents could be helpful with reading activities.

Comments made by the grade 7 and 8 students indicated that students at this grade level did not think their parents could help them with reading activities because sometimes they had to read a whole novel or short story before doing the reading assignment. They did not think their parents would want to spend their free time reading the novel to help them. Several students indicated that their parents had other children to take care of and could not afford to spend all their time with just one child.

Table 4. 114

<u>Confidence regarding giving assistance with reading activities: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8</u>
<u>parents</u>

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 17	Percentage (%)
18	67	Very certain	9	53
9	33	Certain	5	29
-	-	Undecided	2	12
-	-	Somewhat uncertain	-	-
-	-	Very uncertain	1	6

Parents of children in the two sets of grade levels did not differ in their views, however (t (42) = 1.81, p > .05). As reflected by the frequency counts in the above table, 67% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 53% of grade 7 and 8 parents thought they could help with reading activities.

Summary. There were significant differences between parents and students and grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students regarding whether they thought parents could help with reading activities. Parents, regardless of grade level, were confident in their ability to help their children with reading activities. The comments of grade 7 and 8 students substantiated the statistical findings. This group of students thought that parental help with reading activities would be too time-consuming.

Summary of Learning at Home

The researcher noted that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents compared to students and grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the issue of parents helping at home. Parents, regardless of grade level, were prepared to help their children at home with school work. However, grade 7 and 8 students did not want parental help with

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school work since they believed that it was their sole responsibility and not that of their parents. Grade 5 and 6 students were more willing to receive parental help with school work than grade 7 and 8 students. Parents and students alike did not want parents completing the school work for them, however.

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students on whether they thought parents could help with class assignments. While parents were relatively certain they could help, grade 7 and 8 students were not as confident. A pattern developed in which significant differences were found between the two sets of students regarding receiving help: studying for tests and exams; class projects; school-related tasks; certain subjects only; and reading activities. Unlike grade 5 and 6 students, grade 7 and 8 students were somewhat ambivalent. They were unsure whether or not their parents had the expertise to help at home.

Decision-Making

Since there were Parent Councils in both schools, questions 18 and 19, which asked if there was a Parent Council and if not, would he (she) like to see a Parent Council established were not applicable.

20. Are you on the Parent Council at your child's school ? (P)
    Is / Are your parent(s) on the Parent Council ? (S)

Table 4. 115

Serving on the Parent Council: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 80$	Percentage (%)
18	20	Yes	19	24
71	80	No	61	76

As shown by the frequency counts in the previous table, 20% of parents were serving on the Parent Council. By its very nature, only a relatively few parents can serve. It is interesting to note the correspondence. Most students (24 and 76%) were aware that their parents were or were not on the Council.

Table 4. 116

Serving on the Parent Council: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N}$ = 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N}$ = 27	Percentage (%)
13	24	Yes	6	22
40	76	No	21	78

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 24 % of grade 5 and 6, compared to 22 % of grade 7 and 8 students, knew whether or not their parents were serving on the school's Parent Council.

Table 4. 117

Serving on the Parent Council: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N}$ = 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N}$ = 36	Percentage (%)
9	17	Yes	9	25
44	83	No	27	75

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, the results indicated that 17% of grade 5 and 6 parents compared to 25% of grade 7 and 8 parents were serving on the school's Parent Council, suggesting that parental interest in decision-making continues at upper levels.

Summary. Responses indicated that students were aware that their parents were or were

not serving on the Parent Council, and that parents at the grade 7 and 8 level were still serving on such bodies.

Some parental comments suggested that some parents were tired of attending meetings where it was all talk and no action. Other parents indicated that they had little time and what little time they had, they preferred to spend with their family rather than the school. However, some parents did think that Parent Council was a good way to learn about the school and have input regarding school affairs.

21. Would you like to serve on the Parent Council ? (P)
   Would you like your parent(s) to serve on the Parent Council? (S)

Table 4. 118

Desire to serve on the Parent Council: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 71$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 61$	Percentage (%)
9	13	Yes	3	5
40	56	No	17	28
22	31	I don't know	41	67

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, 13% of parents compared to 5% of students agreed regarding the desirability of parents joining the Parent Council. Parental comments suggested that they had prior commitments or had little time to join the Parent Council since they were busy in the evenings with their children's extracurricular activities. Most students (67%) circled "I don't know".

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Table 4. 119

Desire to serve on the Parent Council: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 40$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 21$	Percentage (%)
2	5	Yes	1	5
11	28	No	6	28
27	67	I don't know	14	67

These results were echoed when the ratings of the two sets of students were analyzed. As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 67% of the students in each set of grades indicated they did not know. Comments suggested that students did not want to speak on their parents' behalf.

Table 4. 120

Desire to serve on the Parent Council: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 36$	Percentage (%)
7	16	Yes	2	7
22	50	No	18	67
15	34	I don't know	7	26

As shown by the frequency counts in the above table, more grade 5 and 6 parents (16%) agreed that they would like to join the Parent Council compared to grade 7 and 8 parents (7%).

Summary. Frequency counts indicated that just over one-half of the parents did not wish to serve on the Parent Council. Sixty-seven percent of the students responded in the "do not know" category regarding their parents' desire to serve on the school's Parent Council. Students either were

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not willing to speak on their parents' behalf or did not care.

Some parental comments suggested that they had many other commitments without adding another meeting to their already hectic schedule.

22. Would you like to be on the school board as an elected school trustee? (P)
   Would you like your parent(s) on the school board as an elected school trustee? (S)

Table 4. 121

Desire to serve on the school board: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 80$	Percentage (%)
5	6	Yes	8	10
68	76	No	30	38
16	18	I don't know	42	52

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, 76% of the parents did not want to be on the school board whereas only 38% of the students indicated that they did not want their parents to be elected as school trustees.

Parental comments suggested that parents did not want to join another committee since they had little time with working full-time and taking care of their children's everyday needs.

Table 4. 122

Desire to serve on the school board: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 27$	Percentage (%)
8	15	Yes	-	-
15	28	No	15	56
30	57	I don't know	12	44

As shown by the frequency counts in the preceding table, 15% of grade 5 and 6 students compared to zero percent of grade 7 and 8 students would like their parents to serve as school trustees. Student comments suggested that they did not want to speak on their parents' behalf and that it really made no difference to them at all if their parents were elected as school trustees or not.

Table 4.123

Desire to serve on the school board: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)		Scale	PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 53$	Percentage (%)		Frequency counts $\underline{N} = 36$	Percentage (%)
2	4	Yes	3	8
40	75	No	28	78
11	21	I don't know	5	14

As indicated by the frequency counts in the above table, only 4 % of grade 5 and 6 parents as opposed to 8 % of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed that they would like to be elected as school trustees. However, regardless of grade level, there were more parents opposed to become elected school trustees.

Summary. Parental comments suggested that it was not feasible to join another committee when they had little time for anything else but their work and taking care of their family. Some grade 5 and 6 students thought it would be "neat" to have a parent as a school trustee. Some student comments suggested that they did not want to speak on their parents' behalf or that they did not care if their parents were elected as school trustees or not.

**23. I would like to have a say in what my child is studying at school (P).
I would like my parent (s) to have a say in what I study at school (S).**

Table 4. 124

Involvement regarding curricular decisions: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 89	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 80	Percentage (%)
32	36	Agree a lot	21	26
40	45	Agree a little	24	30
11	12	Neither disagree/agree	22	28
4	5	Disagree a little	5	6
2	2	Disagree a lot	8	10

There were significant differences between the viewpoints of parents and students about parental input regarding what children study at school (t (167) = 3.09, p < .05). As shown in table 4. 124, 81% of parents, compared to 56% of students, agreed either a lot or a little that they would like a say in what is studied at school. At the same time, it should be noted that more students (28%) than parents (12%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and more students (10%) disagreed a lot compared to parents (2%).

Table 4. 125

Involvement regarding curricular decisions: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 27	Percentage (%)
15	28	Agree a lot	6	22
18	34	Agree a little	6	22
15	28	Neither disagree/agree	7	26
2	4	Disagree a little	3	11
3	6	Disagree a lot	5	19

When students' ratings were compared, the analysis showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups of students (t (78) = 1.99, p > .05). As highlighted in the above table, 34 % of grade 5 and 6 as opposed to 22 % of grade 7 and 8 students agreed a little that parents should be allowed to have a say in their schooling. However, more grade 7 and 8 students (19%) disagreed a lot compared to grade 5 and 6 students (6%). Upper level students' comments indicated that they thought parents should not have a say in what they studied.

Table 4. 126

Involvement regarding curricular decisions: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 53	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N}$= 36	Percentage (%)
19	36	Agree a lot	13	36
24	45	Agree a little	16	44
6	11	Neither disagree/agree	5	14
2	4	Disagree a little	2	6
2	4	Disagree a lot	-	-

Results were similiar when parents' views were compared. There were no significant differences between the two groups of parents regarding parents having a say in their children's education (t (87) = .27, p > .05). As shown by the frequency counts in table 4. 126, regardless of grade level, parents agreed either a lot or a little (36% and 36%; 45% and 44% respectively).

Comments suggested that parents wanted to have some say in their children's education but not in regard to curricular decisions. Several parent comments indicated that they did not want to interfere with everyday school activities, but would appreciate if they were informed concerning what topics their children would be studying over time.

Summary. It was revealed from the statistical analyses that there were significant differences between: parents and students; but not grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students and parents regarding their perceptions about having a say in curriculum.

Some parents commented that they did not want to intervene or tell the teaching staff what their children should be taught at school, but they wished to be kept informed with regard to what their children would be taught over a given school term. Other parents suggested that they would like

to know what their children would be studying after the holiday break in order to prepare their

children for the work or plan complementary activities. Quite a few parents indicated, that if they had

their say, they would prefer teachers to return to the basic "three R's".

24. I would like to have a say in how my child is evaluated in his (her) school work, including projects, tests and final exams (P).
I would like my parent (s) to have a say in how I am marked/graded on school work including projects, tests and final exams (S).

Table 4. 127

Involvement regarding evaluation: Parents vs students

PARENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)			STUDENTS (GRADES 5 TO 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N} = 89$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N} = 80$	Percentage (%)
29	33	Agree a lot	24	30
22	25	Agree a little	20	25
18	20	Neither disagree/agree	19	24
12	13	Disagree a little	9	11
8	9	Disagree a lot	8	10

There were no significant differences between parents' and students' perceptions on

parental input about tests, exams and projects (t (167) = .23, p > .05). As indicated in the above

table, 58% of parents compared to 55% of students (over one half) agreed either a lot or a little that

parents should be allowed to have a say in how students are assessed by their teachers.

Parental comments suggested, however, that some parents did not feel comfortable about

telling teaching staff how their children should be assessed.

Table 4. 128

Involvement regarding evaluation: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 students

STUDENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			STUDENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N} = 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N} = 27$	Percentage (%)
19	36	Agree a lot	5	19
15	28	Agree a little	5	18
11	21	Neither disagree/agree	8	30
3	6	Disagree a little	6	22
5	9	Disagree a lot	3	11

There were significant differences between the two groups of students regarding parents having a say in their children's assessment (t (78) = 2.14, p < .05). As highlighted by the above table, 64% of grade 5 and 6 compared to 37% of grade 7 and 8 students agreed either a lot or a little that parents should be allowed to have a say in their assessment.

Table 4. 129

Involvement regarding evaluation: Grade 5 and 6 vs grade 7 and 8 parents

PARENTS (GRADES 5 AND 6)			PARENTS (GRADES 7 AND 8)	
Frequency count $\underline{N} = 53$	Percentage (%)	Scale	Frequency count $\underline{N} = 36$	Percentage (%)
17	32	Agree a lot	12	33
15	28	Agree a little	7	20
12	23	Neither disagree/agree	6	17
4	8	Disagree a little	8	22
5	9	Disagree a lot	3	8

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There were no significant differences (t (87) = .66, $p > .05$) between the perceptions of the two groups of parents about parental input in their children's assessment, however. As indicated in table 4. 129, parents were largely in agreement. Sixty percent of grade 5 and 6 compared to 53% of grade 7 and 8 parents agreed either a lot or a little that parents should be allowed to have a say in their children's assessment. However, more grade 7 and 8 parents (22%) as opposed to grade 5 and 6 parents (8%) disagreed a little.

Parental comments suggested that some parents did not believe that they were trained to make such decisions. Other parents commented that they did not like the present grading system (letter grades) since these grades did not reflect how their children were achieving in the class as a whole. These parents suggested that they would prefer percentages as opposed to letter grades. At the same time, the parents suggested that teaching staff should use less technical language while discussing their children's marks because, after all, they, the parents, were not teachers. Other parents indicated that they would like to know how the marks were allocated for each term or the whole year. One parent was very upset that, although her child always did well in class assignments (which did not weigh heavily in marks), he (she) did poorly on the work that carried higher marks. The result was that the child received a final mark that did not truly reflect (from the parent's perspective) his (her) actual performance as a student. Another parent suggested that teachers should return to the days of standardized testing.

Summary. While there were no overall significant differences between parents and students or grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 parents, there were significant differences between the viewpoints of grade 5 and 6 and 7 and 8 students regarding parental input on student assessment. Parents seemed to be in favor of having such a say, but students in grades 7 and 8 were less certain. One third of students at this level disagreed with the idea either a little or a lot.

Parental comments indicated that some parents would prefer a percentage instead of a grade for each subject in order to gain a better understanding of their children's performance. At the same time, other parents preferred to know how their child was doing in comparison with his (her) classmates. The present letter grades, in their opinion, did not reflect how the children were progressing. Letter grades were only an indication of whether their child was performing above grade requirements, or meeting, or not meeting, grade level requirements.

Summary of Decision-Making

In regard to serving on a formal body such as the school's Parent Council, parents of grade 7 and 8 students were still involved. Students were also aware whether or not their parents served. A large percentage of students " did not know" whether their parents wished to function in such a role.

Compared to students, significantly more parents indicated that they wanted to be actively involved in decision-making roles at school. Some grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot. Parents stated that they wanted to be informed about what their children would be studying term by term over the whole school year. While many grade 7 and 8 students disagreed either a little or a lot, parents indicated they would like to have a say in how students were evaluated. Comments showed that parents did not want to be involved in the daily school activities of the school but needed to be kept informed on what tests, exams, quizzes and class assignments would be undertaken by their children, so that they could help them at home.

25. What suggestions do you have for improving and strengthening future parent and school involvement? (P)
What suggestions do you have for improving and strengthening future parent and school involvement? (S)

The responses to this question were paraphrased under the respective categories of: home support; communication between school and home; volunteering; learning at home; and decision-making.

Home support

Comments indicated that parents wanted to know:

What they, as parents, could do to help create a positive environment for studying and learning;
How to support their child's learning style;
The nature of their child's learning styles;
What to expect from their middle years child; and
How they could be more supportive.

Communication between Home and School

Parents suggested that the school:

Contact them immediately if a problem or assistance was required;
Provide them with a breakdown of the school year at the beginning of the school year, re. topics for study;
Feel free to contact them at any time;
Have pot luck dinners with parents and relatives for individual classes to initiate parental involvement;
Offer more informal parent/teacher meetings;
Offer home visits to those who prefer to meet the teacher in a less formal setting;
Offer more opportunities for parents and teachers to get-together;
Provide an interest survey so that parents could identify their interest in volunteering;
Send newsletters via mail rather than with the child;
Send two newsletters in a month: one at the beginning to show what was planned and a second to let parents know what had been accomplished by the class as a whole; and
Send home a class newsletter compiled by the class teacher to inform parents of upcoming study topics.

Volunteering

Parents suggested that the school:

Telephone parents as soon as possible to inform them of available volunteering opportunities;
Call parents if volunteers were needed;
Use the telephone rather than the child as a messenger;
Expect parents to offer to help one day out of the school year and to coach extra-curricular activities after school hours;
Make parent volunteering compulsory ;
Have no parents as volunteers;
Have parents volunteering as tutors for students who need help in spelling, writing and reading;
Ask more parents to volunteer for field trips, Hot Dog days and assisting with craft activities;
Ask parents to volunteer for different study topics; and
Have parents volunteer for challenge work with small groups of students;

<ins>Learning at Home</ins>

Parents suggested that the school:

Cut back on class projects;
Try having family projects (instead of dreaded science fair projects) to research family history, for example;
Inform parents well in advance about upcoming school work such as class assignments; and
Inform parents of topic specific grade requirements at the beginning of the school year so parents would know what they should be focusing on with their child;

<ins>Decision-Making</ins>

Parents suggested that the school:

Make fewer rules;
Institute firm rules of conduct for the whole school without any exceptions;
Really listen to parents' suggestions;
Staff and administrators present a united front at presentations;
Have all angles and consequences well thought-out when presenting an idea to parents;
Switch classes for an hour or two: for example, the grade 1 teacher switches classes with grade 3, 5 or 8 teacher;
Change the assessment system from allocating letter grades to percentages and standardized tests;
Institute more reporting (i.e. report cards) to provide feedback and help parents monitor their child's progress;
Invite parents to come in and help evaluate projects carried out by individual students.

An overall summary of findings is provided in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the perceptions of middle years parents and students regarding parental involvement for the purpose of: (1) providing insight into how parents and students view the issue; and (2) highlighting how school-home partnerships might be improved.

Selected categories from Epstein's (1995) classification scheme for parent involvement (home support, home-school communication, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making) were used as a framework for developing a questionnaire to survey parents and students in grades 5 to 8 in two K to 9 suburban schools. Out of a total of 190 parents and students, 89 parent and 80 student surveys, respectively, were returned.

Findings revealed that the parents, who responded to the survey, regardless of grade level, were interested in the five different types of parental involvement. Especially at the grade 7 and 8 level, however, students who responded had strong qualifying opinions regarding parental involvement. These opinions seemed to stem from their increasing need to establish independence. Parents, who responded were aware that their middle years children would not be comfortable about their presence in school. Parents wanted to be involved in their children's schooling but needed the right activity to engage them. Time was also a factor.

Summary of Findings

Home Support

There were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the issue of home support. A large majority of parents believed that it was either very important or important to support their children at home. Grade 5 and 6 students were also in favor of receiving home support from their parents.

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However, comments from grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they either wished very little or no home support because they wanted to be responsible for their own school work. These students did not want parental interference in their school lives.

Communication between School and Home

In this area, significant differences existed between the perceptions of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students. No significant differences were noted for grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 parents.

Parents. Although communication was considered extremely important by parents, a large number expressed discontent with the existing lines of communication. Parents preferred the notion of telephoning, personal letters or notes and/or arranging meetings if children were having difficulties at school over such alternatives as home visits, open houses and three-way conferences. Many parents indicated that they did not like to find out about their children's difficulties at parent-teacher interviews. They considered parent-teacher interviews to be too late in the term. Quite a few parents stated that they had never heard of the possibility of home visits. Report cards were also valued for informing parents about school progress.

Students. Students, in general, preferred the use of newsletters or personal letters for communication between school and home. Compared to grade 5 and 6 students, who sided with parents, grade 7 and 8 students strongly opposed the use of the telephone, personal letters, interviews, open house or three-way conferences as a means of communicating with their parents. While both student groups disliked the idea of home visits, comments from students in grades 5 and 6 indicated that they were more in favor of three-way conferences since this form of communication allowed them to be in the driver's seat throughout the discussion of their achievements.

The pattern of findings regarding ways of informing parents about special events at school

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was similar. Grade 7 and 8 students were opposed to: the telephone, open house and parent council meetings. No groups were opposed to letters to advertise upcoming events.

In communicating concerns, parental comments indicated that they would try to resolve conflicts at home, but, if the problem were not resolved, they would discuss the issue with the classroom teacher and then the school principal. As a last resort, they would go to the superintendent. Grade 7 and 8 students seemed to resent parental interference.

Volunteering

Significant differences were noted between the views of parents and students and grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the issue of volunteering. The researcher was unable to find any significant differences between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 parents.

Parents. Parents expressed greater interest in two areas of volunteering: (1) sharing personal expertise; and (2) supporting instruction. The statistical and qualititative data also revealed that only a few parents were principally interested in working in a clerical or supervisory capacity. A large majority of the parents were mainly interested in volunteering in their own child's classroom. At the same time, some parents indicated that they were unable to volunteer during school hours due to work commitments or for other personal reasons. Other parents indicated that they could volunteer after school hours.

Students. Comments from students in grades 5 and 6 indicated that these students were mainly interested in having their parents volunteer in either an instructional capacity or sharing their personal expertise rather than helping with clerical or supervisory work. They seemed very proud to show off their parents to classmates, especially if Mom or Dad had an interesting job or hobby to share with the class. They did not want parents volunteering in other areas of the school since they knew Mom or Dad had little time to volunteer at school.

Comments from grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they enjoyed having Mom or Dad in their classroom whereas grade 7 and 8 student comments were less enthusiastic and quite opposed to the idea of their parents volunteering at school. The latter group of students were very self-conscious and worried about what their friends would say if their parents volunteered at school. Some upper level students indicated that they felt parents volunteering at the school would cause personal embarrassment.

Learning at Home

The researcher found significant differences between the perceptions of parents compared to students and grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students regarding learning at home. Grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they appreciated and enjoyed receiving help from their parents whereas grade 7 and 8 students were quite adamant that they need not want any help. Comments from grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they were dubious about their parents' ability to help with school work.

Parents. No significant differences were noted between the two groups of parents. A large number of parents were very interested in helping their children with school work and were confident of their own abilities to do so. A few parents wanted ideas on how they could help their children with school work. While the parents of grade 7 and 8 students were prepared to support learning at home, they realized their children's need to develop independence.

Students. Significant differences were noted between the two sets of students. Grade 5 and 6 students were more willing than grade 7 and 8 students to have parents help with school work. The comments of some grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they did not appreciate or want parental help with school work especially reading activities.

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Decision-Making

Another area of the survey in which concerns were raised was in regard to the process of decision-making. Findings showed that there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students but no significant differences between grade 5 and 6 compared to grade 7 and 8 students regarding the issue of decision-making. Some grade 7 and 8 students disagreed a lot regarding parental decision-making. A large majority of the parents were interested in being involved in curriculum and evaluation decisions. Parent Council meetings were perceived as a waste of time by some parents since all the decisions had already been made by the administration. Comments indicated that parents did not feel empowered by the decision- making process but rather felt helpless as individuals, who are informed after all the major decisions had been made by the school and school division administration.

Parents. Parents indicated that they did not care for the existing grading system for assessing school performance. Some parents expressed displeasure regarding how their children were being assessed by the teaching staff and suggested that standardized test results would be more meaningful than letter grades on report cards. The same parents explained that they wanted to know how their children were doing academically in comparison with their peer group.

Students. Students were ambivalent about whether parents should become actively involved in the decision-making process. Compared to grade 5 and 6 students, grade 7 and 8 students objected strongly to parents becoming involved in the assessment of their school work. These students did not mind if their parents became actively involved in the Parent Council or served as a school trustee since this did not infringe upon their territory. However, students in grade 5 and 6 still believed and had confidence in their parents as decision-makers. Neither grade 5 and 6 or grade 7 and 8 students minded parents playing an active role in curricular decisions, but, as suggested, grade 7 and 8

students objected to their parents' having a say in the assessment of their school work.

Discussion of Findings

In contradication to some of the previous research findings by Epstein (1991, 1995) and Stevenson and Baker (1987) this study showed that middle years parents in this socio-economic group want to be actively involved in their child's school. Parents want to be involved mainly in the areas of home support and learning at home and want enhanced communication between school and home. Grade level did not play a significant role in parents' perceptions regarding parental involvement. Parents wanted a greater say in curricular and evaluation decisions.

The qualitative data supported the quantitative data, namely, that parents are very interested in supporting students at home as well as at school. However, comments showed that parents were also sensitive to the fact that their middle years children may not always want Mom or Dad in the classroom.

The quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the students in grade 5 and 6 did want and enjoyed parental support at home as well as at school. On the other hand, the grade 7 and 8 students were not in favor of parental involvement at home or school since their qualitative data suggested that they wanted personal independence.

Home Support

Parents, in general, were very supportive of their children's school work and activities. This support was indicated through awareness of children's needs for: privacy, a quiet place for doing school work and providing academic guidance. However, many parents, especially at the grade 7 and 8 level, were keenly aware that they also needed to provide their children with the necessary skills for becoming independent learners through guidance and good role modeling. Parents did not want to "spoon feed " their children but instead wanted them to learn how to think for themselves. Quite a

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few parents indicated that they did not appreciate their children working on homework all evening because the teaching staff had not coordinated their homework schedules. Parents wanted to spend some "quality time" with their children after-school hours or during the weekend. They did not believe that their children should be required by the school to be engaged in more school-type activities after school was over.

On the other hand, a large number of parental comments suggested that parents would be willing to provide a variety of experiences in order to support learning at home, especially if they knew the topics ahead of time. Parents believed that their children could learn about science, mathematics and social studies, through family outings. This finding is supported by several research studies (Stevenson, and Baker, 1987; Auerbach, 1989; Gordon, and Breivogel, 1976). According to Auerbach (1989), factors such as the frequency of children's outings with parents or other adults, number of maternal outings, amount of time spent interacting with adults and enrichment activities have a greater impact on children's academic performance than school-type activties. Auerbach stated that it was a fallacy for educators to perpetuate the myth that children will only succeed if their families do specific school-like tasks with them.

It was interesting to note the difference between grade 5 and 6, and 7 and 8 students' perceptions regarding home support. The grade 5 and 6 students were more willing to allow their parents to be supportive of their school activities than grade 7 and 8 students. One possible reason for this view could be that grade 5 and 6 students are still in need of help with school work, since they are still developing their study skills. Another possibility is that peer approval is not as important to grade 5 and 6 students. The grade 7 and 8 students were seeking independence from their parents and expressed the view that they did not expect their parents to provide academic support, keep the house quiet or provide a separate area to complete school work. The latter group of students did not

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think it was their parents' responsibility or place to provide a supportive environment for them to do school work. These findings are supported by Jackson and Cooper (1992) who noted that students may desire more independence from their parents, and, as a result, parents may be able to exercise less influence on their children's school work. Jackson and Cooper stated that the upper level students want more autonomy for themselves than younger students.

Communication between Home and School

This section of the questionnaire evoked strong parental comments indicating that parents did not feel that enough was being done to satisfy or meet their needs as parents. A majority of parents were very critical of the fact that they were not always informed about their children's problems at school until parent-teacher interviews. Davis (1989) and Ollilia and Mayfield (1992) found that parents wanted to be kept informed and felt that no detail was too small not to warrant their attention.

Parents wanted teachers to telephone home even if there was only a hint of a problem brewing. By telephoning the parents immediately, the teaching staff would likely find out if the child was having problems at home or a family arrangement had changed. However, parents also expressed the view that teachers should deal with the problem at first but keep them informed at the same time of what happened in school. In this way, parents could maintain a watchful eye at home to ensure that their children were abiding by the rules.

Another finding of the study was that some parents really appreciated their children's homeroom teacher because they were always kept informed about their children's school progress. Several parents indicated in their comments that they were happy with their children's homeroom teacher because he (she) had always contacted the parents if a problem or concern required their immediate attention. Credence to this finding is provided by Ziegler (1987) who noted that parents

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valued teachers who initiated contact with them to discuss their children's progress.

Open house as a means of communication was not looked upon too favorably by parents in this study. Moles (1993) supports this finding. He noted that parents did not care for open houses to be used for discussing children's progress. According to Moles, parents saw the purpose of Open House to become informed about grade level specific school curriculum.

There were quite a few parents who said that they had never heard of home visits. One parent's response to this question was: " In my dreams! " Why did this means of communication evoke such a response from several parents? One school in the division has a policy whereby the kindergarten teacher visits all the parents of children who will be attending the school in September. There are several other teachers in the early years who also make a point of visiting families who are unable to visit the school for various reasons. The question of why home visits are not considered viable by parents at the middle years level is left unanswered.

Research (Olmsted, 1991; Becher, 1984; Moles, 1993) has highlighted the impact of home visits on children's educational achievements. According to Becher's, home visits are far more effective than parent meetings or workshops in bringing about cognitive gains in children. Moles noted home visits provide parents with an opportunity to ask questions in a personal setting and, at the same time, allow teachers to gain a better understanding of the child's home environment, cultural heritage and interests. Olmsted supported home visits for parents who do not respond to invitations or messages from the school and as an alternative channel to reach parents who may not wish to meet the teaching staff to discuss their children's school progress.

Volunteering

This was a problem area for many of the working parents, who were unable to volunteer at their children's school because of employment obiligations. Rothwell (1993) corroborates this

finding. She noted that volunteering is a very sensitive issue for some parents. Parental comments indicated that some parents, although their children understood that both parents worked full-time or did shift work felt guilty because they were unable to volunteer. In addition to work schedules, other parents said that it was difficult for them to volunteer between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. because of their having younger children at home, being a single parent or having other personal commitments. These findings are further substantiated by Burns' (1993) who found that parents indicated that they were unable to volunteer at their children's school for the following reasons: increased demands on parents' time, changes in family structure (death, divorce or separation of parent) and/or work commitments.

Some parents indicated that they had volunteered on a regular basis at their children's school until the children were in grade 5 or 6 and then either felt the need to leave the volunteering to other parents or were asked by their children to volunteer elsewhere. A large number of parents expressed their interest in helping their own child at school or volunteering in their children's classroom. This finding is supported by Epstein (1990) who noted that parents are mainly interested in volunteering to help their own children.

The grade 5 and 6 students were more enthusiastic about having their parents volunteering in their classroom than the grade 7 and 8 students. It was not surprising to find grade 7 and 8 students strongly opposed to parents volunteering at all in their school. The latter group of students considered it as "very uncool" to have Mom or Dad present. Peer approval seems important for grade 7 and 8 students. They want to socialize with their friends at school without their parents hanging around. They perceived themselves as adults and wanted to be left alone to make their own decisions. These findings are supported by Stouffer (1992) and Jackson and Cooper (1992), who reported that peer approval is a top priority during the middle years, especially for twelve to fourteen year olds. This

finding is also supported by the work of the Middle Years Programming Committee (1994) who highlighted that gaining the admiration of their peers is very important to grade 7 and 8 learners.

Learning at Home

There were significant differences between parents and students and between grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students. Parental comments suggested many parents would like the opportunity to help at both home and school. Those parents who indicated their preference for only helping at home were eager to help in all areas of school work. However, grade 7 and 8 students indicated that they did not want parental help, especially with reading activities. A number of few parents indicated that they would like teaching staff to send home suggestions on how they could help at home. For example, some parents mentioned that they were not familiar with some of the terminology, such as cooperative learning and learning styles used by teaching staff. Parents would welcome any reading materials or suggestions that would assist them in gaining a better understanding of the terminology used during discussions.

These findings are corroborated by the research studies of Clark (1993), Epstein (1990), Dauber and Epstein (1993), and Gordon and Breivogel (1976) who stated that parents were specifically interested in learning how to help their children at home. In this study, the researcher noted that parents were willing to learn new strategies in order to help their children. According to Clark (1993), parents who were willing to learn had a greater impact on their children's levels of school achievement than those parents who were not willing to explore alternatives. Epstein (1990) noted that the parents in her study expressed strong support for receiving more information on how to help their children at home and how they could stay involved with their children's education.

The findings of Epstein (1995), Gordon & Breivogel (1976), & Clark, (1993) lend credence to the findings in this study which indicated that a large majority of parents were very interested in

learning how they could improve their children's school performance by helping at home. Epstein (cited in Brandt, 1989) indicated that the most significant type of parent involvement was parental help at home.

There were some parents who were very confident regarding their abilities to help their children. Although parents were ready and willing to help their children with school work, they did not want to do the work for them. The parents wanted to help their children develop the necessary skills to complete the work. This type of parent-child interaction enables the child to work beyond his (her) cognitive level (Vygotsky, 1978). The parent is scaffolding the learning process through his (her) mediation. Parents indicated that they would help their children through: (1) talking about the question; (2) finding out what the child already knew; and what he (she) needed to know and do to solve the problem; (3) providing an example and giving a few questions for the child to do on his (her) own; (4) giving mini-tests; and (5) showing step-by-step, how to solve the problem.

Students, especially the upper grade levels, indicated that they would prefer if parents helped at home only rather than at school. More grade 5 and 6 students were receptive to the idea of parental help at home than grade 7 and 8 students who indicated that they should be responsible for the completion of their school assignments. The latter group did not want parents to become involved unless asked. Grade 5 and 6 students mentioned that they liked the one-on-one attention that they received at home when parental assistance was needed to complete school work or to get ready for tests. These students were not as confident in their abilities as were the grade 7 and 8 students and wanted their parents to help with completing school work or preparing for tests.

Decision-Making

Although Rothwell (1993) found that there were low levels of parent participation and much apathy regarding decision-making roles, parents in this study indicated that they would like to have a

say in curricular and evaluation decisions. Most (56%) parents chose not to serve on the Parent

Council, although 31% were undecided. Some parents explained why they were not prepared to join

the Parent Council. Reasons included: (1) lack of confidence in the school administration and

teaching staff to act upon suggestions presented at the meetings; (2) too much talking and little action;

and (3) time constraints.

Parents' main concern was that they be kept informed of the work to be completed over the

whole school year. This finding was confirmed by Dauber and Epstein (1993) who found that

parents want schools to strengthen such practices as giving parents specific information regarding

their children's academic programs and what their children are expected to learn each school year.

Grading. Another area which caused a strong reaction was in the area of grading students'

school work. There were a large number of parents who commented that they did not like the

existing grading system for report cards. Parental comments suggested that parents would prefer a

percentage as opposed to a letter grade. The rationale given by the parents was that they wanted to

know how their children were doing in comparison with their classmates. They did not know or

understand how a letter grade compared to a percentage mark. Some parents suggested that their

children should be assessed by using standardized tests so that their children's performance could be

compared to the general student population (understood). Some parents were discontented with how

their children's school work was evaluated. For example, one parent explained that his (her) child

always did well in class assignments but not on tests. This parent wanted the teacher to either change

the allocation of marks or help the child improve his (her) test performances.

Report cards. Another area of concern expressed by parents was the report card. Several

parents indicated that they had difficulty reading them because they were unable to understand some

of the terminology. The above findings are corroborated by previous research (Woodward, 1993;

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Bastness, 1995; & Moles, 1993). Moles found that parents were confused by the educational jargon and lengthy prose used to communicate children's progress. Bastness (1995) provides further support for the findings of this study. He noted that parents simply want to ask questions and to receive answers in a language that they, as non-educators, can understand.

Conclusion

This study provided many perspectives regarding parental involvement in the areas of: home support; communication between home and school; volunteering; learning at home; and decision-making. There are several conclusions that can be made from this study. First, there were significant differences between the perceptions of parents and students in the areas of home support, communication between school and home, volunteering, learning at home and decision making. These findings are supported by Stouffer (1992) who noted that students were more resistant to parental involvement than the parents themselves. Students did not believe it was necessary for parents to be volunteers in school. Secondly, there were significant differences between the perceptions of grade 5 and 6 and grade 7 and 8 students regarding parental involvement. The differences between the two sets of students may be indicative of the adolescent need to become independent. This finding is corroborated by the research of Jackson and Cooper (1992) and Stouffer (1992) who noted that children in the older grades resist parental involvement due to peer pressure, peer approval and need for independence. Lastly, a surprising result was that there were no significant differences between the perceptions of grades 5 and 6 parents and grades 7 and 8 parents. The researcher was expecting to find grade 7 and 8 parents expressing or seeking less parental involvement than grades 5 and 6 parents due to existing research studies (Epstein, 1984; Brandt, 1989; Stouffer, 1992; and Henderson, 1986). However, the researcher found that parents, regardless of grade level, were very interested in helping their children achieve their maximum potential.

The findings of this study highlight that parents, regardless of grade level, are seeking active, meaningful parental involvement in their children's schooling. This finding is supported by Hudley and Barnes (1993) who stated that authentic communication is vital for developing home-school partnerships. Parents did not want a uni-directional communication approach in which information flows only from school to home. Parents wanted to be welcomed as full partners in their children's education and to strengthen home-school partnerships. Parents are able to provide invaluable insight into the child's heritage, expectations , after-school interests, strengths and weaknesses. Burns (1993) supports this research finding through her work on parental involvement. According to Burns, only when parents are involved in their children's education do teachers gain a better understanding of the families' culture, needs, goals and capabilities.

This study also highlighted that parents were willing to provide assistance, guidance and support for their children at home as well as at school. However, parents expressed an interest in requesting more information on how they could help their children at home. This finding is substantiated by Dauber and Epstein (1993) who indicated that parents spent more time assisting their children with school work when they were given extra support by teaching staff on how to help their children at home. Dauber and Epstein (1993) also noted that the primary request by parents in workshop topics was " How to help my child develop his (her) special talents?"

Another major finding of this study highlighted that parents wanted their children to assume responsibility for completing their own school work. Parents and students alike, believed that children should be responsible for their own school work but parents should be available to provide assistance if necessary. Credence to this finding is provided by Hardwick, McCreath and Ziegler (1992) who observed that parents of successful students are those who show an interest, ask relevant questions, are willing to help or ask for help and give the child ownership of his/her learning. The

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parents in this study through their comments (qualitative data) reflected the view of Hardwick, McCreath and Ziegler. Parents were prepared to ask the appropriate questions, provide guidance and support to their children whenever asked.

Some parents indicated that parents should also take the initiative in requesting conferences with school staff if they had concerns or suggestions for improving parental involvement. This view is supported by Hardwick, McCreath and Ziegler (1992) who noted that, sometimes, parents must take the first step in communicating with the home and school. Further credence is offered by Stouffer (1992) who also indicated that parents need to take the initiative to become actively involved in their children's school.

The study also found that some parents suggested social activities to engage the parents. Stouffer (1992) supports this perspective on parental involvement. Stouffer recommended that the initial contact with parents should be social to encourage parents to become more involved with their children's school. After the social contact, school staff should work gradually towards increased educational involvement by parents.

The research findings in this study have highlighted that parents, in general, have a positive image of parental involvement. However, grade 7 and 8 students do not perceive parental involvement in a positive light, hence, the paradox: parents wish to help their children but know that they must also respect their children's need to seek independence and peer approval. The school needs to reinforce the value of parental involvement by beginning in the early years and building upon this foundation in the middle years.

Parental involvement can help schools provide a variety of enrichment activities and programs without additional costs. Botrie and Wenger (1986) indicate that parents need to understand the rationale for educational changes before they can fully support them. In other words,

educators need to step back and look at educational change from a parent's perspective. Atkin et al

(1988) emphasize that, when parents:

> understand what the school is trying to do,
> identify with its main goals and support its efforts,
> understand something of their role as educators,
> take an active interest in, and provide support for their children's school work
> then the effects can be both dramatic and long-lasting (p.7)

Implications for Educational Practice

Home Suppport

The school needs to work in collaboration with parents to determine how a positive

environment can be created in the home to promote learning. Schools need to develop strategies,

such as booklets and/or workshops to provide parents with the following information: how to read

with their children, how to increase reading comprehension and study skills, and how to increase

learning (use of music or mental imagery for example).

Communication between School and Home

Educators need to look at improving the lines of communication between parents and

themselves through regular contact via letter or telephone. A large majority of the parents indicated

they would appreciate a telephone call on a regular basis to maintain an open line of communication.

The telephone call should focus on the child's progress in general rather than on negative aspects, i.e.

school staff should call parents for good things too.

Educators need to keep the lines of communication open so that all parents feel comfortable

enough to discuss or contact the school with their concerns or praises. It is also important for the

well-being and morale of all concerned to know what the school is doing right. Too many times,

there has been a focus on what the school does not do instead of what the school does do. In addition,

it is important for schools to use Open House to inform parents about school activities to be offered

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throughout the school year. This time can be used by teaching staff to ask parents in person to volunteer, or to let parents know that they are always welcome to visit the classroom or school and share their ideas. The school should also mail newsletters three times a year, for example, in September, January and April, to ask if parents would like to volunteer or for suggestions on how to improve and strengthen home-school partnerships.

Home visits should be encouraged at the middle years level to promote and strengthen school-home relations. The home visits should not be offered as an alternative but as an addition to the already existing communication avenues i.e. newsletters, parent-teacher interviews and report cards. In collaboration with their parents, schools should examine the feasibility of developing an outreach program, offered in the home, for promoting parent involvement with the middle years students.

Volunteering

The school needs to address the issue of volunteering since so many parents indicated that it was difficult to volunteer during school hours. Schools need to change how they perceive parental involvement. Presently, schools offer opportunities to volunteer at school principally between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. Schools need to offer alternatives to parents who want to volunteer after school hours. For example, schools could ask parents to volunteer to be classroom representatives who would contact other parents after school hours to get feedback on various school policies or ideas. The schools need to provide realistic alternatives to volunteering that would be acceptable to all parties.

Learning at Home

A large number of parents, especially those of grade 7 and 8 students, indicated that they would be interested in helping at home. Schools need to take this viewpoint into consideration when

encouraging parental involvement. This is a very important type of parental involvement, and, yet, it is most overlooked by educators. Educators need to look at providing content areas workshops for middle years parents, either in the evenings or on Saturdays, which would help them to provide assistance to their children at home. Other alternatives, such as the use of videos or audio cassettes, can be provided for those parents who are unable to attend workshop sessions.

Decision-Making

Parents do not feel empowered by the current decision-making practices offered by the two schools. Educators need to seek alternative avenues for increasing the levels of parental participation in decision-making. Also, the schools need to remember that many of the parents are working full-time and do not wish to spend their evenings at a meeting but would prefer to be with their children. An alternative to gain the opinions of parents on school issues would be to have classroom representatives telephone parents. A short survey, one-page, for instance, could be developed by schools to ascertain out parents' views on certain school issues and policies. Meetings may not be the ideal way to encourage parents to become involved in the role of decision-maker.

<div align="center">Implications for Further Research</div>

This study focused on the perceptions of parents and students on parental involvement during middle years schooling. It is apparent from the statistical data, as well as the qualitative data, that grade 7 and 8 students for different reasons are more opposed than grade 5 and 6 students to parental involvement. However, parents, regardless of grade level, were strong proponents of the five types of parental involvement explored via the survey.

As a result of the findings, the following recommendations are made for further research. Replicate the study but:

1. Use a larger sample size for studying the perceptions of middle years parents and students;

2. Randomly select a group of middle years students and parents and conduct personal interviews;

3. Conduct studies to:

(a) determine whether parents feel empowered when the six types of parental involvement

(Epstein's, 1995) are addressed by the school;

(b) uncover positive examples of parent involvement as perceived by parents, teachers and

students;

(c) consider the perceptions of administrators, teaching staff, parents and students regarding parental

involvement during the middle years of schooling;

(d) establish how middle years students can play a more active role in promoting parental

involvement during the middle years;

(e) identify whether gender plays a role in both parental and student responses; and

(f) establish whether there are discrepancies between theory and practice. For example, the findings

in this study showed that grade 7 and 8 students were resistant to parental involvement. They may

very well desire parental involvement if the manner in which parents are included is appropriate.

4. Conduct a study of middle years teachers to obtain their responses to the findings of this study and

to determine what they consider feasible in strengthening school-home relationships.

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<u>Appendix A</u>

Confidential when completed

Survey date: 1996	School: R L Grade: 5 6 7 8	Parent Survey

INTRODUCTION

To all Parents:

Parents of students in grades 5 - 8 in two schools of the

are taking part in this important survey. The information from the survey will lead to understanding your perspectives about parent involvement in the middle years, and will also provide information to help develop better school programs to serve the community.

There are **NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** This is not a test. Your participation is voluntary. **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.** The information you give is to be completely confidential. A space is provided after each question should you wish to further elaborate on your response.

Please complete the survey and have your child return it to his/her homeroom teacher.

Thank you for your help!

_____

Hardev (Daisy) K. Priest

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PARENT SURVEY

In responding to this survey, you can suggest ways that the home and school may work more collaboratively. The survey is divided into the following categories: home support, communication between home and school, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making.

Home support: Questions in this section deal with how parents can make the home a better place for learning

1. As a parent, it is my job to support my child's school activities at home. Do you...

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither agree or disagree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

2. I think it is important to provide a separate place for my child to do school work. Do you...

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither disagree or agree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

3. I think it is important to talk with my child about his / her school day on a regular basis. Do you...

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither agree or disagree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

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4. I think it is important to help my child (children) with homework. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

5. I think it is important to keep the house quiet while my child is doing school work. Do you..

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

6. I think it is important to provide a variety of experiences at home (eg.family trips, library visits, discussion about current issues) to support learning at school. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL: Questions in this section deal with how parents and the school can work together as a team to let each other know about how the child is doing.

7. How important are each of the following means regarding how you can learn about your child's progress. Indicate by circling the number most appropriate on the following scale with 1 being very important; 2, important; 3, undecided; 4, unimportant; 5, very unimportant

Letter/newsletter	1 2 3 4 5
Telephone call	1 2 3 4 5
Parent/teacher interview	1 2 3 4 5
Report card	1 2 3 4 5
Three-way conference (teacher-child-parent)	1 2 3 4 5
Open house night	1 2 3 4 5
Home visits (teacher visits you)	1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

8. How important are each of the following means regarding how you like to find out about special speakers, events, workshops and presentations at your child's school. Indicate by circling the number most appropriate on the following scale with: 1 being very important; 2, important; 3, undecided; 4, unimportant; 5, very unimportant.

Letter/newsletter	1 2 3 4 5
Telephone call	1 2 3 4 5
Open house night	1 2 3 4 5
Parent council meetings	1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

9. If your child is having difficulties, what do you do when you have concerns in the following areas. Please comment.

A) Class assignments:

B) School activities (eg. science fair project):

C) His/her peer group/ classmates :

D) Other school-related concerns:

VOLUNTEEERING: Questions in this section deal with how parents, other family members (eg. grandparents) and friends can help out in school.

10. I think it is important to volunteer now that my child is in the middle years. Do you...

O Agree a lot?
O Agree a little?
O Neither agree or disagree? ⇨ if so, go to question 13
O Disagree a little? ⇨ if so, go to question 13
O Disagree a lot? ⇨ if so, go to question 13

Comment:

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11. How important are each of the following means regarding how you would like to be involved in your child's school. Indicate by circling the number most appropriate on the following scale with: 1 being very important; 2, important; 3, neutral; 4, unimportant; 5, very unimportant.

A) Clerical role: desktop publishing; photocopying making telephone calls;   1 2 3 4 5

B) Supervisory role: helping in lunch room; library; recess duty;   1 2 3 4 5

C) Sharing personal expertise role: guest speaker on special topics; hobbies; jobs;   1 2 3 4 5

D) Instructional support role: reading with student; tutoring; mentor (guiding and supporting a student with educational work);   1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

12. Besides myself, I would like other extended family members or friends to volunteer in my child's school. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

13. I would like to volunteer only in my child's classroom. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

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14. I would like to volunteer in another classroom (other than my own child's classroom).
Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

LEARNING AT HOME: Questions in this section deal with how to help and support your child's learning at home.

15. I prefer to help only at home and not at school?

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?   ⇨ if so, go to question 18
○ Disagree a little?   ⇨ if so, go to question 18
○ Disagree a lot?   ⇨ if so, go to question 18

Comment:

16. How important are each of the following means regarding how you <u>like</u> to help your child at home. Indicate by circling the number most appropriate on the following scale with 1 being <u>very important;</u> 2, <u>important;</u> 3, <u>undecided;</u> 4, <u>unimportant;</u> 5, <u>very unimportant.</u>

Class assignments	1 2 3 4 5
Studying for tests/examinations	1 2 3 4 5
Class projects (eg. science fair project)	1 2 3 4 5
School-related tasks (eg. fundraiser, christmas plays)	1 2 3 4 5
Certain subjects only (eg. math)	1 2 3 4 5
Reading activities	1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

17. How important are each of the following means regarding how you <u>think</u> you can help your child at home. Indicate by circling the number most appropriate on the following scale with: 1 being <u>very certain;</u> 2, <u>certain;</u> 3, <u>undecided;</u> 4, <u>somewhat uncertain;</u> 5, <u>very uncertain.</u>.

Class assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Studying for tests/examinations	1	2	3	4	5
Class projects (eg. science fair project)	1	2	3	4	5
Certain subjects only (eg. math).	1	2	3	4	5
School-related tasks (eg. fundraiser, christmas plays)	1	2	3	4	5
Reading activities	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

DECISION-MAKING: Questions in this section deal with how parents can work with the school on developing school policies and programs.

18. Is there a parent council at your school?

○ yes   ⇨ if so, go to question 20
○ no   ⇨ if so, go to question 19
○ I don't know ⇨ if so, go to question 19

Comment:

19. If you answered no or I don't know to question 18, please answer the following question.

Would you like a parent council at your school?

○ yes
○ no
○ I don't know

Comment:

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20. If you answered yes to question 18, please answer the following question. Are you on the parent council at your child's school?

○ yes ⇨ if yes, go to question 22
○ no ⇨ if no, go to question 21

Comment:

21. If you answered no to question 20, please answer the following question. Would you like to serve on the parent council?

○ yes
○ no
○ I don' know

Comment:

22. Would you like to be on the school board as an elected school trustee?

○ yes
○ no
○ I don't know

Comment:

23. I would like to have a say in what my child is studying at school. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

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24. I would like to have a say in how my child is evaluated on his (her) school work, including projects, tests and final exams. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

25. What suggestions do you have for improving and strengthening future parent/ school involvement?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your views are very important for future educational endeavors.

Appendix B

Survey date:	1996	School: R L Grade: 5 6 7 8	Student Survey

INTRODUCTION

To all Students:

Students, from grades 5 - 8 in two schools of the .
are taking part in this important survey. The information from the survey will lead to understanding your perspectives about parent involvement in the middle years, and will also provide information to help develop better school programs to serve the community.

There are **NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.** This is not a test. Your participation is voluntary. **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.** The information you give is to be completely confidential. No one will connect the information you provide with you personally. A space is provided after each question should you wish to further elaborate on your response.

Thank you for your help!

_____

Hardev (Daisy) K. Priest

STUDENT SURVEY

In responding to this special survey, you can suggest ways that the home and school may work together as a team. The survey is divided into the following categories:home support, communication between home and school, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making.

HOME SUPPORT: Questions in this section deal with how parents can make the home a better place for learning.

1. I think it is important for my parents to support my school activities at home. Do you...

   ○ Agree a lot?
   ○ Agree a little?
   ○ Neither agree or disagree?
   ○ Disagree a little?
   ○ Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

2. I think it is important for my parents to provide a separate place at home for me to do my school work. Do you...

   ○ Agree a lot?
   ○ Agree a little?
   ○ Neither disagree or agree?
   ○ Disagree a little?
   ○ Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

3. I think it is important for my parents to talk with me regularly about how things are going at school. Do you...

   ○ Agree a lot?
   ○ Agree a little?
   ○ Neither agree or disagree?
   ○ Disagree a little?
   ○ Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

4. I think it is important for my parents to help me with homework. Do you...

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither agree or disagree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

5. I think it is important that my parents keep the house quiet while I am doing homework. Do you..

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither agree or disagree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

6. I think it is important to have lots of different experiences at home (eg. family trips, library visits, discussion about current issues) to support my learning at school. Do you...

   O Agree a lot?
   O Agree a little?
   O Neither agree or disagree?
   O Disagree a little?
   O Disagree a lot?

   Comment:

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL: Questions in this section deal with how parents and school can work together as a team to let each other know how you are doing.

7. How important are each of the following examples regarding how your parents can learn about how you are doing at school. Show by circling the number on the following scale with 1 being very important; 2, important; 3, undecided; 4, unimportant; 5, very unimportant.

Letter/newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
Telephone call	1	2	3	4	5
Parent/teacher interview	1	2	3	4	5
Report card	1	2	3	4	5
Three-way conference (teacher-child-parent)	1	2	3	4	5
Open house night	1	2	3	4	5
Home visits (teacher visiting your home)	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

8. How important are each of the following examples regarding how your parents can find out about special speakers, events, workshops and presentations at your school. Show by circling the number on the following scale with: 1 being very important; 2, important; 3, undecided; 4, unimportant; 5, very unimportant.

Letter/newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
Telephone call	1	2	3	4	5
Open house night	1	2	3	4	5
Parent council meetings	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

9. If you are having difficulties, how do your parents deal with concerns in the following areas. Please comment.

A) Class assignments:

B) School activities (eg. science fair project):

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C) Your peer group/ classmates:

D) Other school-related concerns:

VOLUNTEEERING: Questions in this section deal with how parents, other family members and friends can help out in school.

10. I think it is important for my parents to volunteer now that I am in the middle years (grades 5 to 8). Do you...

   ○ Agree a lot?
   ○ Agree a little?
   ○ Neither agree or disagree?   ⇨ if so, go to question 13
   ○ Disagree a little? ⇨ if so, go to question 13
   ○ Disagree a lot? ⇨ if so, go to question 13

   Comment:

11. How important are each of the following examples regarding how you would like to see your parent(s) involved in your school. Show by circling the number on the following scale with: 1 being <u>very important;</u> 2, <u>important;</u> 3, <u>undecided</u>; 4, <u>unimportant;</u> 5, <u>very unimportant.</u>

   A) Clerical role: desktop publishing; photocopying   1 2 3 4 5
      making telephone calls;
   B) Supervisory role: helping in lunch room; library;   1 2 3 4 5
      recess duty;
   C) Sharing personal expertise role: guest speaker   1 2 3 4 5
      on special topics; hobbies; jobs;
   D) Instructional support role: reading with student;   1 2 3 4 5
      tutoring; mentoring (an adult guiding and supporting
      you with educational work)

   Comment:

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12. Besides my parents, I would like other extended family members (eg. grandparents) or friends to volunteer in my school. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

13. I would like my parents to volunteer in my classroom. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

14. I would like my parents to volunteer in a classroom other than my own. Do you...

○ Agree a lot?
○ Agree a little?
○ Neither agree or disagree?
○ Disagree a little?
○ Disagree a lot?

Comment:

LEARNING AT HOME: Questions in this section deal with how parents help and support you with your school work at home.

15. I prefer my parents to help only at home and not at school?

    ○ Agree a lot?
    ○ Agree a little?
    ○ Neither agree or disagree? ⇨ if so, go to question 18
    ○ Disagree a little?   ⇨ if so, go to question 18
    ○ Disagree a lot? ⇨ if so, go to question 18

    Comment:

16. How important are each of the following examples regarding how you <u>like</u> your parents to help you at home. Show by circling the number on the following scale with: 1 being <u>very important</u>; 2, <u>important</u>; 3, <u>undecided</u>; 4, <u>unimportant</u>; 5, <u>very unimportant.</u>

Class assignments	1 2 3 4 5
Studying for tests/examinations	1 2 3 4 5
Class projects (eg. science fair project)	1 2 3 4 5
School-related tasks (eg. fundraiser, christmas plays)	1 2 3 4 5
Certain subjects only (eg. math)	1 2 3 4 5
Reading activities	1 2 3 4 5

    Comment:

17. How important are each of the following regarding how you <u>think</u> your parents can help you at home. Show by circling the number on the following scale with: 1 being <u>verycertain</u>; 2, <u>certain</u>; 3, <u>undecided</u>; 4, <u>somewhat uncertain</u>; 5, <u>very uncertain.</u>

Class assignments	1 2 3 4 5
Studying for tests/examinations	1 2 3 4 5
Class projects (eg. science fair project)	1 2 3 4 5
School-related tasks (eg. fundraiser, christmas plays)	1 2 3 4 5
Certain subjects only (eg. math)	1 2 3 4 5
Reading activities	1 2 3 4 5

    Comment:

DECISION-MAKING: Questions in this section deal with how parents can work together with the school in developing school programs and policies.

18. Is there a parent council at your school?

    ○ yes ⇨ if so, go to question 20
    ○ no   ⇨ if so, go to question 19
    ○ I don't know ⇨ if so, go to question 19

    Comment:

19. If you answered no or I don't know to question 18, please answer the following question.

    Would you like a parent council at your school?

    ○ yes
    ○ no
    ○ I don't know

    Comment:

20. If you answered yes to question 18, please answer the following question.
    Is / Are your parent(s) on the parent council at your school?

    ○ yes ⇨ if yes, go to question 22
    ○ no ⇨ if no, go to question 21

    Comment:

21. If you answered no to question 20, please answer the following question.
    Would you like your parent(s) to serve on the parent council?

    ○ yes
    ○ no
    ○ I don't know

    Comment:

22. Would you like your parent(s) on the school board as an elected school trustee?

    ○ yes
    ○ no
    ○ I don't know

    Comment:

23. I would like my parent(s) to have a say in what I am studying at school. Do you...

    ○ Agree a lot?
    ○ Agree a little?
    ○ Neither agree or disagree?
    ○ Disagree a little?
    ○ Disagree a lot?

    Comment:

24. I would like my parent(s) to have a say in how I am marked / graded on school work including projects, tests and final exams. Do you....

    ○ Agree a lot?
    ○ Agree a little?
    ○ Neither agree?
    ○ Disagree a little?
    ○ Disagree a lot?

    Comment:

25. What suggestions do you have for improving and strengthening future parent/ school involvement?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your views are very important for future education programs.

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Appendix C

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Dear _____:

As part of the thesis requirements for my M.Ed. degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I wish to conduct a questionnaire survey involving both parents and students to determine their perceptions regarding parental involvement in the education of Middle Years (grades 5 to 8) students.

For your information, I am appending the letters of consent, and both student and parent surveys that will be administered. Please select one class from each grade (grades 5 to 8) for a total of four classes from your school for the study. The four selected classes of students and their parents (grades 5 to 8) will be asked to participate in the survey. With your permission, I would like to distribute the letter of consent (student) and the parent survey to each participating class from grades 5 to 8 using a maximum of 10 minutes of class time. The students will be asked to return the letter of consent as well as the completed parent survey to the homeroom teacher within the following week. Upon receiving the letter of consent, I would like to arrange a suitable time with the homeroom teacher to administer the student survey. The student questionnaire will require 30 minutes of class time.

All participants will remain anonymous, and all responses will be reported anonymously by the researcher. Please note that all participation is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time without any penalty. I anticipate that the results of the study will be available in June, 1996, and I will provide a copy for your reference.

You may contact me at _ __   .If you require further information regarding the study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Beverley Zakaluk in the Department of Curriculum and Humanities, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba: _ . _____

Yours sincerely,

_____
Hardev. K. Priest

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Dear Parents/ Guardians: Parents' letter of consent

As part of the thesis requirements for my M.Ed. degree in the Faculty of Education at The University of Manitoba, I am conducting a questionnaire survey involving both parents and students to determine their perceptions regarding parental involvement in the education of Middle Years (grades 5 to 8) students.

I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing the accompanying survey within the next week. The survey should take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. Your participation in the study will remain anonymous, and all responses will be reported anonymously by the researcher.

When you have completed the "parent questionnaire," please return it to the school with your child. I anticipate that the results of the study will be made available in June, 1996, and a summary of the study's findings will be sent to the school principal. An informal meeting will be arranged at the school for all interested parents to discuss the study's findings. Also, a one-page summary will be provided at the meeting.

You may contact me at ... If you require further information regarding the study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Beverley Zakaluk in the Department of Curriculum and Humanities, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba:_____

Yours sincerely,

_____

Hardev.K. Priest

Dear _____:

As part of the thesis requirements for my M.Ed. degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I wish to conduct a questionnnaire survey involving both parents and students to determine their perceptions regarding parental involvement in the education of Middle Years (grades 5 to 8) students.

I would like to request your permission to conduct my study at the following two schools: _____ (K - 9) and _____ (K - 9) . Principals at both schools will be informed about the survey after your approval. After receiving the letters of consent from the principals, I will arrange a meeting at their convenience to discuss establishing suitable times to:

1) distribute letter of consent (student) and parent survey;

2) administer the student questionnaire to middle years students
(grades 5-8) during 30 minutes of classtime;

3) hold a post-study meeting for all interested parents to discuss the study's
findings.

Please not that I will personally administer and collect the student survey in each participating school. All participation will be voluntary. Participants' anonymity is guaranteed. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

For your information, I am appending the letter of consents and both the parent and student surveys. I anticipate that the results of the study will be available in June 1996, and I will provide a copy of my report to the division office.

You may contact me at _____ If you require further information regarding the study, you may contact my advisor, Dr.Beverley Zakaluk in the Department of Curriculum and Humanities, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba:_____.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Hardev.K.Priest

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Dear_____: Homeroom teacher's letter of consent

      As part of the thesis requirements for my M.Ed. degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I wish to conduct a questionnaire survey involving both parents and students to determine their perceptions regarding parental involvement in the education of Middle Years (grades 5 to 8) students.

      I would like to request your permission to distribute the letter of consent (student) and the parent survey to each student in your class. This process will take approximately 10 minutes of class time. The students will be asked to return the signed letters of consent and the completed parent surveys within the next week. I will leave an envelope, into which all the signed letters of consent and completed parent surveys should be placed. To avoid disrupting your class, I will collect the envelope at the end of a school day during the following week.

      I would like to arrange a suitable time to meet with you to determine when I could administer the student survey to those students who have permission to participate. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes of class time to complete.

      I anticipate that the results of the study will be available in June,1996, and I will be sending a summary of the study's findings to each teacher. You may contact me at _____. If you require further information regarding the study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Beverley Zakaluk in the Department of Curriculum & Humanities, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba: _____.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Hardev.K.Priest

Dear Parent/Guardian:

      As part of the thesis requirement for my M.Ed. degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I am conducting a questionnaire survey involving both students and parents to determine their perceptions regarding parental involvement in the education of Middle Years students.

      I am requesting your permission for your child to participate in this survey. Your child would be asked to complete a survey, which will take approximately 30 minutes of class time.

      All participants in the study will remain anonymous, and all responses will be reported anonymously by the researcher. Please note that your child does not have to participate and can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.

      I anticipate that the results of the study will be made available in June, 1996, and a summary of the study's findings will be sent to the school principal. An informal meeting will be arranged at the school for all interested parents to discuss the study's findings. Also a one-page summary will be provided at the meeting or via mail if you indicate by filling in the form at the bottom of the page.

      You may contact me at :   . If you require further information regarding the study, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Beverley Zakaluk in the Department of Curriculum and Humanities, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba: .

Yours sincerely,

_____

Hardev. K. Priest

✂..✂

I give my permission for my child to participate in the Parent Involvement study conducted by Hardev. K. Priest. I understand that my child may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Parent's signature: _____

Name of Child: _____

PLEASE HAVE YOUR CHILD RETURN THIS FORM TO HIS/HER HOMEROOM TEACHER WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK.

✂..✂

I would like a one-page summary of the study's findings.

O   Yes ⇨ if yes, please give your name and your child's grade

O   No

Name of parent (please print):_____   Child's grade: _____

PLEASE HAVE YOUR CHILD RETURN THIS FORM TO HIS/HER HOMEROOM TEACHER WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK.

Dear Parents:

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the parents and their children who were able to take part in this survey on parent-school involvement. The results of the study are as follows:

Home support: A large majority of parents believed that it was very important to support at home. However, students (especially grades 7 and 8) did not want want parents to become too involved.

Communication between school and home: This area was considered extremely important by parents and yet, a large number expressed discontent with the existing lines of communication. Many parents wanted the school to look for alternatives besides the standard letter or newsletter. There was overwhelming support for the notion of telephoning and/or arranging meetings if children were having difficulties at school. Many parents indicated that they did not like to find out about their children's difficulties at parent-teacher interviews. They considered them to be too late in the term. Quite a few parents stated that they had never heard of the possibility of home visits. Students in general preferred the use of newsletters or a personal letter for communication between home and school. Also, parents wanted the school to keep them informed about the topics their children would be studying term by term at the very beginning of the school year. They preferred this to a brief curriculum overview on Open House.

Volunteering: While many of the parents were interested in volunteering in their own child's classroom. At the same time, some were unable to volunteer during school hours due to work commitments or for other personal reasons such as having a young child at home. Several parents indicated that they could volunteer after school hours. The grade 5 and 6 students indicated that they enjoyed having Mom or Dad in their classroom. However, as predicted by the parents themselves, grades 7 and 8 students did not want their parents volunteering in their classroom at all.

Learning at home: A large number of parents were very interested in helping their children with school work and were confident of their own abilites to help. A few parents wanted ideas on how they could help their children with school work. Grade 5 and 6 students appreciated and enjoyed receiving help from their parents whereas grade 7 and 8 students were adamant that they did not want any help.

Decision-making: Another area of the survey in which concerns were raised was in regard to the process of decision making. Quite a few parents expressed concern about being informed after the fact regarding behavior and completion of school work . Other parents indicated that they did not care for the existing grading system for assessing school performance. Quite a few parents expressed displeasure regarding how their children were being assessed by the teaching staff. Several parents suggested that standardized test results would be more meaningful than letter grades on report cards. The same parents explained that they wanted to know how their children were doing academically in comparison with their peer group.

Parents have made some excellent suggestions that have been passed onto the administration at each school for follow- up. I will share just a few ideas with you:

Organize social functions such as pot-luck dinners or barbecues at the beginning of the school year;

Provide alternatives means of communication such as telephone calls in addition to the monthly newsletter;

Provide parents with an outline of the topics to be covered during each term at the beginning of the school year;

Keep parents informed and ask for their help if extra support is needed either at home or at school;

Change the existing grading system to percentages and administer standardized tests for all students so parents can be informed of their child's progress in relation to that of other students.

If you need further information on the study, you may contact me at _____ .

Yours sincerely,

_____
Hardev.K.Priest

Appendix D

<center>**T-test to Compare Two Samples**</center>

Assumptions: (1) because of large sample sizes, it need not be assumed that data arises from normal

distribution or that the variances are equal; and

(2) assigning a numerical value to each of the 5 categories allows for t-test

calculations to be any of the five values; in this case an equal interval taken from

top to bottom, or from "agree a lot" to "disagree a lot".

Sample data to compare parents' response versus students' response:

Parents	Scale	Students
21	Agree a lot	20
55	Agree a little	66
3	Neither disagree or agree	5
6	Disagree a little	8
0	Disagree a lot	1
$m_x = 85$	Total	$m_y = 100$

Assign a value to each category of possible response:

Agree a lot	5
Agree a little	4
Neither agree or disagree	3
Disagree a little	2
Disagree a lot	1

To test that the mean response for parents equals the mean response for students:

H: $\mu_x = \mu_y$

H: $\mu_x \neq \mu_y$

T-statistic = $\dfrac{x - y}{S_p \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{n}}}$

Let X = parents and Y = students

X	Y
21 x 5 = 105	20 x 5 = 100
55 x 4 = 220	66 x 4 = 264
3 x 3 = 9	5 x 3 = 15
6 x 2 =12	8 x 2 = 16
0 x 1 = 0	1 x 1 = 1
346	396

$$\bar{X} = \frac{X}{M_x} = \frac{346}{85} = 4.07 \qquad\qquad \bar{Y} = \frac{Y}{M_y} = \frac{396}{100} = 3.96$$

$$S_x^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{M_x} (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{M_x - 1} \qquad\qquad \text{Sums of squares}$$

$$= \frac{[\,21\,(5 - 4.07)^2 + 55\,(4 - 4.07)^2 + 3\,(3 - 4.07)^2 + 6\,(2 - 4.07)^2\,]}{85 - 1}$$

$$= \frac{18.1629 + 0.2695 + 3.4347 + 25.7094}{84}$$

$$= \frac{47.5765}{84}$$

$$= 0.5664$$

$$S = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{M_y} (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}{M_y - 1}$$

$$= \frac{[\,20\,(5 - 3.96)^2 + 66\,(4 - 3.96)^2 + 5\,(3 - 3.96)^2 + 8\,(2 - 3.96)^2 + 1\,(1 - 3.96)^2\,]}{100 - 1}$$

$$= \frac{21.632 + 0.1056 + 4.608 + 30.7328 + 8.7616}{99}$$

$$= \frac{65.84}{99}$$

$$= 0.6651$$

$$S_p^2 = \frac{(n_x - 1) \, S_x^2 + (n_y - 1) \, S_y^2}{n_x + n_y - 2}$$

$$= \frac{(84) \, 0.5664 + (99) \, 0.6651}{85 + 100 - 2}$$

$$= \frac{47.5776 + 65.8449}{183}$$

$$= \frac{113.4225}{183}$$

$$= 0.6198$$

T-statistic $= \dfrac{4.07 - 3.96}{0.6198 \quad 85 + 100}$

$$= \frac{0.11}{0.6198 \quad 0.0118 + 0.01}$$

$$= \frac{0.11}{0.6198 \, (0.1697)}$$

$$= \frac{0.11}{0.10518}$$

$$= 1.0458262$$

Rejection region

$$|t| > t\alpha/2$$

For a significance level α, we reject H if $|t| > t\alpha/2$

$$1 - 0.05 = .95 \quad \text{ie. } 95\%$$

Choose $\alpha = 0.05 \longrightarrow$ as level of significance

Degrees of freedom $= n_x + n_y - 2$

$$= 85 + 100 - 2$$

$$= 183$$

For the sample data $t = 1.0458262$.

$t_{\alpha/2;\, df} = t_{\frac{.05}{2};\, 183} = t_{.025;\, \infty} = 1.96$

Since $t < 1.96$ we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is no significant difference

in the mean response between parents and students.

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