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The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study

A Dissertation
Presented for the Doctor of Education Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr.
May 2008
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who always had a love of books and planted in me the wondering about the relationship between man and nature. It is also dedicated to my nine cohort members who I consider a Southern Bloomsbury. To my late father, Elton F. Frerichs, Sr., who was my backbone, my confidante, and my friend and who helped me become the man I am today. I want to thank my mother Lenis Frerichs, for giving me the love, guidance, and influence to never give up. To my two sisters Joy Frerichs and Bonnie Sheeley who were my first teachers, and whose editing and encouraging have led me to become a member of the noblest profession. And to the reason this topic interested me in the first place, my children and grandchildren, who put all of this in perspective. They make one realize the most important thing we do is to sit down and look at their latest drawing or watch them dance, and enjoy it together.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

To the teacher the prospect of the participation of parents in the educational process carries a wide range of emotions. From satisfaction to fear and loathing, the novice teacher to the teacher nearing retirement never seems to be totally satisfied with the product. The parent sees the child not quite being taught to the high expectations they desire, and the teacher sees a student that was not at a level where he should have been when he/she first received them.

This study focused on the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on parent involvement in selected East Tennessee Title I schools. This mixed methods case study included both thematic development and verification based on data obtained by both qualitative and quantitative means. The research questions posed at the beginning of this study include: (1) How has NCLB influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers regarding the roles of parents in schools?; (2) How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?; and (3) What are the reasons parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement? A theoretical framework based on the work of Epstein et. al. (2002) was used to focus the study’s design, and the data collection and analysis, and the reporting of the findings.

Subsequently, the themes that were developed in this study describe the role of leadership in the school and the transmission of information. Also, parents and teachers, cite their lack of knowledge of what the NCLB Act contains about creating opportunities for parents, and the inability of schools to structure roles for parents at the school to enhance parent involvement. A third major theme was the changing culture’s impact on
parenting and the realization that the society of the new millennium has caused all contributing parties to look at involvement or lack of involvement from a new perspective.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk” (Thoreau, 1906, p. 94). Thoreau’s quote from an earlier century still has implications today for America’s schools and among researchers, educators, legislators, and parents regarding the potentially positive effects of parent involvement in schools. Why would any practice with such a high potential for benefit have to be mandated by policy and law? Parent involvement is a perceptible predictor of students’ success (Million, 2003). In fact, many researchers claim that parent involvement positively impacts students’ achievement, attendance, attitudes, behavior, graduation, and life goals (Becher, 1984; Burke, 2001; Epstein & Dauber, 1995; Truby, 1987; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). An abundance of evidence supports that these benefits cross lines of family income and parent education level (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Funkhouser, Gonzalez & Moles, 1998; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Young & Westernoff, 1996). In the current climate marked by tremendous emphasis on school accountability as measured by students’ performance, education reform measures are replete with components that address parent involvement (Belenardo, 2001).

No longer may schools regard parent involvement as simply including parents in fund raising or attending an occasional student play or music performance. Parent involvement as mandated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes the concept of a meaningful partnership between stakeholders consisting of regular communication with parents and parents’ participation in the development and implementation of a strategic plan for school improvement (Cowan, 2003).
Requirements and restrictions upon receipt of Title I funds is the method the federal government is using to hold local educational agencies (LEA’s) accountable for meeting these new regulations. Title I is the largest single program of federal aid for elementary and secondary education. Whether Title I has done all that much to promote effectiveness or excellence is another matter. Evaluations of the program’s effectiveness have produced mixed results. Some researchers claim that Title I helped narrow the achievement gap between poor and rich students, and between African-American and White students in the 1960s and 1970s. There is little evidence of additional progress since then, although some argue that Title I has prevented low-income and minority children from falling farther behind (Borman, Stringfield, & Slavin, 2001).

Though federal and state initiatives (e.g., Tennessee’s 2004 The Family Friendly Schools Institute) have increased over the last few years, before NCLB most of the interest was mainly symbolic. Verbal support for parent involvement and minimal financial support existed for the necessary staff, resources, and programs needed to address this dilemma (Epstein, 1987). NCLB still supports parent involvement verbally, but as indicated by the parent involvement provisions in Title I, Part A, the involvement of parents in their children’s education and schools is critical to that process.

The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act makes it clearer than ever before that parents are the key stakeholders in their children’s education. The NCLB Act imposes numerous new mandates requiring states, districts, and schools to answer directly to parents for a failure to improve student performance.
One of these new mandates notes:

improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using State assessment systems designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall, but especially for the disadvantaged; providing greater decisionmaking authority and flexibility to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance. (Section 1001 (6 & 7), ESEA, p. A-1)

The old adage of parent involvement being parents helping children with homework, talking to them about school, going to parent meetings, and attending parent/teacher conferences has a new meaning. For all children to reach the goals that NCLB has set, parents, families, and community members will have to be involved as partners with educators in more substantive and powerful ways.

Statement of the Problem

From preschool on, decisions that affect students’ experiences in school are made for, about, and with students and their families. Students come to school from families with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, religions, customs, talents, and experiences. Families are diverse in structure, work experiences, and economic situations; but, despite these differences, they are similar in profound ways. All (or most) families care about their children and want them to succeed in schools with excellent educational programs. Mapp (1997) documented that researchers over the last 30 years have discovered a strong link between parent involvement with schools and an increase in student achievement, enhanced self-esteem, improved behavior, and better school attendance. Moreover, educational researchers declare that there is a positive correlation among parent involvement with schools and benefits for our students, school employees, and parents (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Comer, 1986; Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994).
As stated in NCLB, the term “parental involvement” means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring “that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child” (Section 9101 (32), ESEA, p. A54).

Increasing parent involvement is a positive initiative because students learn more in schools where parents become involved and offer their support (Myers & Monson, 1992). Myers and Monson stressed that societal changes which have greatly affected our children have made the need for parent involvement even more crucial. With the increase of one-parent families, working mothers and fathers, increased distances between school and home, and population mobility, the task of involving parents becomes even more complicated. There is a plethora of studies about parent involvement—but very little since the enactment of NCLB. Jacobson (2002) commented that because parents lack the language or the educational background that some educators might view them incapable of anything that is worthwhile or would make a difference in their child’s education.

Researchers who subscribe to the positive implications of direct parent involvement are concerned that parent involvement remains minimal (Mapp, 1997). There is no topic in education on which there is greater agreement than the need for parent involvement. While NCLB mandates parent involvement, does this federal mandate make it happen, or alter the type and quality of parent involvement? NCLB has mandated parent
involvement, but we do not know what part NCLB has played in making a difference in parent involvement.

Another factor influencing parent involvement at the school involves the wide range of demands and expectations. Despite the establishment of the positive effects of parent involvement in students’ success in achievement, attendance, attitudes, behavior, graduation, and aspirations, according to Kerbow and Bernhardt (1993), parent involvement must sometimes be urged, coaxed, supported by incentives, legislated, and mandated. The real barrier that negatively affected the engagement of each stakeholder (i.e., parents, students, and educators) and the mechanisms that encourage parents to become engaged in their child’s education have not been clearly understood (Kerbow & Bernhardt). Moreover, there is much evidence to suggest that parents and educators often have very different views about the reasons for low student performance, the appropriate roles for parents in the school, and the role of the principal (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000).

Administrators, parents, teachers, and educational leaders must be educated about the value of involving all parents and appreciate the willingness of most parents, regardless of social and economic status, to become involved in their children’s education. The educational system has to develop and maintain a solid parent involvement program under mandates from NCLB. It is crucial that we, as educators, investigate the present conditions, current practices, and the strengths and weaknesses of parent involvement in the decision making process. Through the examination of this phenomenon, the researcher will build on the knowledge base for educational leaders who wish to establish, build, and maintain parent involvement in the decision making process.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the impact of the NCLB Act upon parent involvement in the decision making process in selected East Tennessee Title I schools. There is an increasing amount of literature regarding parent involvement, though a minute amount has been focused on what NCLB has done to encourage parent involvement in the decision making process. The purpose of this study was addressed through the utilization of a theoretical framework developed by Epstein with her theory of family, school, and community connections. Epstein (2001) posited that most effective families and schools have overlapping, shared goals and missions concerning children. The degree of overlap is controlled by three forces: time, experience in families, and experience in schools (see Chapter 2 for a more complete explanation of the theoretical framework).

Research Questions

The research questions are reflective of my theoretical framework which is based on the work of Epstein (2001). These guiding questions have served as the cornerstone in focusing the interview and survey questions, the study’s design, analysis, and reporting of the findings of this research. Maxwell (1996) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) emphasized the need to integrate research purposes, the methods, theoretical framework, validity strategies, and research questions. This mixed methods, multi-site case study focuses on what administrators, parents, and teachers at Title I schools view as the role of parent involvement in the decision making process as impacted by the NCLB legislation. This research addresses the following questions:

1. How has NCLB influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers
regarding roles of parents in schools?

2. How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?

3. What are the reasons that parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement?

Definition of Terms

Over the last 50 years, the concept of parent involvement has broadened to include “parent/family involvement and school/family partnerships” (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider & Lopez, 1997). The recognition of the importance to education and schooling of children by both parents and contributing stakeholders other than parents has grown (Davies, 1994; Epstein, 1992). To guide the reader, the following terms are defined:

1. Parent: means any family member, including a blended or extended family member (Shartrand et al.), or other adult who plays an important role in the child’s life (National PTA, 2000) or who contributes to the learning of the child and his/her improvement in school (Shartrand et al.).

2. Parent Involvement: refers to actions parents take on behalf of their child to enhance the child’s development both in school and outside of school. It also includes actions parents take to improve the school for all children. According to Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis (2002), parent involvement is (a) active engagement of parents at home in support of their children’s social and academic development (supporting; nurturing, and child rearing), (b) consistent and effective communication between the school and the home (relating, reviewing, and overseeing), (c) active engagement of parents at school either as
supporters or as volunteers (supervising and fostering), (d) active engagement of parents at home in activities coordinated with work that children are doing in their classrooms (managing, recognizing, and rewarding), (e) active engagement of parents in decision making (contributing, considering, and judging), and (f) active engagement of parents with community organizations that share responsibility for the education and future of children (sharing and giving) (p. 25).

3. Decision making: parents involved in school governance committees, and planning or problem solving conferences that affect the education of students.

4. Economically Disadvantaged: a student by Title I’s definition who is receiving a free or reduced-priced lunch benefit.

5. Schoolwide: is one of two models for serving students in Title I schools. Under NCLB, the primary change to schoolwide programs is that the poverty threshold for eligibility to operate a schoolwide program dropped to 40 percent. This model funds a comprehensive school plan to upgrade all the instruction in a very high-poverty school, without distinguishing between “eligible” and “ineligible” children.

6. Targeted Assistance: one of two models for serving students in Title I schools. This model provides supplemental services to identified children who are low-achieving or at risk of low-achievement.

7. Title I: provides financial assistance to local education agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Title I is designed to support state and local school reform efforts tied to challenging state academic standards in order to
reinforce and amplify efforts to improve teaching and learning for students farthest from meeting state standards.

Delimitations

Creswell (2003) defined delimitation as “how the study will be narrowed in scope” (p. 148). This study was delimited in the following ways. First, I chose to study only five East Tennessee schools in five separate school systems. Choosing just five school systems was necessary not only to make the study manageable but also to allow a rich and thick investigation into the phenomenon, as opposed to a less probing investigation involving a larger number of school systems.

The study is also delimited to the perceptions of administrators, parents, and teachers at five school systems and can be generalized to only those individual schools. I decided to exclude two stakeholder groups from my data collection procedures. While students and policy makers are instrumental in a school’s decision making, their perceptions are uniquely different from the chosen groups and would have to be the focus of additional research.

Limitations

Whereas delimitations are intentional decisions that researchers make to narrow their studies, limitations are undesired realities. Creswell (2005) advanced that limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher. The small size of the study and its focus on East Tennessee schools will limit the ability of the findings to be generalized to other settings (e.g., urban and suburban) (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). However, using multiple cases, the capacity for generalization is increased (Merriam, 1998).
Significance of the Study

In that the NCLB Act was implemented in 2001, it should be no surprise that the literature base is limited in research on the topic. Schools that qualify for federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act operate under a system of incentives and sanctions based upon the kinds and degree of parental involvement within the school. In uncovering and probing the NCLB effect on parental involvement, this study could be of valuable assistance to many school systems and policy makers who will soon need to understand the inner textures of this issue and how this issue might be approached and negotiated.

Parent involvement in the decision making processes has the potential to be an important factor in school reform and the initiatives to improve schools. President George W. Bush’s administration has taken a hard line on enforcing many of the most prescriptive elements of NCLB and made parent involvement a priority (Cowan, 2004). The intent of this study is to gather and analyze the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents concerning parent involvement in the decision making process. This study was significant because it sought to identify how East Tennessee schools were impacted by NCLB in their involvement of parents in the decision making process. NCLB promotes more choice for parents and makes more information available to parents (ESEA, 2001). Additionally, schools that qualify for federal funding under Title I of the ESEA operate under a system of incentives and sanctions based upon the kinds and degree of parent involvement within the school. The research provides insights from school administrators, teachers, and parents. It afforded the opportunity to investigate how the interpretation of parents involvement in the decision making process was put
into practice, and it highlighted levels of parent involvement affected by NCLB in East Tennessee. This study added to the literature a discussion of views and beliefs of how all stakeholders can become more involved in the decision making process and how schools might more efficiently and effectively build school and family partnerships.

Organization of the Study

This mixed methods case study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction to the topic, a statement of the problem, a list of the research questions, the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations, and a definition of relevant terms.

A review of relevant literature is included in Chapter II, along with a description of the theoretical framework. The chapter reviews relevant research drawn from a historical perspective, benefits and barriers to parent involvement, models and types, and factors that influence parent involvement.

Chapter III outlines the study’s research design and provides a description of the communities in which the case study was conducted. The chapter begins with a description of the assumptions and rationale for using a mixed methods research design.

Chapter IV reports the study findings. The data are categorized and presented through themes that address each of the research questions.

Chapter V includes a summary of the findings of this case study. The chapter contains specific implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Maxwell (1996) explained that a review of relevant prior research serves three possible purposes. First, it can be used as a “justification for your study,” second to “inform your decisions about methods,” and, finally, as “a source of data that can be used to test or modify your theories” (p. 43). This literature review is organized into several sections. The first section explores a brief history of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and parent involvement. Parent involvement benefits and barriers, followed by models and types of parent involvement are then discussed. Next, the current research associated with positive changes with increased parent involvement is reviewed. This section is followed by the factors that influence parents and their involvement. The last section of this literature review discusses the theoretical framework used in this study.

Historical Perspective

As we enter the 21st century, accountability has become the centerpiece of our nation’s educational goals. While educational accountability may be transforming all aspects of teaching and learning, explosive headlines and the fear of terrorist attacks make it painstakingly clear that there may be no substitute for the warmth and comfort of the concept of “family.” Parent and community involvement has emerged as a major school initiative as our nation attempts to prepare our children academically and socially to participate and compete in the global economy of the new millennium. Parent involvement has also become a central focus of the current accountability movement.
The national initiatives (e.g., 1992 Goals 2000 Legislation, the 1994 Amendments to Title I) over the previous century have increasingly acknowledged and stressed the crucial role that parents play in their children’s education. It was not until the 1960s, with the focus on the at-risk student population, that the federal government began instituting national initiatives to mandate parent involvement as a primary means of improving student learning.

Parent involvement in schools is not a new topic in the educational arena. It is a component that has stood the test of time in federal policy but has been an underutilized resource in public education. To gain an insight into the national initiatives currently influencing parent involvement, such as NCLB, it is important to look at the impetus that brought the current mandates to fruition. To adequately traverse the evolution of parent involvement in public schools, it is important to investigate and develop a comprehensive understanding of how parents were involved before the national initiatives were given birth and to examine the imprint of the Title I program on schools.

Parent involvement can mean many things to many people. Historically, we have witnessed major changes in patterns regarding the relationship between the school and the home. It has long been recognized that the parent is the child’s first teacher and that the home is his or her first classroom (Berger, 1995). Nevertheless, in the American experience, there has always been some degree of ambivalence regarding the role that parents should play in the child’s formal education (Epstein, 2001). In recent years, parent involvement in education has received increasing attention from the popular as well as scholarly press, with a number of authors pointing out the benefits experienced by children (Epstein, 2003; Henderson, 1988; Pepperl & Lezotte, 2001). Despite this
attention, several aspects of parent involvement have received little, if any attention.

In the early 19th century, the community and the parents greatly controlled the decisions of the school. The church, home, and the school generally supported the same agenda for student learning and the student’s evolution into the adult community (Houston & Prentice, 1988). The hiring and firing of teachers, determination of a school calendar, and development of a school’s curriculum were an outcome of the direct involvement of parents and community (Epstein, 1986).

To some degree, this trend began to reverse itself in the 1920s. Parent involvement had entered what Henderson (1988) called the “bake sale” mode. With the spread of compulsory attendance laws, preschool and parent-education programs grew in popularity. The general acceptance of teaching as a profession began to change the face of parent involvement in schools (Berger, 1995; Epstein, 1996; Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

In the two decades following World War II, the “baby boomer” generation began to move through elementary schools. By the 1950s, teachers typically held the view that they should teach and parents should simply be supportive of the teachers and the school (Berger, 1995). The typical American family of this generation was influenced by women’s entrance into the work force and the growing questioning of all institutions.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided funding for various initiatives including instructional supplies and services in elementary and secondary public and private schools. ESEA was one of the legislative acts marking the inception of federally funded legislation linking parent involvement to education. This legislation, which was the basis for Title I, introduced the provision of funding to support
educationally deprived children and also stressed the importance of involving parents of low-income students in local programs. Title I initiated the requirement that parents serve on school advisory boards and participate in classroom activities. This era was the beginning of where a new emphasis emerged. Parents were influenced by research in the late 1960s and 1970s that suggested they should play a greater role in school governance because both they and their children were influenced by school decisions (Lightfoot, 1978; Sarason, 1971).

In another shift to increase accountability in schools in January 2002, President George W. Bush signed the NCLB into law, which includes provisions that focus squarely on building a parent’s capacity for involvement. Section 1118 of NCLB states:

A local educational agency may receive funds under this part only if such agency implements activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents… build the schools’ and parent’s capacity for strong parental involvement… conduct with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the schools served…including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). (Cowan, 2004, pp. A32-A33)

The act requires each school district that receives Title I funds to implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents. This law coincided with the nation’s values increasingly shifting towards more conservative opinions with public school officials in competition with home schooling and private schools. Educators are often forced to defend themselves against charges of having low expectations for students or what some perceived as having condescending attitudes toward parents. The biggest change is that funding for parent involvement must be distributed to individual schools, and those parents of Title I students must be involved in the decisions concerning how
these funds are spent.

The 1994 Elementary and Secondary Education Act’s (ESEA) reauthorization which was called the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) employed Title I, Part A, as the primary means for holding states and local educational agencies accountable for their success or failure in using their federal education funds. Partnerships between schools and parents were set as a national goal for all schools in the Goals 2000 legislation (Public Law 103-227) and continued in 2001 with the NCLB Act. This latest reauthorization, the 2001 NCLB Act, generally left parent involvement policies instituted by IASA unchanged, with a few important exceptions.

Schools that are allocated Title I funds have the choice in the program design and, therefore, in the discretion of the use of funds. Cowan (2004) regarded Title I at its inception and for many years afterward mainly as a “funding stream” rather than a “program” (p. 107). The federal government has left it up to local educators to determine how to allocate funds and how to best serve their students. The two main models for serving students in a Title I school are either one, identifying the low or at risk of low achievement, and secondly, funding the entire program and upgrading all instruction without distinguishing between “eligible” and ineligible” children (Cowan, p. 108). The two choices of program design and use of funds are called targeted assistance programs or schoolwide.

A local educational agency may consolidate and use funds, together with other federal, state and local funds, in order to upgrade the entire educational program of an eligible Title I school; this choice of program is termed a schoolwide program. Schools may elect to operate as a schoolwide program only if they have a child poverty rate (the
number of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunches) of at least 40 percent.

Schoolwide programs are justified on the grounds that once poverty reaches a certain threshold in a school, it becomes logical to try to improve the whole instructional program as opposed to providing services separately to some of the students. Providing separate services is the second model, also called targeted assistance. A targeted assistance school is so-termed because it targets its services on specific, identified children who are low-achieving or at risk of low-achievement. A student is eligible to receive Title I services in a targeted assistance school if the school identifies the student as “failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the state’s challenging student academic achievement standards” (Title I Handbook, 2004, p. C-8). Schoolwide programs are not required to specifically identify eligible Title I students for targeted Title I services that are supplementary to the regular program. In schools operating on the schoolwide model, Title I is no longer a distinct program but is integrated into the regular program. The realization that all (rich, poor, middle class) parents in a schoolwide model are being considered Title I parents could lead to a quandary as to whether or not all parents are involved in the decision making process. The federal government requires as an implementation component of a schoolwide program strategies to promote effective parental involvement.

During the school year 2004-05, 82% of all Title I programs in the State of Tennessee were schoolwide as opposed to targeted assistance. In comparison, 53% of Title I schools nationally are characterized as schoolwide indicating that the State of Tennessee has a larger percentage of schools favoring the schoolwide model.

The involvement of parents and children in education begins when children start
schooling at the approximate age of five. From this point on, as our society over the last century has evolved, parent involvement in the daily activities of child rearing has greatly declined (Epstein, 1992). As more parents’ struggle to make a living and raise their children, parenting has become a task that increasingly involves the school. As children move through school, the demands on the school increase.

Through the years, responsibility for educating children gradually shifted from the parents and families to public school institutions. Years of study and research by Henderson (1987, 1994), Epstein (1985, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1992), Davies (1987), Becker (1982), and others, however, support the concept that student achievement in schools improves when parents are involved. In fact, teachers and the entire school, as well as parents, are positively affected by meaningful, on-going, parent involvement. Although the evidence is profound about the benefits of parent involvement and many schools and parents are working hard to establish and strengthen relationships, some still lag behind.

Benefits of Parent Involvement

Researchers have documented several benefits to parent involvement in the schooling of their children (Epstein & Conners, 1994; Henderson & Berla, 1994, Olmstead & Rubin, 1983). A compelling connection has been found between students’ achievement and parent involvement (Keith & Keith, 1993). It is demonstrated that parents’ interest and support are the primary factors for students’ success or failure (Berger, 1995). Contemporary authors have written of the link between parental involvement in the school and students’ success at school (Epstein, 2003; Griffith, 2002, Lommerin, 2000; National PTA, 2000).

Evidence of the advantage of parents engaging with their children in educational
activities is substantiated regardless of the family’s economic background (Henderson, 1981; Pepperl & Lezotte, 2001). Henderson and Mapp (2002) revealed in an analysis of 51 studies they conducted that students with above-median parent involvement had academic achievement rates that were 30% higher than those with below-median parent involvement. In a review of 66 studies, Henderson and Berla (1994) suggested that the most accurate predictors of student success in school were the ability of the family, along with the help and support of school personnel, to: (a) create a positive home learning environment, (b) communicate high and realistic expectations for their children’s school performance and future careers, and (c) become involved in their children’s schooling. The opening statement in their book, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, declared, “The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life” (Henderson & Berla, p.1). Barriers to Parent Involvement

Barriers or resistance to parent involvement are due, in part, to the organizational realities of schools, which offers one explanation of the resistance of schools to parent participation. With regard to a school’s characteristics such as the nature of the setting, size, academic focus, and climate, Feurstein (2000) reported that research appeared to be limited. Because family involvement has been demonstrated to have such significant effects upon students’ performance, the factors that influence it have become a matter of great interest to educational decision makers (Feurstein). Although the factors may not be easily influenced, bridges can be and are being built over these barriers. It has become
clear that “great schools have strong partnerships with parents” (Million, 2003, p. 5).

Another barrier to parental involvement focuses on what Lightfoot (1978) termed, “two overlapping spheres of influence” (p. 56) between the home and the school. She contended that families are the primary relationship between parents and children and that school is the secondary relationship between teachers and children. A conflict arises with the different types of interest the school and the family have in the child. While both consider the schooling of children a sociocultural task, the family focusing on the child as an individual is in contrast to the school focusing on the child as a member of a group (Katz, 1971).

Models and Types of Parent Involvement

Clearly, children benefit when their parents participate and support their education. The ways in which parents are, and should be, involved in their children’s education is less clear. In attempting to understand and describe parent involvement in their children’s education, researchers have categorized the form and means through which parents participate. A wide range of parent involvement programs is currently described in the literature. Models differ primarily in their philosophy and purpose for involving parents, and in the comprehensiveness of the ways parents are involved. Two philosophies of looking at parent involvement programs are termed deficit and non-deficit models.

If it is assumed that the reason for the poor success of children in school is that there is something lacking in the home, it is defined as a deficit model. The goal of a deficit model parent involvement program is to train the parents in parenting skills; and, thus, the children will have a better chance for success in schools. Parent involvement would
be classified as parent education. While not an ambition of the deficit models, sometimes
schools and teachers have been changed through exposure to parents. Many preschool
parent involvement programs (such as the Pre-K initiative enacted Tennessee in 2005) as
well as compensatory federal programs as Head Start are built on a deficit model.

During the 1960s and the enactment of the War on Poverty, parents were seen as
effective and necessary school supporters and were intentionally included in the
schooling of their children (Gestwicki, 2006). Head Start and Follow Through were two
intervention programs that arose out of the legislation, and parents were a key
component. The programs were designed to educate both young children and their
parents, on the theory that educated parents are better equipped to produce educated
children.

There are numerous benefits to parents actively involved as partners in learning.
Across the nation, efforts are being made to enhance attempts to redefine the role of
parents as partners. Chrispeels (1991) described the policies developed in San Diego that
paid particular attention to the needs of parents who were not typically involved in
education. She presented a framework for describing how the school, home, and
community should work together. This model suggests that parent involvement has a
hierarchical structure with co-communication being the basis for other types of
involvement. Hence, more fundamental types of parent involvement occur that require
less skill than higher more complex types, and would occur more often. Her model
includes the following components: (1) involving parents as partners in school
governance, including shared decision making and advisory functions, (2) establishing
effective two-way communication with all parents, (3) respecting the diversity and

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differing needs of families, (4) establishing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children’s education, (5) providing support and coordination for staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parental involvement from kindergarten through high school, and (6) using schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support (pp. 368-369).

Epstein et al. (2002) has developed a framework (see Table 1) of six major types of involvement that have evolved from many studies and from many years of work by educators and families in elementary, middle, and high schools. Her typology is the “primary framework to study parent involvement” (Chen & Chandler, 2001, p. 4), and was adapted by the National PTA to provide standards for parent/family involvement programs (National PTA, 1997).

Epstein’s recent work (2002) has focused on differences in the ways teachers and administrators encourage parental involvement and how these differences affect the types and amounts of parental involvement. Her research has shown that whether and to what extent parents become involved is much more dependent on the practices of the school and teacher than on family characteristics such as race, parent education, family size, and marital status (Epstein, 1990).

Current Research Associated with Parent Involvement

The current focusing of educational research by educational theorists to complement federal initiatives on the efforts of parental involvement on making schools better and improving student achievement is not a new concept. The relationship has been recognized for decades. Following are some of the numerous positive changes in
Table 1

*Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 1 Parenting</strong></td>
<td>Assist families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families’ backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 2 Communicating</strong></td>
<td>Communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Create two-way communication channels between school and home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 3 Volunteering</strong></td>
<td>Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve as volunteers and as audience at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 4 Learning at Home</strong></td>
<td>Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities. Encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 5 Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>Include families as participants in school decision, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type 6 Collaborating with the Community</strong></td>
<td>Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges and universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Epstein et al., 2002, p. 165)
students, parents, teachers, and school climate attributed to or associated with parental involvement by researchers and educators. The majority of the literature reviewed was either specific to the elementary level or not specified. Most Title I programs are concerned with children at the lower elementary levels. Title I reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in both public and private schools. Title I funds may be used for children from preschool age to high school, but most of the students served (65%) are in grades 1 through 6; another 12% are in preschool and kindergarten programs (Ed.gov, website at http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/titleiparta/index.html: retrieved March 15, 2006).

Modern theorists and researchers continue to emphasize the importance of parent involvement in improving the education of elementary-age children while expanding their interest in older students. Researchers reported that parent involvement is critically important to the academic success of students throughout their educational careers (Cotton & Mann, 2003; Epstein, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2005; Lommerin, 2000; Walberg, 1986).

After reviewing the research on parent involvement, Baker and Soden (1997) suggested that some types of parent involvement are more effective than others. They stress the importance of the early childhood years with an emphasis on literacy in the home by careful planning and awareness of “parental stimulation of the children’s language development, security of the parent-child attachment relationship, and parent involvement in preschool and early intervention programs” (p. 1).

Researchers have determined that school performance of low-income students in particular seems to vary directly with the degree of parent involvement (Henderson,
1988; National Institute of Education, 1985). Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) found that families of all ethnic backgrounds, education, and income levels often had positive influences on their children’s learning. Davies (1987) studied low income parents in Boston, Liverpool, and several cities in Portugal for parent involvement activities. Through interviews he found that communication that existed was primarily negative and involvement was low. Administrators perceived the problem to be apathy on the part of the parents, i.e., the parents did not have time, competence, or interest to get involved in the education of their children.

Students are not the only beneficiaries of parent involvement. As parent involvement increases, teachers develop a greater sense of efficacy and, therefore, higher morale. Additionally, teacher’s experienced increased rates of return on homework and reported more success in their efforts to influence students (Epstein, 2003). Pryor (1994) suggested that parents’ bonding to the school positively affected students’ bonding. Furthermore, students’ bonding to the school positively affected their achievement.

Factors That Influence Parent Involvement

Historically, the policies and attitudes were primarily implicit and concerned with what parents could do in the home to support the educational goals of the school. Today, however, NCLB has made explicit and has recognized the role of parents and community members as partners and decision makers in schools.

In recent years, a wealth of research has supported the belief that children do better in school when parents are involved (Epstein, 2001; Lommerin, 2000). Additional proof is in the premise that parent involvement in almost any form appears to produce measurable gains in student achievement (Henderson, 1988). According to Henderson, there are
many positive results from parent involvement. Specifically, students whose parents are involved get higher grades and higher test scores, have more long-term academic success, and have more positive attitudes and behaviors than students whose parents are not involved.

According to Epstein (2005), students whose parents are involved have better basic skills and access to a greater and more diverse variety of classroom materials. They also have additional enrichment activities provided by the parents that the teacher cannot provide. Lastly, they have parents who have positive self-images.

Typically, more highly educated families are more involved in their child’s education. However, families from all situations, regardless of the formal education or income level of the parents, and regardless of the grade level or ability of the student, use strategies to encourage and influence their children’s education (Epstein & Connors, 1994). Clearly, the messages sent by schools influence the level that parents are willing to be involved in school. Schools with high parent involvement are more effective and have more successful programs than schools with low parent involvement (Becker & Epstein, 1982). If families are also sources and motivators of learning, teachers realize that learning does not begin and end at the schoolhouse door. It has become clear that “great schools have strong partnerships with parents” (Million, 2003, p. 5). “Regardless of the parent education, family size, student ability, or school level, parents are more likely to become partners in their children’s education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school, at home with homework, and at home on reading activities” (Epstein & Dauber, 1989, p. 8).
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the comprehensive work of Joyce Epstein (1987, 1995, 2001, 2003). Merriam (1998), writing about theoretical frameworks, stated “…it will draw upon the concepts, terms, definition, models, and theories of a particular literature base and disciplinary orientation” (p. 46). I chose Epstein’s work because she is, in my view, the guru or ultimate source for school, family, and community partnerships. “If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children’s education and development” (Epstein, 2001, p. 354). This model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center. Gestwicki (2004) noted that the increased empowerment of parents has changed the model for parent involvement from the old parent-child-teacher triangle to a new model of two concentric circles, the child on the inside circle and the parents and teachers surrounding the child on the outside circle. (See Figures 1 and 2).

Epstein’s (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence provided the model of school, family, and community partnerships that locates the student at the center (see Figure 3). This model identifies schools, families, and communities as major institutions that socialize and educate children. The judge of our schools’ accomplishment is based upon the education, development, and ultimate success of the students.

The assumption is that, if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of student, they are more likely to achieve the academic performance in reading, math, and science required by NCLB. This theory of overlapping spheres assumes mutual interests and influences of families and schools that are promoted by the policies
Figure 1. Old model of parent involvement.

Figure 2. New model of parent involvement.

Figure 3. Overlapping spheres of influence.
and programs of the school and the actions and attitudes of the stakeholders that make up the school. School, family, and community partnerships are for all families. Successful parent involvement in forming true partnership and place where leadership in decisions is shared is not just for families formally educated, easy to reach, or able to often volunteer at school. This lens captured data concerning what influence NCLB had upon parent involvement in school-level decision making and advocacy. Although there are important differences between school and families (Dreeban, 1968), this study emphasized the need to recognize the important similarities, overlap in goals, responsibilities and mutual influence of the two major environments that simultaneously affect children’s learning and development.

Epstein et al. (2002) developed a framework of six types of involvement to meet the challenges that have prevented many families from becoming involved in their children’s education. This model (which was identified previously in “Models and Types of Parent Involvement”) includes how basic and advanced activities both may contribute to a balanced program of partnerships. These six types of involvement provide specific ideas on how schools, parents, and community members can best impact student performance at schools, going beyond typical PTA-type activities.

The difference in this and earlier mentioned movements is that this is very structured. Type 1 is the promotion of parenting skills and their support. The activities could help families understand adolescence, support physical and mental health, and prevent key problems in student’s development.

Type 2 is ensuring that communication between home and schools is regular, two-way, and meaningful. Type 2 should assist in increasing attendance at school functions,
conferences, and events.

Type 3 activities or volunteering are ensuring that parents are welcome in the school and their support and assistance are sought. Mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and speakers are examples of volunteering. Today’s technology world has increased activities to include e-mail, websites, electronic marquees in front of the school, translation devices to reach non-English-speaking families and automated phone services that dramatically increase the number of volunteers and volunteer opportunities in schools. When bringing parents into a school, areas that need to be addressed include the recruiting, allocating flexible hours, arranging worthwhile tasks, and training.

Learning at home activities (Type 4) require two-way communication and demonstrate that parents play an integral role in assisting student learning. This communication should foster monitoring, assisting and interacting between students and their parents. This type of involvement should increase parent’s understanding of the school curriculum, students’ achievement, and parents’ interest in the education of their children.

Type 5 involvement includes parents as full partners in school decision making and advocacy. Decision making is a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not a power struggle between conflicting ideas.

Collaborating with the community or Type 6 involvement requires parent leadership from all aspects of the community. Racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds are factors that should be represented in these activities. Collaborating with the community is a method to ensure that community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning. Communication is the key factor in Type 6 activities as well.
Having parents involved in school decision making, above all else requires commitment on the part of school leadership (Ruthorford, 1995). Epstein’s (2002) theory places students as the main actors in their education, development, and success in school. The assumption is that if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of student, they are more likely to do their best to learn to read, write, calculate, and learn other skills and talents stressed by NCLB.

Conclusion

In this literature review I have familiarized the reader with four areas. First, I outlined the parent involvement movement from a historical perspective. This supported evidence for increased parent involvement as a necessary reform in public schools, and how it is crucial that such changes go beyond merely the superficial or mere presence. Parent involvement in today’s schools must be characterized by meaningful partnerships. The student would be central to a successful partnership. This partnership would recognize the shared responsibilities of home, school, and community for student’s learning and development.

Second, I describe the benefits and barriers of parent involvement. This review of literature clearly documents the concept that parent involvement in school greatly impacts a child’s achievement. Unfortunately, it also demonstrates the issues that exist that hinder the partnership.

Thirdly, models and types of parent involvement and factors that influence the wide range of parent involvement programs are discussed. Pepperl and Lezotte (2001) drew and important distinction between the type of parent involvement that many schools have been practicing and the kind that is now necessary.
The best hope for effectively confronting the problem—and not each other—is to build enough trust and communication to realize that both teachers and parents have the same goal—an effective school and home for all children! (Introduction, n. p.)

Finally, I have explained the theoretical framework which formed the design of this study and directed the analysis of data. This framework is based on components from Epstein’s (1987, 1995, 2001, 2003) large body of work on parent involvement.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on East Tennessee Title I schools in meeting the requirements of the role of parent involvement in the decision making process. In contrast to the abundance of literature pertaining to parent involvement on elementary and secondary educational levels (Epstein, 1986, 1991, 2001, 2005), controversial issues related to the 2001 NCLB Act and its standards to address parent involvement have had limited investigation. The data gathered during this study add to the body of knowledge, thus, assisting all stakeholders in their understanding of decision making and the phenomenon of parent involvement.

This chapter focuses on the rationale for and assumptions behind the research design, my role as a researcher and the biases I brought to the investigation, data collection and analysis procedures, and the methods by which I ascertained the accuracy of the collected data, and resultant analysis.

Assumptions and Rationale for a Mixed Methods Study

The bitter debate in the final decades of the 20th century, regarding the superiority of one or the other of the two major social science paradigms, the positivists’ “quantitative” paradigm and the constructivists “qualitative” paradigm were viewed as “increasingly unproductive” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 3). In the aftermath of the paradigm war, the detente brought the emergence of mixed methods to the forefront. Tashakkori and Teddlie emphasized that one of the possible mixed method designs is a “dominant/less dominant” design (QUAL → quan) in which one part of the design is “in no way as
important” as the other part (p. 46). The research questions (see Chapter I, pp. 6-7) demonstrate that the predominance in answering the “how and why” questions led to the inclusion of the qualitative paradigm. If the nature of the research involves “how” and “why” questions, the qualitative paradigm is more appropriate (Yin, 2003, p. 7; see also Merriam 1998). According to Maxwell (1996), a qualitative analysis enables the researcher to discover “how the participants make sense of [a phenomenon] and how their understandings influence their behavior” (p. 17). The quantitative element in the present design is important in triangulating findings and in giving the researcher greater confidence in the results. Creswell (2005) suggested that investigators could “improve their inquiries by collecting and converging different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon” (p. 511).

Creswell (2005) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) in recent publications have expanded this discussion concerning the use of qualitative and quantitative paradigms within the same study. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 specified “scientific research” a number of times in the law. This has been interpreted to mean that the use of quantitative methods or using a mixed methods approach is more NCLB receptive. The methodological appropriateness of this study should be judged to the extent to which the research answers the inquiry question at hand, not whether NCLB adheres to some preordinate standard.

While a variety of research designs exist, this study lends itself to the use of a mixed methods design. The perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents were incorporated from multiple sites to provide qualitative information relating to opinions, preferences, and beliefs. A quantitative element to provide descriptive data to the reader
was developed by the addition of a survey. The data gathered through the surveys were used to determine if the information provided at the interviews was consistent with the larger school population. “A researcher can augment qualitative observations of behavior with a quantitative survey that provides greater confidence in the generalizability of results” (Creswell, 2005, p. 511).

The advantages of including qualitative research are ideal for the goal of this particular study. Merriam (1998) noted that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 1). A graphic representation of this study’s main dimensions, key factors and variables, and the presumed relationships among them is shown in Figure 4. In short, the design of the present study was anchored in a rationale that the research questions required an answer to “how and why” questions that were more appropriately explored through the qualitative paradigm (see Yin, 1994). A subsequent quantitative phase of the study was necessary to corroborate and triangulate these qualitative data.

Type of Design: A Mixed Methods Design

Merriam (1998) suggested that multiple cases increase the capacity for generalization. A multi-site, mixed-methods, case study design was employed at the five selected rural East Tennessee school districts. The quantitative element of this study was important in that it allowed for triangulation of the data and the survey was a method based on the interviews that was used to canvass the remaining faculties and parents of schools to
Figure 4. Research design map.

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see if the thoughts of those interviewed were representative of the entire school. Creswell (2005) called this a “two-phase” design (p. 524) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) referred to this as a “sequential” design (p. 43). Tashakkori and Teddlie stated that this type of design allows a researcher to do “qualitative data collection and analysis on a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phase of the study” (p. 47). “Typically in these designs, the researcher presents the study in two phases with the first phase involving qualitative data collection (e.g., interviews, observations) with a small number of individuals followed by quantitative data collection (e.g., a survey) with a large, randomly selected number of participants (Creswell, p. 516).

The notion of a “case study” follows the basic premise of qualitative research as it allows for in-depth, detailed information from a relatively small sample of people who are selected for purposes that serve the focus of a study (Patton, 1990). A case study is defined by Sanders (1994) as “an intensive, detailed description and analysis of a single project, program, or instructional material in the context of its environment” (p. 203).

Qualitative researchers “are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). This study illustrated the views of administrators, teachers and parents pertaining to what the stakeholders in five rural school districts perceive and foster in the decision-making process involving parents. Then, this information was presented with rich, thick description to the reader. This case study approach is intended to divulge attitudes, feelings, ideas, actions, and suggestions from those involved.
Role of the Researcher

This researcher maintains an attitude that Greene (1995) forwarded as a philosophy for educators, “…there is always more to be woven; the quilt, the carpet, are forever incomplete” (p. 8). In conducting this research, I needed to be aware of potential biases that could have influenced the investigation. Currently, an administrator (Assistant Director) in the Monroe County School System, I began my career in East Tennessee 23 years ago as a faculty member in a rural high school. Previous to my current position, I served for five years as director of federal programs, after serving at various schools as principal.

According to Merriam (1998), a researcher’s biases must be disclosed as one method to ensure internal validity. Revealing a researcher’s bias involves clarifying the researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the beginning of the study. I have spent the past five years intimately involved with federal programs. I have a commitment and empathy for children that need assistance, for them to not be considered left behind. Throughout this study I had to be aware of my allegiance to federal assistance and ensure that these conclusions did not impose themselves on my research.

I purposefully took the following measures to minimize my bias: triangulation of data sources through the use of interviews, documents, surveys, and observations; production of audible and written records of all data gathered; creation of code maps and temporal records explaining how data analysis is undertaken; and the use of a data analysis grid. Additionally, member checks, the process of asking participants to verify the analysis, were employed in this study.
Site and Participants

Data for this study were collected from five Title I schools located in five separate East Tennessee school systems. Purposive sampling was used to select the schools for the study. Criteria for the selection include: (1) all schools are located in southeastern East Tennessee, (2) all schools are Title I schools, (3) all schools have a formalized parent organization, (4) all schools have a population of between 400 and 650 students, (5) all schools possess grades levels within PK-8, and (6) all schools are led by administrators willing to assist in the study.

Participants from the selected sites included members of various stakeholder groups including administrators, parents, and teachers. The schools chosen represent a socioeconomic, racial, and geographical composition comparable to East Tennessee (see Table 2).

Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of the sample and the total number of participants interviewed for each of the five selected sites. All participants were provided with a Project Information Sheet (see Appendix A) and participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form and Statement of Consent (see Appendix B), which ensured confidentiality.

The grade configurations of the schools included grades ranging from kindergarten through eight. The specific schools were all similar but of course diverse in their own uniqueness. The function of parental involvement was shared by all schools.
Table 2

Comparison of School Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Size of School (# of students)</th>
<th>Free or Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>School Setting</th>
<th>Racial Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>inner city</td>
<td>56% White 34% African American 8% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>98% White 2% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>suburban</td>
<td>70% White 27% Hispanic 3% African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>93% White 6% African American 1% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>suburban</td>
<td>84% White 10% Hispanic 6% African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Breakdown of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Site &amp; Grade Configuration</th>
<th># of Administrators Interviewed</th>
<th># of Teachers Interviewed</th>
<th># of Parents Interviewed</th>
<th>Title I (% of students served system wide)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary (K-8)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary (K-5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary (K-8)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary (K-2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % Ranged From</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.5—85.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection Procedures

Yin (2003) believed that the benefits from sources of evidence could be maximized if one followed three principles. Yin’s “Principle 1: Use multiple sources of evidence” was followed in this case study to deal with the problems of establishing the construct validity and reliability of the evidence (p. 97). Adler and Clark (2003) wrote that case studies rely on several data sources. Creswell (2005) stated that in qualitative research this evidence can take the form of interviews, observations, documents, or the use of audio-visual materials. Table 4 documents the data sources used in this study and specifically how each data source enabled me to answer the proposed research questions.
This table was applied as a map for ensuring that the use of each data collection tool led to answers for each research question.

Data sources were semi-structured interviews, documents, observations, supplemental interview data, and surveys. The primary data sources for this study were semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) with 5 administrators, 15 parents, and 5 teachers. It is important to show how the interview protocol and the research questions are related.

*Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during this study. A brief overview was provided to establish rapport and clarify any questions the participants had about the study. The interview contained open-ended questions (see Appendix C) that permitted the participants to answer in the direction they desired. The interviewees were asked to make any additional comments that might add to the gathered information. Patton (1990) described three types of interviewing techniques: (1) informal, conversational interviews, (2) semi-structured interviews, and (3) standardized, open-ended interviews. With a semi-structured interview the interviewer is given the autonomy to probe within the predetermined areas of inquiry and still stay focused (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

Interviews were taped recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis. According to Merriam (1998) and Maxwell (1996), good interview questions can be divided into six types: experiences/behavior, opinion/value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographics. A variety of interview question types (see Table 5) were used to gather information from respondents in this study.
## Table 4

**Matrix of Research Questions and Data Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has No Child Left Behind (NCLB) influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers regarding roles of parents in schools?</td>
<td>newsletters, policy statements, handbooks, letters, memos, meeting agendas, sign-in logs</td>
<td>P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17 T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T14 A2, A3, A4, A7, A8, A9, A11, A14, A15, A16</td>
<td>Meetings (P.T.O)</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P4,P9, P11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?</td>
<td>newsletters, policy statements, handbooks, letters, memos, meeting agendas, sign-in logs</td>
<td>P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P13, P14, P15, P16 T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13 A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A10, A11, A12</td>
<td>Meetings (P.T.O.)</td>
<td>P8,P11, P6, P7,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the reasons that parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement?</td>
<td>newsletters, policy statements, handbooks, letters, memos, meeting agendas, sign-in logs</td>
<td>P4, P6, P7, P8, P14, P15, P16, T3, T5, T6, T10, T12, T13 A2, A5, A6, A10, A11, A12, A13, A14</td>
<td>Meetings (P.T.O.)</td>
<td>P3, P5, P10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A = Administrator; P = Parent; T = Teacher
Table 5

Interview Question Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interview question</th>
<th>Teacher interview Protocol</th>
<th>Administrator Interview protocol</th>
<th>Parent Interview protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience/behavior</td>
<td>T-13, T-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>P-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>T-2</td>
<td>A-4</td>
<td>P-2, P-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>T-1, T-3, T-12, T-14</td>
<td>A-1, A-11, A-12, A-14</td>
<td>P-1, P-3, P-7, P-16, P-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>T-6, T-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>P-6, P-8, P-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background/demographics</td>
<td>T-4, T-7</td>
<td>A-6, A-15</td>
<td>P-9, P-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>T=Teacher</td>
<td>A=Administrator</td>
<td>P=Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveys

The parent, teacher, and principal surveys (see Appendix D) were developed to provide descriptive data to the researcher. All teachers and five administrators from each chosen school were asked to respond to the parent involvement surveys. The surveys were used to assist in the determination if the information provided at the interviews was consistent with the beliefs of the stakeholders of the larger school population. Gay (1987) described, “For descriptive research, a sample of 10% of the population is considered minimum” (p. 114). I issued surveys to approximately 100% of the parent populations in each school. If at least 10% of the parent population had not responded within two weeks to the surveys, a subsequent survey was issued until the minimum return was achieved. Subsequently, 359 of a possible 2,650 parents, over 10% of the parent population responded to the survey while 69 or 40% of the teacher surveys were returned. One hundred percent of the five administrators responded to the survey.
Teachers distributed the surveys to every student in their class to take home to their parents. Surveys were either returned by the students or returned by the mail. A cover letter was attached to each survey and signed by the administrator (see Appendix E).

Document/Collection Techniques

Any written or recorded artifact not prepared at the request of the researcher can be used in the document collection technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the researcher obtained documents pertaining to the research questions stated in this chapter. Documents corroborate the researcher’s observations and interviews and thus make the findings more trustworthy. They may raise questions about the researcher’s educated hunches and thereby shape new directions for observations and interviews (Merriam, 1998). By examining past parent involvement policies, newsletters, and other forms of communication that the school utilizes to build the link between schools and home, I garnered a background knowledge which allowed me to move forward in examining patterns or themes that were developed as a result of this study. Although I used participant observation, I was aware of Merriam’s assertion that document collection provided me with historical, demographic, and sometimes personal information that was unavailable from other sources.

Documents add both historical and contextual dimensions to the researcher’s observations and interviews. They enrich what he or she sees and hears by supporting, expanding, and challenging portrayals and perceptions and they must rely on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents (Merriam, 1998). In addition, the document collection helped to establish trustworthiness in the research by corroborating
the data collected during interactions with the study participants (e.g., interviews, observations).

Documents are not affected by the presence of the researcher; and, as Yin (2003) stated, “…every document was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done” (p. 87). Documents gathered for this study included announcements, minutes of meetings of interest to this study, newsletters and information fliers sent home, school calendars, policy statements, student and parent handbooks, presence or absence of parent rooms in the school, logs of presence of parents contacting or working in the school building, organized parent meetings, and logs of teachers and administrators contacting parents.

Observations

Observational data are used for descriptive purposes. A description of the settings, the activities, the people, and the meaning of what was seen is provided to the reader. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places. The focus was upon the statements of all the stakeholders. These observations were used to either substantiate or refute the information provided during the interviews and or the surveys. A more complete description of phenomenon is obtained during observations then will be provided from just interviews and surveys (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1995). I was provided with opportunities “to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on, and make flexible short—and long-term plans for the days to come” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 49). This accumulation of data reflected
Patton’s (1990) notions of qualitative research by “finding out what people do, know, think, and feel by observing, interviewing, and analyzing documents” (p. 94).

Observations are useful for several reasons. They can serve as a method of multiple source data triangulation, additionally, observations can be useful when the researcher is unfamiliar with the phenomenon or wants to study rapidly changing social situations (Adler & Clark, 2003). In this case study, observations were at Parent Teacher Organization meetings and at school visits.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected provided means for a mixed methods, dominant/less dominant design. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed in full. The data were sorted into categories, or themes, based upon recursive readings of transcriptions and institutional documents (Merriam, 1998).

Table 6, developed by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), is included in order to present the reader with a clear picture of how the data categories were formed and consolidated. The first iteration makes public the initial codes used for data analysis. The second iteration demonstrates how those codes were grouped to form categories or themes. The final iteration discloses how those categories were used to develop theory or contribute to theory advancement.

Constas (1992) developed a two-dimensional model designed to organize the documentation of procedures used in the development of themes or categories. The first dimension represents the components or actions affiliated with the development of categories. The second domain documents the temporal aspects of category
Table 6

**Code Mapping: Three Iterations of Analysis**

Code Mapping for *No Child Left Behind’s* effect on parent involvement:

1. How has NCLB influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers regarding roles of parents in schools?

2. How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?

3. What are the reasons that parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement?

(Third Iteration: Application to Data Set)

Themes Discovered During the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“communicate, communicate, communicate…try to be open and positive”</th>
<th>“I just agree with them because they need it”</th>
<th>“just not seeing the school as something positive”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A. Communicating</td>
<td>2A. Decision Making</td>
<td>3A. Parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. Collaborating with Community</td>
<td>2B. Volunteering</td>
<td>3B. Learning at Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Second Iteration: Pattern Variables—Components)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1A. Communication is the Key</th>
<th>2A. “It takes a Village to Raise a Child”</th>
<th>3A. Time and Transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1B. Strong, Innovative Leadership</td>
<td>2B. What is Parent’s Role?</td>
<td>3B. Safety and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. Different Meanings of Parent Involvement</td>
<td>2C. Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(First Iteration: Initial Codes/Surface Content Analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b. Presence</td>
<td>2a. Information</td>
<td>3a. Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Leadership</td>
<td>2b. Volunteering</td>
<td>3b. Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Visibility</td>
<td>2b. Events</td>
<td>3b. Past History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Team Effort</td>
<td>2c. Lack of Academic Skills</td>
<td>3c. What is parent involvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Atmosphere</td>
<td>2c. Protection of Turf</td>
<td>3c. Drawbacks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data: Interviews Data: Observations Data: Documents Data: Surveys

(Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 32)
development, i.e., a priori–before the data collection, a posterior–after the data have been collected and iterative–during the data collect activities. A two-dimensional table (see Table 7) was used to document the origin of the analytical actions carried out in this study (Constas, 1992).

Methods of Verification

Creswell (2005) wrote, “Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions of themes in qualitative research” (p. 252). “Especially in terms of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity” (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). Merriam (1998), Fielding and Fielding (1986), and Anfara et al. (2002) emphasized that triangulation is a strategy employed to improve the credibility, dependability, and “confirmability” of the research.

For the purpose of answering my research questions, I utilized two types of triangulation. First, I employed multiple types of data including observation, surveys, documents, and observations to verify data collected from the participants (see Figure 5).

Second, I used information gathered from multiple stakeholder groups in order to confirm or corroborate received information from varied perspectives (see Figure 6). According to Merriam (1998), member checking is the process in which the researcher is “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (p. 204). Member checking, asking participants to verify the analysis, guarantees that there is a linkage between the analysis and the reality that is perceived by the study’s participants.
### Table 7

**Documentational Table for the Development of Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of Categorization</th>
<th>Temporal Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A priori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origination</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where does the authority for creating categories reside?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>3, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretative</td>
<td>3, 4, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verification</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On what grounds can one justify a given category?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referential</td>
<td>2, 5, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>3, 4, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>3, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative</td>
<td>1, 2, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nomination</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the source of the name used to describe a category?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Category Label Key:**

1. Communication is the Key
2. Strong, Innovative Leadership
3. Different Meaning of Parent Involvement
4. It Takes a Village to Raise a Child
5. What is the Parent’s Role
6. Attitudes
7. Time and Transportation
8. Safety and Security

(Constas, 1992)
Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) also recommended peer examination and debriefing which I included as a means to enhance internal validity and credibility. I used three peers not connected with the specific schools to check the work in a general sense for dependability. All are life-long teachers, principals, or supervisors and were from the East Tennessee area. I asked the three to read all interview transcripts and checked my assumptions against theirs. Trustworthiness was furthered by the use of verbatim participant language and accounts reported in the analysis in order to avoid bias in the researcher’s interpretation. I employed the use of an audit trail and continued investigation until reaching the point of saturation which ensured trustworthiness of the data analysis.
Figure 6. Use of multiple participant groups to verify information.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter is organized to answer my research questions: (1) How has NCLB influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers regarding roles of parents in schools?; (2) How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?; and (3) What are the reasons parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement? The chapter will begin with a brief introduction to the findings resulting from this study, describe the context in which the study takes place, present to the reader the major themes discovered during this case study as a result of collecting and analyzing a tremendous amount of raw data, and end with a concluding discussion. In the presentation of the findings, the reader is provided with direct quotations from administrators, parents, and teachers across five school systems (varying from rural to inner city, and county as compared to city school systems). Results from the analysis of descriptive surveys, documents, and observations are also provided in this chapter in order to triangulate or establish validity to the case study results.

The findings are based on an analysis of four main data sources. First, interviews were conducted with five administrators of selected East Tennessee Title I schools, five teachers, one from each of these schools, and 15 parents, three from each school. Second, a survey was distributed to all administrators, parents, and teachers at the five East Tennessee Title I schools. Third, I reviewed a collection of documents (see Table 4 in Chapter III for a listing of these documents). Fourth, my observations were
documented as field notes during my visits to the schools. For a complete description of data collection methods and procedures, see Chapter III.

This chapter will disclose the findings for this study. In order to ensure confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms for each of the selected sites and participants. Through the exploration of a wide array of answers to these question, this chapter explains how administrators, parents, and teachers who are directly involved in this study interpret the situation.

The Participating Schools

As stated in Chapter 3, a multisite case study design was employed using five schools systems in East Tennessee. Systems were selected to provide variation in demographics and system population. Directors (i.e., Superintendents) were asked to recommend administrators of schools that had established positive reputations in the cultivation of parent involvement. The administrators were then asked to recommend teachers and parents that had and were highly involved in their school. It was an assumption on the part of this researcher that parents who were highly involved with their children in school would also be perceived as being information-rich with regards to the focus of this study. Variances in other demographic factors within the sample were welcomed.

Table 8 presents the demographics of the participants in the study (See Appendix F for code chart). Structured open-ended interviews with administrators, parents, and teachers were the primary method of data collection. Although the interviews were audio taped and transcribed, confidentiality was assured and was maintained.
Table 8

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Ethnicity and Sex</th>
<th>Identification Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>1AF01W0409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>1PF02W0306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>African American /Female</td>
<td>1PF03B0204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>1PF04W0103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>1TF05W0505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Caucasian /Male</td>
<td>2AF06W1013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>2PF07W0308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>2PF08W0212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>2PF09W0102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>2TF10W2630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Caucasian /Male</td>
<td>3AM11W0308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>3PF12W0204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>3PF13W0703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>3PF14W0902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>3TF15W0203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>4AF16W0836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>4PF17W0207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>4PF18W0207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>4PF19W0309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Caucasian /Female</td>
<td>4TF20W0912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School (Pseudonym)</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Sex</td>
<td>Identification Code</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Caucasian/Male</td>
<td>5AM21W0330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian/Female</td>
<td>5PF22W0102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian/Female</td>
<td>5PF23W0103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Caucasian/Female</td>
<td>5PM24W0202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>AfricanAmerican/Female</td>
<td>5TF25B1111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Central Elementary.* Central Elementary School serves approximately 500 students. It is the kindergarten through second grade school in a city school system serving approximately 1,400 students. Although 100% of the schools in the system are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the 2006 per-pupil expenditure of $6,717 for the system is $752 below the state’s average of $7,469, and poverty levels place it as one of the poorest areas in Tennessee. Because nearly 71% of the school’s population is deemed economically disadvantaged, the school qualifies for Title I funding and is a schoolwide program. In the 2006-2007 school year, Whites made up 84% of the enrollment. Hispanics (10% of school population) constitute the largest minority within the school.

Central Elementary has had only one principal in its three years of existence. Due to Central Elementary looking so clean and new, the school appeared to have just opened its doors for the first time. The principal will be leaving to become a director (i.e., Superintendent) of an adjoining school system during the following school year. When I first entered, the principal was wearing a bright orange shirt and tie and was in the front door greeting parents at the beginning of the school day.
East Elementary. East Elementary is one of 18 schools in a county system that serves almost 12,000 students. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, it serves approximately 650 students in grades kindergarten through fifth. Only about 2% of East Elementary School’s students are non-White. Slightly more that 65% are economically disadvantaged qualifying the school to receive Title I funds, and East Elementary is a targeted-assistance school. In 2006-2007, the per-pupil expenditures of $7,140 were slightly less than the state’s average of $7,469.

The principal was beginning her tenth year as the leader at East Elementary. While the principal holds a doctoral degree, she never referred to that fact. The principal was pleasantly unassuming and appeared to be very positive and approachable as she walked to greet me in the parking lot of the school.

North Elementary. North Elementary has a 2006-2007 enrollment of approximately 400 students, 91% who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches. North Elementary is an inner city school in a large metropolitan area in a system with approximately 54,000 students. Comprised of grades kindergarten through fifth, the per pupil expenditure of $7,259 is more than $200 below the state average of $7,469. North Elementary is not among the only 58% of schools within the system that are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Fifty-six percent of the students are White, 34% are African American, and 8% are Hispanic. Discussing the diverse nature of the student population, the principal noted:

Yes, this is kind of like San Francisco, we have every nationality known to mankind in this building. We have six different languages spoken here. We send out our newsletters in Spanish and English; however, it doesn’t go out in the other four languages. (1AF21W0409)
The principal was beginning her fourth year as principal of North Elementary. She previously served as the assistant principal there and at another inner city school. When I arrived, there were two teachers in the car line greeting parents and opening car doors. The principal, a white female, was performing breakfast duty supervising the service in the cafeteria.

_South Elementary_. South Elementary serves approximately 600 students in a school system of approximately 6000. South is one of the nine county schools that are all accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. South Elementary contains grades kindergarten through the eighth with approximately 70% of the student body considered economically disadvantaged. Ninety-three percent of the students are White, 5% are African-American, and 2% are Hispanic. The 2006-2007 per pupil expenditure of $6,481 is almost a $1,000 less than the state’s average of $7,469.

The principal is elderly, having worked 36 years in the teaching profession, the last eight years as principal of South Elementary. She was sitting at her office desk when I arrived.

_West Elementary_. West Elementary School has an enrollment of approximately 500 students. The school is configured to serve grades kindergarten through fifth. Like all elementary schools within the county system, it is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Approximately 30% of the school’s students are in an ethnic minority group, the largest of which is Hispanic. Per-pupil expenditures for 2006-2007 of $6,677 are less than $800 below the state’s average of $7,469.

The principal was wearing blue jeans and a tee shirt and was greeting parents at the door as school began. The principal was completing his third full year and only his
eighth in the teaching profession. He always wore a smile, and kids constantly were hugging him. He had a consistent rapport with the students as they passed in the hall.

Parent Involvement at Participating Schools

In the process of examining the perceptions of parents and educators regarding parent involvement, I sought to determine what administrators, parents, and teachers viewed as the basic elements of their involvement. As described in Chapter 3, these parents were selected on the basis of a referral from their child’s principal, one that was based upon an observed high level of parent involvement. The implications that were drawn from the interviews with regard to the research questions pointed to minor differences in the priorities perceived by administrators, teachers, and parents. Documents (i.e., handbooks and agendas) from all five school systems had portions dedicated to transmitting information to parents that was mandated by NCLB concerning parent involvement. Parents implied during the interviews they were aware of the requirements for schools to promote and facilitate stronger school-parent partnerships, but virtually all seemed to place their personal agenda to the forefront.

The characteristics or philosophy of parent involvement at these schools as described by the school administrator (i.e., principal) in the initial interviews are summarized in Table 9. It became apparent the administrators and the teachers of the five schools in this study influenced the extent to which parent involvement was encouraged at each school. While most administrators held views and philosophies that were similar, each administrator held his/her own individual opinions and beliefs of the benefits gained.
Table 9

*Administrator’s Philosophy of Parent Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Parent Involvement as Characterized by Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary</td>
<td>I think it is crucial to developing relationships for one. Without the relationships I don’t think we can do our job. I know that a lot of our parents don’t have the education and they really need to help their child. So, I think it is our responsibility to also teach the students and the parents as well, that we have their support for this work. (1AF01W0409)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary</td>
<td>I believe it is essential; I believe it is essential for the child’s success. I do not think their parental involvement needs to necessarily have to be visible. They can be emotionally involved with their child, helping them do homework at home, and seeing all their needs are met, have everything they need ready to come to school. (2AF06W1013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary</td>
<td>I think the more parental involvement we have the more successful our children will be, for a number of reasons. I think our parents, if concerned about their child’s education, the kids will be apt to perform better; and they will be concerned about what they are doing in the classroom. We have had a problem with parental involvement in the past. We don’t have as much as we need. We have tried a number of different things, and I think we have more than when I started. (3AM11W0308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary</td>
<td>The parents need to be involved. They need to know what is going on. That way they can help them at home. When they are included in the activities, it makes school feel like a more important thing to them. If they are involved, they are going to be more supportive, and I have found the activities we have, we are getting out different parents with big groups of parents that we have never seen before in the last several years. Because of that, attendance is better, their work is better; it is doing what it supposed to do. (4AF16W0836)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>I am a strong believer in parent involvement. Parents need to be involved in the educational process; we have great parent involvement in this school. (5AM21W0330)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60
Virtually all administrators mentioned the importance of increasing parent attitudes in a positive way, and increasing parenting abilities.

Teacher’s philosophies (see Table 10) were similar to administrators and parents. In Table 10, the teacher is representative of all teachers at each school. The common ground is that all groups have a belief and commitment that students do better in school and stay in school longer with strong parent involvement. Parent involvement in student education includes everything from making sure children do their homework to attending school functions and parent-teacher conferences, to serving as an advocate for the school, to working in the classroom. In addition to increases in students’ grades, teachers recognized benefits in other areas that affect student achievement. Teachers characterized the importance of increasing parenting abilities and the improvement of the school climate.

Parents’ philosophies (see Table 11) were centered on an attempt to convey a message of support to their own child and to know more about their own child’s needs. In Table 11, the parent quoted is a representation of all parents at that school. Some parents saw their involvement as a means to garner more help for their own child, while others attempted to benefit all students with their involvement. Childhood experiences were cited as factors that motivated them to be highly involved with their own children’s schooling. Increased student performance and an awareness of the overall school climate were benefits deemed important in the philosophy of most parents.

Parents agreed with administrators and teachers that a high degree of parent involvement could hold benefits for the schools as well. Most parent responses focused
Table 10

*Teacher’s Philosophy of Parent Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Parent Involvement as Characterized by Teacher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary</td>
<td>I think it is very important that parents be involved, I think parent involvement can range from just home involvement with their kids to involvement at the school, and there are multiple levels of parent involvement. But, I feel like it is really important for students to be successful that their parents are involved in their education. (1TF05W0505)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary</td>
<td>I think being in this area our parents are just trying to make ends meet and they are meeting themselves coming and going, just trying to keep their bills paid. And they want their kids to do well, but they don’t necessarily have the time or make the time to be there for their kids. And some of them don’t have the ability to be able to work with their kids so education is important to them as yes, you need to be in school, you need to be good, and you need to do your best. But there is not enough parent involvement as there should be, and I don’t think it is because they don’t care. I think it is because a lot of them can’t or don’t have the time to do it. (2TF10W2630)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary</td>
<td>It is a team effort, if you get your parents to working as a team with you it is pretty easy to get those kids to do what you want them to do. My philosophy is the more parent involvement the better outcome I am going to have in May. (3TF15W0203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary</td>
<td>I think we do a good job, we do a lot of activities that involve parents and invite parents to things, and we have good attendance. Muffins for Moms, Donuts for Dads, they come in and also read with their kids. (4TF20W0912)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>Well, at this level it is always very high, parent involvement at this school is very high, and I think that is a good thing. I think the children need to see their parents around, if they are visiting they are letting the children know they are involved in what they are doing and interested in what is going on at that school. Because it makes them want to learn more at least with my own experience with my son, kids are happier. Because, as they go on you don’t see a much, as they get older. (5TF25B1111)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

*Parent’s Philosophy of Parent Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Current Parent Involvement as Characterized by Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Elementary</td>
<td>I am so involved with my children’s education, that they know I am here and I care for them. I let them know how much I care for them by my presence and working at this school. I have lived at this school since my 4th grader was in kindergarten. This is what I do. (1PF02W0306)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Elementary</td>
<td>It is important that parents are involved, to be a part of their child’ education. Know who their friends are, who they are involved with, and also their teachers. Getting to know the way teachers are with them, and understand they are with your children, once they are in school more than you are with them. So, it is very important to be aware of what is going on with your children. (2PF07W0308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Elementary</td>
<td>I think the more involved you are with your child the more successful the child will be at school. A child is more comfortable when they feel they have your support at home and at school. (3PF13W0703)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Elementary</td>
<td>There should be more parents involved; we are one of the poorest schools in the county. Without volunteers coming in and helping the teacher, which is done a lot, teachers wouldn’t have time to teach. They would have to run their own copies and other things, with parent volunteers they have more time to teach. There is more structure for the kids if they are in the classroom. (4PF18W0207)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Elementary</td>
<td>It makes a big difference for the kids. It is good for the parents to know what is going on with their kids. I seems the children that are doing fine always have their parents at events such as open house. The children that are having problems, their parents never show up. (5PM24W0202)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
upon the help that parents could offer to teachers and principals who were perceived as being overworked.

The philosophies of parent involvement stated by administrators, teachers, and parents all held beliefs in several benefits for education. The following summarizes the benefits of parent involvement at the participating schools that were included in the discussion of the separate philosophies: (1) improved overall school climate, (2) increased positive parental attitudes, (3) increased student performance, and (4) increased parenting abilities. The comments indicated that even a minimal amount of parent involvement would have a significant effect on children, parents, and teachers alike.

Research Question #1: How has NCLB Influenced the Views of Administrators, Parents, and Teachers Regarding Roles of Parents in Schools?

The role of the parents in the education of their children still has various or diverse meanings to many people. In order to better analyze the data and answer this research question, I used the key concepts (i.e., words and phrases from theoretical framework, review of literature, as well as words used by participants and found in documents) to form codes and then grouped them into broader themes. These themes are as follows: (1) Communication is the foundation, (2) Strong, innovative leadership is a key component in the success of a school, and (3) The definition of parent involvement has various meanings for the participants. Information received from the interviews along with data from surveys, observations, and documents helped develop the themes that are addressed in answering this research question.
Communication is the Foundation

The first theme answering this research question situates communication in the school as the primary basis for the roles that parents played. The lead administrator or principal is a key factor in this communication. The process of communicating is Type 2 among Epstein et. al. (2002) six types of involvement. Epstein noted that two-way communication between school and home with the child being the central focus is vital. Communication, therefore, is a key ingredient in any parent involvement initiative. Throughout the interviews, the principal’s lead role in involving parents and setting the tone for the school was continuously presented. The following administrators described some of the issues involved with communication.

Before I came here, we were having about 1,700 office referrals for 400 kids. The only thing parents were hearing, phone calls whatever, is your child is suspended, your child has been bad, so when I came, I started making positive phone calls every day. You know, especially calls to the kids who were bad. We find anything, so the assistant principal and I make positive phone calls home everyday. We write positive letters every single day. I do lots of home visits. Do the workshops with parents myself, so just trying to make sure I have contact with every single parent, that is my goal. (1AF01W0409)

One must always attempt to communicate with one’s parents, try to be very open and welcome with parents. I greet parents when they come in the door and talk with them when they leave. (5AM21W0330)

Teachers were asked to respond to questions regarding what role they felt that they should play in involving parents in the school. The following statements illustrate their feelings:

Communicate, communicate, communicate, and I’m not always the best at communicating. I’m not one to pick up the phone and call. I’ve sent notes home, I have asked for conferences, I make myself available for conferences, and when I do need the parents, if they have come in, I tell them anytime they need to talk to come by, they are not interrupting. I asked parents to come and sit in class and see what is going on, see what is expected of their kids, I do that every year. We need to make cookies and invite parents to come in. Try to be very open and positive with my
parents, the old saying, no news is good news, sometimes maybe, no feedback is okay. They are satisfied with the way things are. They feel comfortable enough. I have never had too many problems with communication with parents. (2TF10W2630)

I call my parents, I send a weekly letter home, individual students that I try to target as early as possible, and I have regular phone calls whether they want to hear from me or not. They do. I have even gone to the car line and talked to them. (3TF15W0203)

To see that the child is present at school and ready to learn was perceived as just a beginning in a parent’s role. Parents wish to be involved to model the importance of school to their child. By their presence at school they are communicating to their children and others that school is an important endeavor. This parent expressed her role as:

We should have our child prepared, ready for school instruction, here. I think if I have a question for the teacher, I need to address it to that teacher and not send it through my child, so to speak. I see a lot of that, but I think, as a parent, we have a duty to also keep that communication line going. I think that is another problem, too. A lot of parents just send the children to school. They are here to learn that sort of thing, bring their homework home and that’s where it all ends. And that is not where it all ends. (2PF08W0212)

Indeed, in some cases, parents used terms that implied almost a support staff or partnership role, as with this parent:

I think it is very crucial that parents are involved with the school and their children. Without parent involvement, there are things that just can’t be done. Homework is not going to be fulfilled. Communication is just a big deal to me. Without communication between the parents and teachers and the student, there is a breakdown, and we’re just not going to be able to move ahead if we don’t have that parent involvement with the student and the teachers. (2PF08W0212)

Strong, Innovative Leadership

The second theme that helps to answer research Question # 1 considers the principal and teachers as the leaders or the importance of strong, innovative leadership. In this leadership role the principal is the primary source for encouragement for a high level of
parent involvement. The administrators’ responses indicated that they, too, appreciated how crucial their leadership is in making parent involvement a part of their school’s culture. The principal is a vital leader, and the realization that NCLB has affected this leadership was evident in the information shared during the interviews:

We looked heavily at that [parent involvement] at the beginning of this school year. As you know, probably, inner city schools are notorious for not having parent involvement. This year I wanted to know exactly what they meant by increased parental involvement because they kept putting that in our school improvement plan, of course. This year we determined that parental involvement would mean (1) getting back the daily behavior folder every day, signed, (2) coming to the parent report cards, the parent activities every week, (3) listening to our lesson line messages and following up on any notes, and (4) volunteering in the classroom. So we are just in the quantitative data on that, how many times each parent is coming in. (1AF01W0409)

The way we do it here is that my parents are very outgoing and very forthcoming with suggestions. They will send me letters. They make observations around the building about things that might need to be changed or things that might need to be done, and they will send me suggestions. I do listen to the suggestions and sometimes have used some of the suggestions they have sent in. Most of our parental involvement here, probably 75 percent is not visible, because they work. We’re in a community that has boat companies. They are working at night or working late afternoons. You can call them if you need something, they will send it in. They will see that homework is done, see that notes are signed, and things like that. (2AF06W1013)

In addition, there were instances in which teachers’ provided the message that parent involvement was an expectation at their school. Teachers conveyed the belief that they could not succeed without the help from parents. These two teachers described examples:

I think it is very important that parents be involved. I think parent involvement can range from just home involvement with their kids to involvement at the school, and there are multiple levels of parent involvement. But I feel like it is really important for students to be successful that their parents are involved in their education. (1TF0FW0505)

I can’t change their home life. I think that if some kids could just go home and have supper, take a bath, and have mom and dad go over things, and get in bed at a decent hour, and get up early the next morning. Home life, I can’t change home life, but I see
that as the biggest thing. Having some continuity or stability at home, if my parents would just take the time to go over assignments with the kids, let me see your homework, if I had this year maybe seven instead of the three out of my class that the parents consistently checked over their work, I would think that was wonderful. Something as simple as that. (2TF10W2630)

Clearly, what administrators do to encourage and nurture parent involvement in their schools determines the tone of the school. Principals must be available for parents and motivate and model the concept of involving parents at their school. The following parent reinforces the importance of the principal’s role in this area:

I think parent involvement here is very good, and the principal does a very good job anytime I come in to do anything. If I am just popping popcorn for the kids, he is very positive about you being here and real appreciative, comes around and shakes your hand and tells you, he’s glad you are here. The office staff is very nice, always welcome you when you come in. I think that there are a lot of parents that volunteer here. I think there could be more, but they always have something for you to do, today I am cutting out box tops to send off. General Mills box tops are worth 10 cents each. I bundle them up and mail them in for the school, and they get a check back. I’m just here with a little bit of time to do that. I don’t mind to do it at all, and then they appreciate it when you do it. I think parent involvement is pretty good and think it is easy to be a volunteer here. (3PF12W0204)

Parents displayed the belief in the notion of the principal as the chief factor in the leadership role of the school and the source of the formation of the view they held. Overwhelmingly, the participating parents perceived their involvement had been strongly encouraged by the administrator at the school. When asked if they felt the principal encouraged their involvement one parent replied, “She is always welcoming, visible. She’s always there, out, goes through lunchroom” (2PF07W0308).

Other parents responded:

I think she should encourage the teachers to keep the parents more involved. She is always in the hallways if I have a question, she is readily available. (2PF08W0212)

One, she tries to get the children excited. She gets on the intercom and says stuff, makes them laugh, be funny, helping them have thoughts that stick in their minds, where when they go home they will encourage parents to want to come, sends home
letters, sends home monthly newsletters with everything that goes on, and then if something is not on there, she will send another letter. She goes around to the classrooms and talks to the kids and tries to talk to them so they will take it home to the parents. If the children are excited about it, the parents will be too.

(2PF09W0102)

He is very parent friendly and probably more so then any principal I have ever seen. Very open with all parents, door is always open and you can come in, always.

(3PF12W0204)

Well, he is a very personable person. I’ve noticed anyone that comes through the door, like school functions, like field day last week, he was going around, kind of like a politician, ‘nice to see you’, going around to each family, shaking hands saying ‘hi’, being friendly, making them feel welcome. (3PF13W0703)

We are so lucky to have him here. I think he is very involved with children’s lives. You can come in that door, male, female, black, or white it doesn’t matter, he is still right there, checking on you problems, involved with what is going on with the children. (3PF14W0902)

Only parents and teachers at one school, South Elementary, had negative comments about the principal. Interestingly enough the responses on the surveys (see Appendix G) from this school did not support this position. Only two parents surveyed believed that the principal did not make herself available to parents, in contrast 45 other parents considered she made herself available. Negative comments from interviews concerning this principal mirrored this, “If she has a problem, she will call you, if not, no” (4PF19W0309). When asked their beliefs about the principal and what role he/she played as a school leader, one parent commented, “She does nothing” (4PF20W0912).

The interviews from Central Elementary were more positive and reflected and enforced the comments from the first three schools. The following statements represent actions on the part of administrators that are perceived by parents as fostering parent involvement:

Every time I have been through here in the morning to drop off my child, the principal is standing at the door; and when we come every six weeks for awards’ day,
he is doing the awards’ ceremony. He is usually always early and stands around late
to be able to talk to parents, and I see him out at a lot of community events. I think
he is very involved in the county and town. (5PF22W0102)

Oh, he’s wonderful. He makes you feel welcome. He is going to be missed very
much when he leaves. Because he’s out there every morning greeting, if he doesn’t
catch you coming in, he catches you when you go out. I mean (it) makes you feel that
you’re important to this school. He is very impressive. (5PF23W0103)

He has always made us feel welcome. He is usually out front. We see him every
morning. When I am volunteering I notice he goes around to every class, checks in to
see if you are supposed or not supposed to be there. He does awards assembly for the
kids, always in there. He is positive, complimentary of the parents that come,
encourages parents. Kids enjoy parents coming. He has always been real positive,
encouraging, helping out and everything. He is here every morning. We asked who
was a good kindergarten teacher when our child first started? Who do we need to talk
to? Is there certain teachers we would like better? You get a few names, some better
than others. He was very helpful. We came in and talked to him. We had a couple of
teachers we had requested. He showed us through the school, introduced us. This is
where kindergarten is. This is where they will be going. Here is different classrooms.
If you have a request for a teacher, I’ll see what I can do to help you out. He has
always made us feel welcome here. (5PM24W0202)

The impressions garnered from administrators, parents, and teachers of the No Child
Left Behind Act were varied. Ranging from a lack of knowledge to complete

misinformation to knowledgeable individuals, NCLB brings a response to most inquiries:

I think that most of NCLB has brought about a positive impact at least as far as we
have seen, and the Reading First Grant and things like that, but it has been a positive
impact on us. I think there are some things as far as testing goes that I am not
completely comfortable with. That would be the right word as far as I guess how the
scores are looked at. (1TF05W0505)

I don’t know. I have never really sat down and thought about it. My kids are zoned
for another school, and I bring them here everyday for school. I don’t know.
(1PF02W0306)

Well, until recently I didn’t know what it was, and I kept hearing it, and I always
thought that when I was in school we had grouping. You were in low, middle, or high
group, and that was where you stayed, and then I thought they were integrating the
groups, where there would not be anymore groups. There would just be kids all mixed
in and helpers to help the one’s behind that needed a little help. Earlier, that’s what
I thought; and, then, with Title I this year, I went into a class that the whole class was
Title I, a developmental kindergarten, so really up until then I had never had a child
in Title I classes that helped children that needed extra assistance. (2PF07W0308)

I think it is a great idea, but very unrealistic. I don’t feel that every child can make it. I think some are always going to stay the same. No matter what you do some are not going to not be left behind, up to par, not with every child. (2PF09W0102)

The idea behind it is good, but it is irrational and anybody knows whether you’re working with somebody on a job or at school you know people are never going to be the same or what they should be. 2014, everyone supposed to be on grade level, yea right. I think we have lost common sense, and I think the state should have more say so in what is going on then the federal government. There needs to be standards set, but it has gotten too bureaucratic. (2TF10W2630)

The surveys conducted with administrators, parents, and teachers (see Appendix G for complete survey results) are consistent with the interviews. Parents at all five East Tennessee Title I schools involved in the study feel they are welcome at their school, believe the principal makes him or herself available to parents, and consider the PTO active. The involvement or benefits of Title I and NCLB was either considered lacking or beliefs were held because of lack of knowledge. The parent’s responses to the survey items are summarized in Table 12.

The principal surveys display a consistency that principals feel that parent involvement is a worthwhile endeavor. Administrators report (see Table 13) that they do practice the initiatives illustrated in the survey instrument. The principal was considered by all parties involved in this study as the leader of the school, and it is reflected in the beliefs of parents in the activities they believe are taking place. The data gathered from all schools whether inner city, rural, or suburban are essentially parallel. An exception, one principal (East Elementary) stated their PTO was not active, while 100% of her teachers were in agreement, but, 67% of parents at this school stated they had an active parent organization.
Table 12

**Responses to Survey Questions From Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Percent Responding “Yes”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents serve on advisory, Tennessee Comprehensive Systemwide Planning Process (TCSPP), improvement or other committees</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active PTO</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups included in the school’s decision making</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the principal make him or herself available to parents</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe you are welcome at your school</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in the revision of the school district’s curriculum</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in the school’s decision making process</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped develop you as a leader</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar with Title I</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has No Child Left Behind benefited your child</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have input into how Title I funding is spent</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe Title I is benefiting your child</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following passage of NCLB do you believe involvement has increased</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13

*Responses to Survey Questions from Administrators and Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Administrators</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Responding “Yes” (N=5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent Responding “Yes” (N=78)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents serve on advisory council, the Tennessee Comprehensive Planning Process (TCSPP), improvement or other committees</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active parent organization</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents included from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group in the school’s decision making</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make yourself available to parents</td>
<td>Not asked of Administrators</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the principal communicate his/her expectations to you regarding parent involvement</td>
<td>Not asked of Administrators</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you wish to involve parents at your school</td>
<td>Not asked of Administrators</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents involved in the revision of the school district’s curriculum</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents involved in the school’s decision making Process</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help develop parents as leaders</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I services an integral part of your school’s educational operation</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB effected the beliefs that parents have about the benefits their children are receiving</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents included in how Title I funding is spent</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I is benefiting your students</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of decision making following passage of NCLB to have increased for parents</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings of this study suggest that parent involvement is more likely to occur at schools that have a leader who encourages and nurtures the concept with the people who are most important to its success—parents and teachers. The principal is also deemed as the motivator and role model for any mandate that is pushed by the federal or state government.

According to the administrators and teachers surveyed (see Table 13), administrators see parent involvement as almost a perfect operation. Teachers report a little less satisfaction. As a result, parents’ roles are definitely not as consistent in their perceptions as the role held by administrators and teachers.

The survey data illustrate that the interaction and opportunities are looked upon differently by the involved parties. 100% of administrators believe that parent involvement has increased since passage of NCLB, compared to 32% of teachers, and a meager 19% of parents. A greater disparity is the belief that Title I is benefiting their child, teachers at 93%, compared to only 37% of parents.

The Definition of Parent Involvement has Various Meanings for the Participants

The term parent involvement appears to mean many things to many people. Findings from this study suggest that parents wish to know and understand their roles at the school, but they simply do not. While parents need to be presented with clear expectations, administrators, parents, and teachers do not agree on these roles. It is essential that parents and educators understand that raising student achievement involves much more than improving what goes on in the classroom. It is unfortunate that there is often competing views on what the focus should be.
Epstein’s Type 3 involvement, the act of volunteering, is the most often seen act of parent involvement. The role by a parent of just volunteering to be in a class, usually their own child’s, and just be with their child or be a helper for the teacher is prevalent. While administrators and teachers expressed a desire to have parents perform more important tasks, in virtually every case, parents and administrators alike seemed to have a common operational definition of parent involvement based upon only one typology, i.e. volunteering as described by Epstein (2001). This was expressed by a number of parents:

I think a parent can play any role they can, just be a classroom helper or helper in the office, maybe lunchroom, wherever they need them to be. I think they could find a place where children look up to them, and their own children look at them with more respect if they’re in the school, I think any helping role they can do. (2PF09W0102)

I see myself as a very involved parent. I go out of my way to keeping contact with the teachers and make sure my child is progressing the way he needs to progress. I always try if they’re having parties or any functions. I always make every effort to be there. I contribute items to the school if the teacher needs any such as tissues, hand sanitizer, pencils, whatever. I’ve always tried to make myself available. If you need something, let me know. I will be glad to help you get those things. (3PF13W0703)

I think they should play an active role. I think they should always know what goes on in their children’s lives, whether it be school or anywhere they are at. I think you should know what the teacher requires of them, what activities they are supposed to be doing, what level they are on, whether they are reading up to level, or are they falling behind. I think if a parent is not involved, a child can slip behind. (3PF14W0902)

Parents should be very involved, very supportive, and come to school events, volunteer, anything they can do to help the school, because it takes the whole community to work with the school. You have to go with what the teachers want, too. I have found out different teachers want different involvement, so you have to base it on that, but there are ways you can volunteer other than just in the classroom, PTO, and book fair, things like that. (5PF22W0102)

I guess, volunteering my time, if it is needed for that class, to help some children that are not as advanced as others in any class you are in. If that teacher needs to help with a certain child, just like the Hispanics we have here, to help them out so they can get more advanced in America. I think that would be good if they have
the time to do that. (5PF23W0103)

The pattern which helped develop this theme was a lack of knowledge of what NCLB truly requires. The misconception appeared in what teachers and parents perceived of each other’s role in parent involvement. When asked the question of whether or not parents played a part in the school district’s curriculum development or in the decision making process, 70% of parents said “No”; and 87% said they “didn’t know or No.” In the school’s effort to develop parents as leaders, 83% said “no” or “didn’t know.” Teachers, when asked the same question about leadership, responded by saying 67% “yes.” They did try to develop parents as leaders.

Teachers responded on the surveys to how Title I funding is spent with 63% stating knowledge of how these funds are spent. This compared to only 10% of parents is a clear message demonstrating lack of knowledge of how these funds are spent. The one belief held by all is that everyone involved is for whatever is best for the individual child’s success.

All administrators vocalized the importance and desire to have parents of low socioeconomic and of various ethnic/racial status take roles in the school as part of the parent involvement process; however, the fulfillment of this desire was not as evident as in other areas of parent involvement. The schools’ staff stated they wanted to have parents of different socioeconomic and ethnic/racial backgrounds as part of the parent involvement process; nevertheless, many of the parents when asked if these groups were involved just commented that they knew they were welcome to attend school functions.

Expectations in the interviews from the school’s administrators, teachers, and parents focused on learning and high levels of parent involvement. This was exhibited, despite
living in low socioeconomic areas or ethnic/racial status. Stories were revealed that demonstrated the impact of diverse parents and the efforts to involve all participants.

One administrator when asked about involving parents of diversity responded:

> Oh, yes, we are very diverse here with approximately 25% Hispanic population, very small percentage of Black and Asian kids, but we try to involve everybody that wants to be involved. Certainly on our school improvement plan and not just that. We just went through SACS accreditation and with those sorts of things, and everything else we do, we always try to have at least one Hispanic parent and one white, one black, one Asian. It doesn’t always work out because we don’t have that many Asian kids, but we always try to incorporate and give them an invitation. (3AM11W0308)

The themes that were demonstrated clearly parallel the perceptions that were explained by administrators, parents, and teachers toward the roles of diverse parents in schools influenced by NCLB. Firstly, all students were held to high expectations and standards and this was communicated to everyone involved; and, secondly, the leadership influence at the school was directly responsible for the vision and culture of the school.

The impact of the school leader is vital in this process, by setting the tone in modeling expected behaviors and expectations, shaping a vision, cultivating it, and holding stakeholders accountable to get the job done. Throughout the study, the single most important and influential individuals were the school leaders.

Research Question #1: A Summary

In the displaying of the data of the views of administrators, parents, and teachers, it became quite evident that NCLB has affected parent involvement very little. In virtually every case, parents and school officials alike seemed to have a common operational definition of parent involvement based upon only one typology, i.e. volunteering as described by Epstein (2001). When questioned about the ways in which they had been involved, nearly all parents responded wholly in terms of the volunteer work on behalf of
the school. Likewise, administrators and teachers, unless led in other directions through questioning, were usually focused upon the effect of parent volunteers.

The data from this study suggest that the administrator or leader of the school’s efforts to incorporate parents and teachers in the process of education through traditional parent meetings are not effective. A token individual or a signed attendance sheet does not guarantee the quality of a parent-school meeting. It was apparent that we can longer define parent involvement based on just bodies present, even though a packed house at an activity or event is something to be considered worthwhile. Typical meetings such as PTO may no longer be considered a fruitful meeting in getting parents involved in a true process of decision making for the school.

Finally, and perhaps most encouraging, responses of both parents and school officials indicated an agreement that parent involvement is tremendously important. Indeed, when questioned about NCLB’s effect, parent involvement was perceived as even more important than previously thought. The realization that the leader of the school is the person that sets the tone and the vision throughout the school year was prevalent. If the leadership is respected by the staff, community, and parents, parent involvement was evident in their schools. While administrators expressed a desire for more leadership from parents, they never expounded upon how to enlarge the limited number of leadership roles.

Research Question #2: How has the Implementation of NCLB Impacted the Aspects, Characteristics, and Components of Parent Involvement?

The findings of this study reveal a number of impressions that attempt to answer this question. To accomplish this task, the responses were analyzed from those closely
involved, that is administrators, parents, and teachers. During the interviews, surveys, observations, and review of documents, a number of aspects, characteristics and components of parent involvement were described. The implications that were drawn from the data during the answering of this research question were the necessity of having everyone involved and the lack of knowledge that all parties have concerning NCLB.

“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child”

East Tennessee Title I schools could be the village described in the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” because of the intricate intertwining of the home, school, and community as they come together for school activities. The question of whether the village was coming together for the good of the child or the opportunity to break bread together was elaborated on by various administrators and teachers. Food seemed to be an effective means to inspire parents to come out because each event that was mentioned in interviews or observed was jammed with parents, grandparents, and other siblings. The following voices illustrate the roles and opportunities that administrators and teachers at various schools offer to evoke parent involvement.

They are constantly being invited to come and eat lunch with their kids. Any time I see them in town, I will say something like I don’t know how you work or what hours you work but please come and eat lunch with us. You’re welcome to come and eat lunch. Anytime we have a parent conference, I reemphasize to them the school is there. It is here for them. They are welcome to come in anytime; they can visit their child’s class anytime. In our newsletter, we always say you are welcome to come anytime to visit. (2AF06W1013)

Anything that involves the children performing, or anything that involves food. We had 600 people here the other night for a talent show and hot dog supper. (2AF06W1013)

Anytime we feed them they will come. Spaghetti suppers, pizza suppers. Anytime we have a dinner they will come, or if there is an activity they are interested in. Like we are looking at a building project sometime in the next couple
of years. Therefore, parents will come see if their kids are going to be in a K-5 or K-8 school. But food is a big catcher. (3AM11W0308)

I think we do a good job. We do a lot of activities that involve parents, and invite parents to things. And we have good attendance, Muffins for Moms, Donuts for Dads. They come in and read with their kids. (4TF17W0912)

The question of what is parent involvement and what is actually occurring and its effectiveness was very much an integral part of the participants’ answers. What is parent involvement in the context of federal legislation? The requirement that parents serve on advisory committees and be on leadership teams, and the realization of how much impact or power they really possess was evident. This research question unfolded the dilemma of what degree parents and school officials hold similar perceptions regarding the roles of parent involvement within their schools. The implications that were drawn revealed a significant “disconnect” between the parties.

In describing their efforts to get parents interested and cultivate higher levels of parent involvement, school officials mainly referred to activities and the number of parents present. Sign-in sheets at events where food or eating were an integral component were documents that enforced the idea that food was an important ingredient in getting parents involved. In no cases did the administrators or teachers refer to problems associated with the limited number of leadership roles within those groups. Having sign-in rosters where parents were present is what would be looked at by federal monitors. But this comment from an inner city parent may shed light on their participation:

I sit in at the beginning of the year so they (school officials) have a parent, and they state where funds go and where they are going to spend it, and I just agree with them because they need it. I’m not going to say no you are not going to do that, but I sit in at the beginning of the year and see where they are going to disburse the money. (1PF03B0204)
The principal at the same school when asked about her involvement in how Title I funds were spent made the following observation:

Our Title I budget is divided into three different sections by the powers at central office. So, when I’m allocated my budget, I am told I can spend it on staff development, equipment, and this year they added parent involvement along with materials. So, what usually happens, and I don’t know if you are familiar with our county, they expect us to write grants. But Title I gives us most of the money in staff development, so we have all this money sitting here for staff development, but we don’t have enough for computers and equipment. So, I think maybe if we had more say so on where the money could be allocated, instead of them assigning a certain amount of money to each category, I think that would help. But other then that, Title I is phenomenal. Just for the support they give us and the support they give the parents and personnel, they are really supportive. (1AF01W0409)

The administrator at South Elementary, when asked how No Child Left Behind and Title I impacted at her school, made this comment about funding and how the program was run:

Title I has a big budget, and we use it. We have a parent activity every month. It’s amazing that parents come out. We usually serve refreshments and things of that nature. We have newsletters that go home, we have a table out front that we buy supplies for. We don’t have room for a parenting room that they would like for us to have, but we are getting new benches for the parents. (4AF160836)

The administrator at West Elementary had this to say about Title I funds:

I think we do well with Title I. We are the largest Title I school in our county, per free and reduced population. We have around 70% depending on what day of the week it is. We get monies accordingly; we use those monies to supply extra teacher assistants, extra computers, extra software, extra parental involvement, everything Title I tells us to do. We try to follow through. We have a manual. We try to dot all our i’s and cross all of our t’s. (3AM11W0308)

The question on the survey asking parents if they had input into how Title I funding was spent had only 10% saying yes, with 90% saying no, or they didn’t know. Parent and teachers responses in the interviews ranged from no knowledge to feelings of expertise. The parents from West Elementary gave responses of “Probably not” to
“No, not at all,” and “I know we get those papers every year that explain Title I, but whether we read it or not I don’t know.” Even the teacher at West Elementary stated, “Not that I can recall.” Parents and teachers at South Elementary reflected these views somewhat with such comments as a teacher stating, “Roughly, I have some grasp of it,” to parent’s comments of, “No”, “No”, and “No.”

It is clear that among parents and teachers interviewed, that the input into how funds are being spent has boundaries. Administrators and teachers stated that they desired input, but their own input was limited in many areas. This was reflected in the following comments:

I know everything I need to know. I haven’t really been involved because I have never felt that my children needed any of the services. I think everything, to some extent, is mentioned in the handbook. (5PF22W0102)

One parent at Central Elementary echoed this statement with, “I might have gotten a pamphlet. Nobody has explained it to me one on one” (5PM24W0202). Two other parents at the same school gave an emphatic, “No” (5PF23W0103 & 5PM24W0202). This dissatisfaction with and explanation came from a parent at the inner city school, “It probably has been explained to me, but it just never stuck. I guess I don’t really know” (1PF03B0204).

East Elementary which was the only targeted assisted school; and, if the parent’s children were Title I, hopefully, their comments would seem to illustrate this point, “There has been things sent home; and, to be honest, my kids weren’t Title I so I can’t tell you what they said” (2PF07W0308). One of the other parents stated basically the same thing, and the parent that had a Title I student said, “Yes, letters were sent home.
Teachers explained it to me the best they could. We also had Title I meetings regularly, where they explain it in more detail” (2PF09W0102).

What is the Parent’s Role?

Administrators, parents, and teachers have different interpretations of what parent involvement means. Administrators felt a key factor was that the school and teachers were putting forth an effort to get and keep parents involved in their children’s education. Teachers at all schools kept logs on their parent contacts, these documents were turned in to the front office to defend their efforts.

Administrators, parents, and teachers, when referring to schools and parents, always used the terminology of the other parents, not putting themselves or their parents in a category of not fulfilling what they considered their basic obligations. The role that a parent should play in their involvement or in the decision making process in the school, which was Type 5 involvement according to Epstein (2001), is discussed in the following comments:

I think the parent needs to be involved and be there, but I don’t think they need to be coming in the classroom and telling the teachers what to do. Like myself, I have an education but not in teaching. The teachers do. So I respect that, and I know there are some parents that will come in and say this needs to be done, why are we doing this, and pitch a fit, blah, blah, blah. I don’t think that. I think the teachers need to be doing what they are taught to do, and we are there to help in any way that we can help them, not be a hindrance. (2PF07W0308)

I would not say that teachers want input from parents. I am really close to my child’s teacher, but I have very little input. Like when they are doing certain things, we will discuss it. I believe she is always looking for ways to help my child. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty. But she hasn’t asked me, as a teacher, give me some ideas to help your child. (3PF13W0703)

A teacher at South Elementary was vehement in her comments regarding the parent’s role by stating, “A parent should play no part in hiring or firing I think they
should be involved in some parts, but not that kind of control. That would be a little too much” (4TF17W0912). A parent at the same school felt the roles of the teacher and the parent could be explained as, “The teachers know if my kids misbehave I will be here. My kid will act different when it goes back to class” (4PF19W0309). This parent felt the role of the parent should be, “To work with their kids to help them learn by reading to them, here at school or at home” (4PF20W0912). Teachers were much more explicit with what they considered the separate roles of teachers and parents.

No, I think the place for parents is to voice their concerns, Religion is important to me and a lot of my kids. If someone is offended by something, there should be an alternative offered. As far as them having say so in everyday things, no. In business they don’t ask. (2TF10W2630)

A parent at South Elementary when differentiating between the parents and the teachers roles said, “They (parents) need to come in and be interested in everything, but you still have to let the teachers do their job” (4PF18W0207). This was reinforced by a Central Elementary parent who commented, “I am not one that wants to get up there. I am fine the way it is. I think there would be some parents I wouldn’t want to be in my child’s class” (5PM24W0202). A teacher at West Elementary differed to some extent by stating, “All decisions made whether they be teacher or principal or even higher should go through the parents” (3TF15W0203).

Parents expressed the belief that the parent should communicate with and support the teacher. Support in learning at home was an important factor common to many. This was characterized by one parent:

I wouldn’t say that teachers want input. I am really close to my child’s teacher, but I don’t have any input in the classroom, like in what they are doing. We will discuss things. She is always looking at ways to help my child. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty. She has told me what to do at home to help my child, but she doesn’t want my ideas at school. (2PF08W0212)
One point is clear: administrators, parents, and teachers have to get the same messages regarding the roles of parents in parent involvement. Administrators and teachers have the responsibility of creating opportunities for parents to become involved. It is readily apparent that parents vary in their aptitude and skills at assessing and utilizing opportunities for parent involvement that the school offers. The documents such a parent sign-in sheets and observations of parents present in schools indicated that schools attempted to encourage and increase parent involvement.

Research Question #2: A Summary

NCLB has left parents and school officials in a quandary over what roles parents should undertake in schools. Parents and educators state that parents’ roles in the school are undefined or unclear. Motivating factors for highly involved parents varied. The response of accountability usually coincided with a desire to just know what was happening. Some parents saw their involvement as a means to garner more help for their own child. Through the comments of those closely involved with the five East Tennessee Title I schools, data revealed a belief that all parties felt they must work together for the success of their school. To make a parent’s time spent at school worthwhile, the administrator or teacher must clearly define the role of parents in his/her school, and then this must be communicated to all stakeholders. The data from this research indicated that parents do seem to desire to be involved, but they are unclear of their role.

Communicating, or what Epstein (2001) described as Type 2 involvement, was the second most recognized typology behind volunteering in the context of shared participant experiences. Administrators, parents, and teachers all recognized the importance of
effective communication and often lamented its absence. This theme was present through all the individuals interviewed.

The lack of knowledge that exists about the roles of parents in schools is defined differently by administrators, parents, and teachers. Definitely a clearer definition of parent involvement as defined by NCLB would be welcomed. As one parent referred to the implementation of NCLB, “I think parents are a little more involved, just because it is emphasized so much more” (2PF09W0102). The administrator from East Elementary while admitting to this new emphasize stated, “There is nothing that NCLB has done, or nothing they could put in that would make it (parent involvement) different” (2AF06W1013).

Research Question #3: What are the Reasons Parents of Students in East Tennessee Title I Schools Cite for their Involvement or Lack of Involvement?

The third research question of this study concerned the perceptions of parents with regard to their involvement or lack of involvement. Specifically, it sought to determine the barriers perceived by parents and if these barriers were under a school’s control. It is evident that times have changed and the reality of the cultural change, and its impact upon parenting that is taking place in our society. The realization is also present that poor parents and children are a prevailing element of our society and that class (i.e., socioeconomic status) is a significant player in how things are perceived. Three components were recognized as keys in why parents are involved or for their lack of involvement in our culturally changing society: (1) the element of time and difficulties in transportation, (2) safety and security, and (3) attitudes.
Element of Time and Difficulties in Transportation

Overwhelmingly, the major reason for involvement or lack of involvement as perceived by the participating parties was the element of time and the difficulties of transportation. Virtually all expressed the belief that work, single-parenting, the dynamics of family problems, and the characteristics of today’s American society have all had ill effects upon the degree to which parents have time to be involved. Additionally, they all saw these elements as generally outside the ability of the schools to correct. Several of the parents said they had made the choice not to work outside the home during their child’s elementary schooling so that they could maintain a higher degree of involvement. While parents and administrators share many of the same sentiments, administrators were vocal in stating:

In terms of why parents are not involved: (1) lack of transportation in getting here, and (2) also that they have had bad experiences in their educational careers and just not seeing the school as something positive. (1AF01W0409)

Work schedules, and we have parents and children that are 20 to 25 miles away from school, so it is the living proximity to the school. And with our high level of free and reduced, we have a large number of uneducated parents, and they are afraid to come to school. I have parents that are afraid to come to the principal’s office, just to come in and talk. It’s their past experiences at school. (2AF06W1013)

We have a lot of parents that work more than one job. We have a lot of parents that just have one car so if the daddy is at work, momma can’t come to any meetings at school or things like that. We have a lot of parents who don’t have any transportation at all. If we had meetings at their house, they would come. I will say that if we do kindergarten or pre-k roundup, we do do home visits. I always ask two teachers to go together instead of individually. A downfall for us is we don’t meet parents’ needs of getting out to them and reaching them when they don’t have the opportunity, the opportunity to come in. Transportation is a great issue that parents have to overcome. (3AM11W0308)

Transportation, our area is huge. You get into our side roads. It is quite a trip because we have parents who can’t bring their kids to school if they miss the bus. We have low income kids, and gas prices are, wow. (4AF16W0836)
Meanwhile, parents while not differing to a large degree believed:

I feel like they are more qualified than I am. That is what their education is all about is their classroom management. I believe if my child is an issue in the room they need to address that with me. But outside of that, no I don’t think the teacher has an obligation to send me some type of communication only as in what expectations are in their room. But not necessarily to council me on how their room should be. (2PF080W0212)

I see my role as anything that I can do. Being a working mom, it is a little harder, but whenever they ask for parent volunteers, I volunteer as much as I can. Classroom helper, help with extra-curricular activities, and activities they have in the evenings, whether it be fundraisers or just, we had a talent show. Anything they need help with and they ask, I help when I can. (2PF09W0102)

The comment was made by a parent, “I’m not one that believes in no paddling. If my child misbehaves, he deserves what he gets, but not to a point that I think it is not deserved” (4PF18W0207). The following administrators commented on how they perceived the current climate:

Our parents that do work, maybe not offering the classes or meetings at seven or eight o’clock when it would be easier for the parents that are getting off from work, but my staff is whipped at that point so just trying to find the balance of what’s best for my staff, what’s best for the parents, and then where do we meet in the middle I think that is hard. (1AF01W0409)

Some teachers are more open to parental involvement than others. So, the greatest barrier would be that if a parent didn’t feel as welcome than they are not going to be as likely to come in. It could still be a good teacher, but, just doesn’t like somebody watching them. Some don’t care if there are three or four people in there, would put them aside working in reading groups, or doing something, so it depends a lot on the teacher’s attitude. (5AM21W0330)

School Safety and Security

A second theme in answering this research question for involvement or lack of involvement was recognized in the need for improved safety and security. In the post-Columbine society, remembering 9-11, and recently the Virginia Tech shootings has caused some parents to look more to safety as a reason for involvement. Schools have
tremendous responsibilities to ensure that access to students is safely controlled. The questioning of with whom your child is associating and a growing fear of deviant individuals has caused parents to look at school in a different light. The following quote by an administrator emphasizes the importance he believes parents place on safety and the need for a secure school environment.

A lot of factors, that go into that. Parent involvement has probably increased because of Title I. I am monitored because of NCLB to see if I am meeting my guidelines, and I have documentation, so many things we have to do. Because of NCLB, we are watching our p’s and q’s. I think 9-11 has encouraged parents to come in and watch their elementary babies, but when you get to middle and high school, they don’t want moms and dads around. I think they are a lot of things. Kids are babied more now then when I first started in education. But maybe mom and dad need to baby those kids to a certain point, and it is our job too whenever that point is reached and go from there and work with a variety of kids and still be involved with the school. (3AM11W0308)

The following parent voices reflect the importance of school safety in getting parents involved:

I think the schools are understaffed, and I realized that my child in kindergarten. There are a lot of activities she does, she couldn’t do without parent volunteers, that are very good activities that need to be done, but the teacher doesn’t have an assistant all day. So there are times she couldn’t do them without a volunteer. That is important, and it is important that the parent be involved in school so you get to know your kid’s friends, who your kids are hanging around and with. (3PF12W0204)

I think parents are involved just because society has changed. That is what I would say. I would lean that way. I think people with just the way things are happening, I think people want to be involved in school. You can look at how many people are looking at educating their children at home with home schooling. That was never done when we were in school. No, I think schools have changed. Parents are more worried about their kids at school. You’re seeing all these crazy things happening at places all over. It’s not that much, but it’s publicized enough to get you fearful. It’s right there in front of you. The world is getting smaller and I think more people are feeling that they need to be involved. That’s my opinion. I want to be at the school to see where he’s going. I want to see who’s here. I want to get an idea what they are doing with him, the kids he’s around. We have made ourselves, and we have been welcomed to do that. They don’t have a problem with us coming here and being involved. (5PM24W0202)
While parents want to be near their students, stricter regulations and guidelines conveyed by school authorities or the seeing of the need for improved building security could be a barrier to greater involvement. An indication from this data is that the parent involvement that is taking place is not what these schools desire. The leadership in all of these schools was open to new ideas and answers for their questions of why more parents were not involved. No Child Left Behind had and is impacting because of the realization that it is present. Whether the impact is to the standards written in the law is very much in doubt. While most accountability standards are to be reached by 2014, the accountability of the parent involvement requirements, if only met by having sign in sheets and bodies present, may be a foretelling of the results of NCLB in 2014.

Attitudes

The roles of parents have changed and schools must adjust to those changes. This theme describes that administrators and teachers attitudes have changed toward parent involvement. Parents also noted that they were no longer invited into classrooms. The following comment by a parent displays her fear in having an open door policy for parents:

Well, I can understand some apprehension in involving some parents, but I think they need to encourage that. But in the same way I can understand how you are almost afraid to invite that because you don’t know what you are inviting. If that makes sense? How often do school programs and things try to get a sense of community? I think that is real important. But I can see the apprehension of the teachers. I would feel like anytime a parent came in, there would be a conflict. Just human nature, and typically when a parent does take the time to come, it is something. (2PF07W0308)

As the administrator at West Elementary explained:

I would like for our parents to be more involved in their children’s education first and foremost. I would like for a really strong committee of parents to come in
and set up a really strong advisory council to help me make decisions that would help the school. A lot of parents think if they have really strong teachers teaching their kids that is all they have to do. I would like a council that would step up and help with decision making. We do, but by invitation, and they have to be encouraged to come in. (3AM11W0308)

How does an administrator make such an idea work? The concept that parents and teachers truly want what is best for the students is a starting point. The voice of one parent may be the answer for what it takes to get parents truly involved in decision making. “Leadership can make a big difference. If parents feel more comfortable, they will come in” (3PF14W0902).

The theme of NCLB and the impact permeated among the teachers interviewed. The following are excerpts from interviews with teachers at three of the schools:

NCLB has nothing to do with our levels of parent involvement. Personally, I don’t think that the NCLB document itself has increased parent involvement. Like when I compare it to when I was in school and now, I think parent involvement is a lot dependent upon the parents themselves, and I don’t think that you can say we are going to increase parent involvement and do all these things if the parents don’t want to be involved. They are not going to. And for the different school situations I have been in personally, there has always been a lot more parent involvement in say a private school versus a public school, a parent that doesn’t work compared to a working parent, those parents that don’t have to spend so much time trying to provide a home can be more involved in the school day. It doesn’t mean that they are not involved at home, and I think that it is really hard to mandate parent involvement. I think you can make efforts to improve it. You can make efforts to make them feel more comfortable in your school, and we have done that here and it has increased. We have so many things going on at our school. It is hard to say that one distinctive thing is the reason for the increase. It was multiple things that are happening at the same time, so it would be hard to distinguish that our increase in parent involvement was directly related to NCLB because there were many multiple factors going into it. (1TF05W0505)

I think parent involvement has decreased. I can tell a big difference, maybe it is a sign of the times. I don’t think parents are valuing education the way my parents and my peers’ parents did. It has been a struggle for me to get my kids in my class to get their parents here. (3TF15W0203)
Well, I feel it is a good thing, but it has put a lot of pressure on the teachers as far as scores, testing, and that type of thing. I’m not involved in that process, but I hear them talking, how they feel about it, but I understand the need for trying to have NCLB to try to educate all children; I think it is a goal they may never reach because there is always going to be some child falling through the cracks.

(5TF26B1111)

Research Question #3: A Summary

Administrators and teachers constantly stressed that parents are welcome and were needed in the school. Parents echoed this sentiment, but their comments on the mundane tasks that were sometimes assigned did not encourage or nurture parent involvement. During my observations at the schools, no administrator or teacher asked volunteers to assist in meaningful ways at the school.

The administrators and teachers involved in this study created a picture of willingness to involve parents, but they were also cautious to set boundaries for parents that were involved. As one parent described what he felt teachers believed about some parents that were attempting involvement, “I think there would be some parents I wouldn’t want to participate in my child’s class. That is what the teacher is there for. If the teacher trusted the parent, maybe it would be ok” (5PM24W0202). Teachers expressed reluctance for parents to come and go as they pleased. Structured parent involvement programs were requested by teachers that limited the access of parents to come into the school and into their classrooms. The teacher at East Elementary requested help from parents in asking, “…something as simple as going over assignments with the kids, asking to see their homework” (2TF10W2630).

Overwhelmingly, the participating parents perceived that their involvement had been strongly encouraged by the schools. Barriers to parent involvement that were mentioned
were usually outside of the schools’ control, such as time. Time was seen also as a major impediment by both administrators and teachers.

NCLB was familiar terminology to all interviewed and was not held in high regard as to the benefits that students were gaining. This was reinforced by the surveys that demonstrated only 34% stating NCLB benefited their child and 19% responding that parent involvement had increased since its passage.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Implications

Whether teachers and school administrators desire parents to be involved in America’s public schools or not is no longer an option. Under the provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001: No Child Left Behind (NCLB), parent involvement is now a federal mandate. Moreover, with the heightened emphasis upon student academic performance and school accountability, schools need not only the support of parents but also their full involvement in meaningful partnerships. Historically we have witnessed major changes in the relationship between school and the home. What is being mandated, though, is far beyond the “bake sale” model (Henderson, 1988) of parent involvement that was evident in the early decades of the twentieth century and the sharp delineation of responsibilities between parents and teachers (i.e., that teachers are experts and should make all decisions regarding teaching and learning and parents should simply support the school) that grew as a pattern in the 1950s (Berger, 1995). The home lives of parents and their children have changed tremendously in recent history. But the questions remain: (1) How have our schools changed in response to these societal changes; and (2) Are we trying to squeeze modern day parents into our old and outdated educational system? We know that involving parents in meaningful ways in the education of their children has always been somewhat problematic. But what must schools do to facilitate the meaningful relationships that are now mandated and are necessary? Researchers (Epstein, 1987; Myers & Monson, 1992) remind us that when
schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life.

Epstein et. al. (2002) in the first sentence of School, Family, and Community Partnerships asserted, “There is no topic in education on which there is greater agreement than the need for parent involvement” (p. 1). After having reviewed a large body of theory and research on parent involvement, I can conclude that the stakeholders involved in this study utilized many of the practices encouraged by parent involvement writers and researchers (e.g., Chrispiels, 1991; Epstein, 2005; Gestwicki, 2006; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Practices such as workshops, training programs, family resource centers, home visits, surveys, regular conferences, translators, newsletters, annual reviews, family participation in academic goal setting, etc. were all mentioned.

Epstein’s Framework of Involvement

Additionally, by using the types of parent involvement framework developed by Epstein et. al. (2002) as my theoretical framework, I was able to evaluate how NCLB impacted parent involvement in selected East Tennessee Title I schools. In the conduct of this study, I was not testing Epstein’s work to see if it could be supported or refuted by the data I collected. I was merely using it as a lens through which to view the detailed process of parent involvement. The conclusions reached in this study were reflective of the data and pertained to administrator, parent, and teacher perceptions regarding the elements of parent involvement. A comparison of Epstein’s framework of involvement (see Table 14) to the five East Tennessee Title I schools demonstrates the focus or lack of involvement that exist. In virtually every case, administrators, parents, and teachers alike
Table 14

*Epstein’s Types of Involvement Efforts Compared with East Tennessee Title I School Efforts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Epstein’s Model Expected Results</th>
<th>Administrators &amp; Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1 Parenting</td>
<td>Parenting classes; Assisting parents to communicate the importance of education</td>
<td>Somewhat recognized</td>
<td>Only if prompted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 Communicating</td>
<td>Provide info; Schedule training workshops; Leadership workshops; Meetings; Celebrations</td>
<td>Readily recognized importance</td>
<td>Readily recognized importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3 Volunteering</td>
<td>Training; Inviting</td>
<td>Recommendations based upon</td>
<td>Recommendations based upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 4 Learning at Home</td>
<td>Involving in learning activities; Help in selecting and preparing for future</td>
<td>Only if prompted</td>
<td>Only if prompted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 5 Decision Making</td>
<td>Leadership training; Providing opportunities</td>
<td>Limited degree</td>
<td>Virtually nonexistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 6 Collaborating with the Community</td>
<td>Assist in accessing and developing partnerships</td>
<td>Virtually nonexistent</td>
<td>Virtually nonexistent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
seemed to have a common operational definition of parent involvement based upon one typology, i.e. volunteering as described by Epstein et. al. (2002). During the interviews it became quite evident that administrators based their recommendations of participating parents upon this criterion. When questioned about the ways in which they had been involved, nearly all parents responded wholly in terms of the volunteer work on behalf of the school. Likewise, administrators and teachers, unless led in other directions through questioning, were usually focused upon the effects of parent volunteers.

Communicating (Type 2) was the second most recognized typology in the context of shared participant experiences. The importance of effective communication was readily recognized and parents and educators often lamented its absence.

Parenting (Type 1) and Learning at Home (Type 4) found their way into administrators and teachers conversations to a limited degree, but parents commented only if prompted. Unless they were specifically asked, references to Decision Making (Type 5) were nonexistent according to parents, but administrators and teachers implied while it was lacking, they desired meaningful decision making assistance. References to Collaborating with the Community (Type 6) were virtually nonexistent among administrators, teachers, and parents.

Finally, and perhaps most promisingly, responses of administrators, parents, and teachers indicated an agreement that parent involvement is tremendously important. Indeed, when compared to the pre-NCLB experience, nearly all indicated that they perceived the active involvement of parents to be even more important in the educational experience.
By examining parent involvement at the selected five East Tennessee Title I schools three conclusions about the impact of NCLB on parent involvement are offered. The conclusions include: (1) School practices as well as family background influence parent involvement, (2) Outcomes of parent involvement can be both positive or negative, and (3) Collaboration of researchers with policy leaders and educators is crucial. These conclusions are discussed in detail below.

Conclusion One: School Practices As Well As Family Background Influence Parent Involvement

One of the first things that can be concluded from this study of how NCLB has affected parent involvement is that school practices are a crucial variable that influence parent involvement. This case study contributes and reinforces Epstein’s et. al. (2002) claim that “Teachers’ practices to involve families are as or more important than family background variables such as race or ethnicity, social class, marital status, or mother’s work status for determining whether and how parents become involved in their children’s education” (p. 45). The school practices that were discovered through this research included: (1) respect for families’ strengths and efforts, (2) the understanding of student diversity, and (3) the awareness of the skill to share information on child development. A parent from East Elementary reinforced the beliefs that NCLB has affected teacher practices and has thus been a contributing factor to increased parent involvement.

Parent involvement since NCLB has increased at this school and system I think, basically because we have a very involved staff. They go the extra mile to keep parents involved and to make sure we are kept up to date with everything that is happening. I see teachers spending time with parents to try to get them involved. I think it is the staff as a whole that has made parent involvement an important element in this school and system. (2PF08W0212)
Regardless of the difference in what motivates school personnel and what motivates parents, they share the same goals—the education of the child and the dream that children will like school, work hard, do the best they can, graduate from high school, go to college, get a good job, become good citizens, and have children and start the whole process over again. The specific dreams or goals that individual parents have for their children are not always known by teachers or administrators. How can these goals be attained or are children being lost along the way? As one parent commented, “The only way to keep children from being left behind is to have parents and school officials work to make dreams come true” (5PF22W0102). To answer questions about how to achieve these goals and objectives is the reason for studying parent involvement.

The public and public officials take the issue of improving education seriously, as is strongly evidenced by the prominence of the No Child Left Behind Act in the national educational policy agenda. NCLB gives importance to the family’s role in children’s learning as efforts have intensified to raise student achievement and reduce achievement gaps. The individual teacher may feel inadequate or have a problem in supplementing family efforts. Early childhood education, new commission reports, and national and state leaders pushing for universal pre-kindergarten programs are efforts that are underway to promote stronger family involvement in children’s education.

St. John (1995) made the case that principals, in particular, must realize that it is their attitude that, to a large degree, determines whether parents see themselves as unwelcome guests, instruments of school initiatives, or real partners in school restructuring. St. John’s study exhibited administrators that recognized the importance of parent
representatives on school councils, site-based management teams, committees, and other policy-advisory groups.

As Pena (2000) suggested, some teachers have not felt secure enough to welcome parents into a partnership. Few teachers have had significant preservice or inservice training in the development of effective home/school partnerships (Epstein, 1992). Providing instruction in parenting skills to those who need them, teaching non-reading parents how to read, and helping families obtain suitable reading materials for their home are factors within the control of educators. Burke (2001) described the training that teachers need in order to recruit and train parent volunteers. Elements included appropriate support behavior and academic support strategies as well as techniques in managing difficult volunteers. The data from this research demonstrated the need for Epstein’s Type 1 involvement, the training of parenting skills to be implemented. While it was stated by principals and teachers at nearly all of the schools, only North Elementary commented upon ways they assisted parents in this area. The administrator at the inner city school explained that her school had meetings and thus attempted to educate parents of the importance of parent involvement:

Our parents have very little formal education and sometimes educators, as you know, speak above the levels of our parents, and we’re very cognizant of that here. However, it is hard to get away from those educational terms where parents will actually understand them, so whenever we do have meetings or workshops I think sometimes the parents feel lost. I think that, through their inference for not coming back. I think time is another thing. But, we make efforts to have workshops to help train our parents. (1AF01W0409)

One teacher, when asked about NCLB’s effect stated, “…no change, it’s not the program. It’s the clientele.” She went on to explain, “…in this area with our socioeconomic conditions the way they are, the parents don’t understand, the points or the hints”
These comments imply that to make a parent’s time worthwhile, administrators and teachers must clearly define the roles of parents and teach the skills needed in their schools and communicate these roles and opportunities to all involved. Schools can accomplish this by providing parents with communication that is frequent, open, and informative. This goal is met by using a variety of means to let parents know what is going on at the school and inform them about their children’s progress. Communication in today’s society has advanced beyond the sending of notes home. New methods of communication, (i.e., e-mail, voice mail, parent notification systems, outside billboards) need to be investigated to realize their potential.

To give another perspective, Nicolini (2003) suggested that neither preservice training nor years of experience appeared to be predictors of teachers’ perceptions of parent involvement. Rather, in Nicolini’s study, that controlled for grade and socioeconomic status, the most salient predictor of positive teacher attitudes toward parent involvement was the level of teacher efficacy.

Conclusion 2: Outcomes of Parent Involvement can be Positive or Negative

The second conclusion we can draw from the experiences within the five East Tennessee Title I schools is the persistent misconception by all stakeholders involved with parent involvement that any parent involvement leads to all good things for students, parents, teachers, and schools. If students are having trouble in school, and parents and teachers meet, provide extra homework help, and conduct other corrective activities, then do these students become less troubled and more successful over time? A negative correlation may exist if Type 2 involvement, communication only occurs with parents of students experiencing academic or behavioral problems. Parent involvement is like any
practice, it can be done well or poorly. Poorly designed or badly implemented practices to involve parents will be ineffective or cause problems for students, parents, and schools.

The positive outcomes and the increasing of students’ independence by their ability to make age-appropriate decisions are documented by Epstein (1983). This study reinforced those views and also found that it is often mistakenly assumed that what is done to or administered to the student is best, instead of the student being the doer or the actor. Epstein found that age-appropriate decision making opportunities at school and at home increase students’ independence and produce other positive outcomes. Bronfenbrenner (1979) advised that socialization and education should be organized so that, over time, the balance of power is given to the developing person.

Conclusion Three: Collaboration of Researchers is needed with Policy Leaders and Educators

The third conclusion we can make about NCLB’s affect on parent involvement focuses on the collaboration of researchers with policy leaders and educators. The definition of successful parent involvement according to NCLB is more than reading with children, signing papers and folders, and preparation of materials. Educators implementing various activities to improve the six types of involvement (Epstein, 2002) may over time, if poorly designed, lead to decreasing a parent’s confidence about his/her understanding, or decision making, or interaction with their children. For example, some measures of Type 2 (Communicating) activities are negatively correlated with measures of other types of parent involvement and with indicators of student success. There should be no significant correlation of attending a conference and student success. If administrators and teachers communicate with families about good and bad behavior, then the negative
correlations between phone calls and notes and student behavior will diminish or disappear.

While policy leaders acknowledge a shared vision, the realization is that an involvement gap exists between parents and schools. That an involvement and achievement gap exists is evidenced by the prominence of the No Child Left Behind Act and the requirement for schools to promote and facilitate stronger school-parent partnerships. It is essential that parents, educators, and policy leaders fully understand that raising student achievement involves much more than improving what goes on in a specific classroom. However, it is the administrator, as the visionary leader, who must initiate and orchestrate a dialogue to overcome and close this gap. Schools, with parent help, must work to develop a unified philosophy that sees parents as partners and parent involvement as something that is desirable. While parents are seen as needing to be educated by administrators and teachers, administrators and teachers may need to be educated as to benefits of parent involvement and ways of working with parents.

So What Have We Learned

First, the knowledge that administrators and teachers can influence school practices and thus school practice can be an important variable that influences parent involvement became apparent. Although school practices may work independently, research and practical examples suggest that programs are stronger and of higher quality when federal, state, district, and school policies, funding, and technical assistance are linked. Second, the results or consequences of parent involvement at all levels for students, families, and teaching practices can be either positive or negative. It is important for educators and researchers to learn which parent involvement activities make a difference. If a parent is
contacted only after academic or behavior problems, parent involvement will probably have a negative correlation. Third, the strong connection for collaborative work and thoughtful give-and-take by researchers, policy leaders, and educators are largely responsible for the progress made in parent involvement.

Recommendations

Based upon an analysis of the finding of this study, the following recommendations for practice are offered. One recommendation would be to examine children’s family and home experiences, identifying those factors that influence learning. Examples of such factors include instruction for parents in teaching and in making learning materials available to supplement the teacher’s work at school, classroom observation to demonstrate methods of teaching, and parent responses to teacher’s questionnaires to evaluate their own child’s progress or problems in school. The realization is apparent that schools are the primary agencies for teaching students and that NCLB is the driving force behind the current focus on improving schools. Long before schools begin their work, teaching and learning take place in the home. The home and family experiences and the quality of home and family teaching make a large difference in how much children know and are ready to learn when they arrive at school. As a teacher from East Elementary said:

With NCLB we are dealing with educational issues not personal, not family life. I think we are wearing so many hats today. Schools are wearing so many hats. We are taking the place of ministers, Sunday school teachers, psychologist, and doctors, and no policy is going to change that. (2TF10W2630)

School officials must express to parents that they expect and want them to be involved. This can be done formally through frequent announcements and informally through actions and attitudes. The more often parents hear that they are expected to be involved,
the more likely they will be involved. Schools must provide a comprehensive range of options for parent involvement with a wide variety of times, places, and types of involvement. These options could include providing information and ideas to families to help students at home with homework and other curriculum related activities, decisions, and planning. Parent representatives instituted that form networks that enable all families to be linked.

Secondly, our nation’s attention is riveted on reducing the large achievement gaps that exist between minority and non-minority students, and between children from low-income families and families with higher incomes. The reform efforts of NCLB are primarily focused to reduce the achievement gap between these groups. The difficulties in transportation, along with safety concerns were themes discussed by administrators, parents, and teachers in this study. The small schools’ movement has gotten a great deal of publicity and might be an answer to get parents involved and develop a sense of ownership. Gas prices and economic woes might be less of a consideration if a child’s school were close to home. The question of transportation and the great distances that children travel on buses is ammunition for the advocates for small school reform. The inability for economically disadvantaged parents to be present and involved physically in our nation’s schools may be another example of our nation becoming a classed society. Parents deemed school size to be a contributing factor in their involvement. The sense of community in smaller schools was regularly cited. Closely associated with size of the school is the ability to communicate within it.

Thirdly, with the changes occurring constantly in our society, what should the focus of our efforts be? It is unfortunate that there are often competing views on what our focus
should be. Should the focus be upon the conditions outside of schools that have an impact on students’ capacity to learn, or should efforts be directly pointed at the schools? Why is the gap that exists becoming wider between schools and parents? The fear by teachers of lawsuits and the realization of unimaginable acts of violence that are occurring on our nation’s school campuses have caused everyone to reexamine their focus. Is it lack of involvement or the lack of being able to be involved? Are the experiences of parents who have had opportunities to take part in making meaningful school decisions as a part of their involvement in their child’s schooling significantly affected by such opportunities? If it were determined the ability to be part of a school’s decision making was affected, it could have major implications for school practice.

Fourth, No Child Left Behind is constantly stressing research based staff development. What about research based staff development for parents? If parents are more inclined to be involved when their children are small, the emphasis should be upon training those parents of children just beginning school. While parents’ responses indicated an agreement that parent involvement was important all through school, they indicated the tremendous importance of getting their children off to a good start. Parents indicated a change in attitude of students toward parent involvement as individual students’ need for independence increased as they grew older.

Areas for Future Research

Throughout the conduct of this study, I continued to discover several troubling questions regarding the development of meaningful partnerships and how accountability is obtained. These questions were never resolved, so I offer them for further examination.
The first area would be to attempt to answer the question raised by this research about the importance of the students’ role in school, family, and community partnerships. This study recognized that an intense and concerted effort to improve teaching can compensate to some extent for learning deficiencies present when students arrive at school. No Child Left Behind has well documented that there are deficiencies in our schools, but it is also clear that there often are shortcomings and deficiencies in the schooling and support children receive at home. Research is needed to tell us how much a particular investment in school effort can make up for under investment in the out of school environment, or vice-versa. Students are the key to the success of any parent involvement initiative, they are not only the reason for partnerships, students also are essential partners. The role of students that come from low-income families, single-parent families or conditions exist that result in a low quality of standard of life are seemingly at a huge disadvantage. While many children growing up in single-parent families are doing very well, just as many children in two-parent families are doing poorly is a reality that should also be recognized. What can neighborhoods, communities, private organizations, and governments do to compensate for this decline in the parent-pupil ratio?

As schools attempt to involve parents in leadership roles, the problem of a limited number of leadership positions being filled by what is perceived as a few more affluent or obedient parents is a problem that needs attention. A study is needed to evaluate and determine the methods for evaluating parent involvement. The lack of an evaluative component in parent involvement has been cited as a weakness by several researchers.

Finally, the experiences of parents of English Language Learner (ELL) students need to be examined. The impact of the interplay between cultural differences and parent
involvement practices in American schools is becoming more significant. If the inability of parents of school children to speak and understand the English Language excludes the children from effective participation in the educational program are steps being taken to address these barriers? Considering all the factors involved, are ways being orchestrated where training is being utilized? Administrators and teachers as well may need to be educated as to benefits of parent involvement and ways of working with parents.

Conclusion

The questions of what parents and schools need to know and do to develop and implement successful parent involvement programs have not been completely answered. There should be no question that involving parents in the education of their children still remains problematic and grows more troublesome as a child progresses through the educational system. This study contributes to the foundation upon which we build a full body of knowledge to communicate with, learn from, and assist others regarding parent involvement. As one administrator voiced, “Parent involvement is doing whatever is necessary on the part of the teacher and the parent and developing a relationship that is conducive for the child to succeed in school” (2AF06W1013). If parents and educators are going to improve the degree to which parents are actively engaged in meaningful partnerships, they must not leave the question to be decided by federal monitors checking off requirements. Rather, parents and educators must work together to learn all that they can about students’ needs and then join hands to work for the benefit of those students. It is important to believe that parents and educators can and must make a difference in schools. Parents can be an integral part of helping to meet whatever needs or goals that are established if administrators and teachers include them as true partners.
The effort to improve our schools and enhance home and family conditions in order to give all students a better chance to reach high levels and accomplish dreams is a goal of educators, parents and policy leaders. No Child Left Behind has ambitious national goals that will require serious efforts to address. The identification of family characteristics and home commitment play critical roles, as well as the knowledge that schools play a critical role in this effort. What should be the focus to accomplish the future that everybody wants? If this is not achieved, is it better to place blame on the school or the conditions outside the school such as the family, society, or the nation’s economy? To accomplish dreams schools and parents must proceed together. “If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them” (Thoreau, 1992, p. 303). The placement of this foundation toward fulfillment of dreams is a task of administrators, teachers, and parents. This desire for student’s success is the common ground that all groups in this study share.
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Appendix A

Project Information Sheet

The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study

(Interview Participants)

The interview you will be taking part in today will serve as data for my doctoral dissertation, The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study. The purpose of the study is to investigate and describe the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act upon parent involvement in selected East Tennessee Title I schools.

If you agree to participate in this research study, the interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete; and I will be asking you to provide feedback about your thoughts and experiences with parent involvement at your school. If you would feel more comfortable, I can provide you with a copy of the interview questions prior to the date of the scheduled interview. Later, I will provide you with a transcription of your interview for you to add or delete information if needed.

Since your participation in this research involves only these confidential interviews between you and me, there should be no risk or discomfort on your part. The benefits to participating in this study are to share your experiences so that parent involvement continues to be an integral part of your school’s success. You may disclose as much or as little as you like. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty and without loss of the rights and benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you
withdraw from the study before the data collection is completed, you data will be returned to you or destroyed.

If you would like to volunteer for this study or would like more information before deciding, please contact me at the phone number or address listed below. Thank you for your time and interest.

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr.
P. O. Box 331
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
(423) 295-4292
elton@monroek12.org
The survey you will be taking part in today will serve as data for my doctoral dissertation, *The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study*. The purpose of the study is to investigate and describe the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act upon parent involvement in selected East Tennessee Title I schools.

The methods that I will use for this study will be a audio-taped interview with the school administrator, a teacher, and at least three parents, distributing and collecting a survey to all certified faculty members and a representative sample of the parent population, and at least one day observing at the school where I will record field notes, collect and review documents, and record daily activities and procedures.

If you agree to participate in this research study, I will distribute to you a survey which will take a few minutes to complete. This survey is anonymous and should present no risk to you as an administrator, parent, or classroom teacher. You will be provided an envelope to place your survey in when completed. All completed surveys will be collected in a large, postage paid envelope by a designated person in the school office (someone other than the principal). This person will place all collected surveys in the mail to be sent to the researcher after sufficient time has been allotted for surveys to be completed and turned in.
If you would like to volunteer for this study or would like more information before deciding, please contact me at the phone number or address listed below. Thank you for your time and interest.

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr.
P. O. Box 331
Tellico Plains, TN 37385
(423) 295-4292
elton@monroek12.org
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

(Interview Participants)

I understand that this research is being conducted by Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., under the direction of Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., of the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I have read (or had read to me) the description of the research study as outlined above. The investigator has explained the study to me and has answered all questions I have at this time. I understand the purpose of the project and that I am being asked to participate in an interview which will be audiotaped and transcribed. The potential risks and benefits were discussed.

The interview you will be taking part in today will serve as data for my doctoral dissertation, *The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.*

If you agree to participate in this research study, the interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete; and I will be asking you to provide feedback about your thoughts and experiences with parent involvement at your school. If you would feel more comfortable, I can provide you with a copy of the interview questions prior to the date of the scheduled interview. Later, I will provide you with a transcription of your interview for you to add or delete information if needed.

Since your participation in this research involves only these confidential interviews between you and me, there should be no risk or discomfort on your part. The benefits to participating in this study are to share your experiences so that parent involvement continues to be an integral part of your school’s success. You may disclose as much or as
little as you like. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty and without loss of the rights and benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before the data collection is completed, you data will be returned to you or destroyed.

The information you share will be held in the strictest confidence at all times. The interview will be audiotaped so that I may review and transcribe it for my research. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Claxon Addition (on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus).

The only people who will be allowed to see the transcripts of the interviews beside myself are members of my dissertation committee and three peer reviewers. The identifying information will be stripped from what these people see and no interview data will be published in my dissertation or anywhere else without your review and consent.

Any findings that result from this research could possibly assist other Elementary Title I schools in increasing parent involvement. There is no payment for participating, or any costs to you other than the time it takes to complete the interview.

I freely volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of the rights to which I am entitled. I further understand that my consent may be withdrawn at any time with no penalty and that I may discontinue my participation in this research at any time.
If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study or the procedures used, you may contact myself or Dr. Anfara, my doctoral committee chairman, at the addresses or phone numbers given below. You may also contact the University of Tennessee’s Research Compliance Services directly at (865) 974-3466. If you choose to participate, please sign a statement of your willingness to do so. Thank you.

Participant’s Signature______________________

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr.                                               Dr. Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
P. O. Box 331                                                         321 Bailey Education Complex
Tellico Plains, Tn 37385                                         Knoxville, TN 37996-3400
(423) 295-4292                                                       (865) 974-4985
elton@monroek12.org                                                vanfara@utk.edu
Informed Consent Form

(Survey Participants)

I understand that this research is being conducted by Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., under the direction of Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., of the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I have read (or had read to me) the description of the research study as outlined above. The investigator has explained the study to me and has answered all questions I have at this time. I understand the purpose of the project and that I am being asked to participate in a survey. The survey you will be taking part in today will serve as data for my doctoral dissertation, *The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study*. The potential risks and benefits were discussed.

Since your participation in this research involves only this survey that is completed anonymously, there should be no risk or discomfort on your part. The benefits to participating in this study are to share your experiences so that parent involvement continues to be an integral part of your school’s success. You may disclose as much or as little as you like. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty and without loss of the rights and benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before the data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

The information you share will be held in the strictest confidence at all times. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Claxon Addition (on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, campus).
The only people who will be allowed to see the surveys beside myself are members of my dissertation committee and three peer reviewers. The identifying information will be stripped from what these people see and no personal data will be published in my dissertation or anywhere else without your review and consent.

Any findings that result from this research could possibly assist other Elementary Title I schools in increasing parent involvement. There is no payment for participating, or any costs to you other than the time it takes to complete the survey.

I freely volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and that my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of the rights to which I am entitled. I further understand that my consent may be withdrawn at any time with no penalty and that I may discontinue my participation in this research at any time.

If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study or the procedures used, you may contact myself or Dr. Anfara, my doctoral committee chairman, at the addresses or phone numbers given below. You may also contact the University of Tennessee’s Research Compliance Services directly at (865) 974-3466. If you choose to participate, the return of the completed survey constitutes your participation. Thank you.

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr.  
P. O. Box 331  
Tellico Plains, TN 37385  
(423) 295-4292  
elton@monroek12.org

Dr. Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
321 Bailey Education Complex  
Knoxville, TN 37996-3400  
(865) 974-4985  
vanfara@utk.edu
Appendix C

Interview Protocols for

Parents

Administrators

Teachers

The interview protocol used for this study was designed to gain insight into the following research questions.

1. How has NCLB influenced the views of administrators, parents, and teachers regarding roles of parents in schools?
2. How has the implementation of NCLB impacted the aspects, characteristics, and components of parent involvement?
3. What are the reasons parents of students in East Tennessee Title I schools cite for their involvement or lack of involvement?
Interview Schedule for Parents

I want to thank you for giving your time to help me in this study. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has emphasized a new role for parents and has made it clearer than ever before that parents are the key stakeholders in their children’s education. No Child Left Behind represents a major shift in thinking about the role of the federal government in public education and the mandates controlling Title I funding. I am trying to determine how parents are now involved in the decision making process in the education of their children, if parents want to be more involved, and also how parents want or do not want to be involved. I would also ask you to think about what the school could do to encourage more parents to be involved in the decision making processes.

You are one of three parents or guardians who were randomly chosen from a list of all parents or guardians of students at this school to be interviewed. All of the questions are matters of opinion, and I just want to know how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want. I would like to tape record the interview, so I am sure exactly what you say. No one at this school will hear any of the tape, and your name will not be on the tape. After the interview, the tapes will be taken to my home and transcribed. The notes from this transcription will also not have your name attached. You can decide to stop this interview at any time. If you decide after the interview is over that you do not want your interview to be used, the tape will be erased and the notes will be destroyed. Is it okay with you if we tape the interview?
1. How long have you had one child in this school? In what grade or grades is he/she?

2. What is your philosophy concerning parent involvement at your child’s school?

3. What are your impressions of the No Child Left Behind Act? Has your involvement in the decision making process of your school increased, decreased, or stayed the same since its passage in 2001? In what ways?

4. No Child Left Behind mandates and is financially controlled at the local education agency through Title I funding. Has this been explained in any form to you as a parent?

5. What role do you feel the parent should play in the decision making process of his/her school? Does this school have a policy to involve parents? Do you believe this school attempts to involve parents of diversity?

6. As a parent, what role do you see yourself playing in your child’s school?

7. Were you involved in the school in previous years? Does the school now do more things to increase your involvement?

8. What role should administrators and teachers play in involving you in the decision making process of this school?

9. What are your impressions of the Title I program at this school or other schools? Do you believe that Title I is spending funds to increase your decision making power in this school?

10. Have you ever completed a survey or been asked to evaluate the Title I program at this school? If so, has the program changed the following year? Positive or
Negative?

11. How does communication affect your involvement at school? What types of communication does the school use to foster your involvement?

12. Does the teacher invite your input into the decisions made in the classroom or at school? What role should the teacher play in involving you in the school?

13. Teachers choose among many types of activities to assist their students. Do you feel that involving parents is important at your school? Why? Why not?

14. How would you describe the principal’s decision making process?

15. Do you believe that by being a parent in a Title I or a Non-Title I school increases your ability to play a role in the decision making process?

16. Do you have any input into the Title I decisions at this school? If the answer was no, do you know why?

17. How would you compare the levels of parent participation in the decision making process prior to and following implementation of the newly required policy?

18. Are evaluation findings of the Title I program used to develop decision making policy and do these findings promote the improvement of student academic achievement, the social and emotional welfare of students, and the school’s teaching and learning environment? Why? Why not?

19. Is there anything I have not asked that is important about your relationship to this school?
Interview Protocol for Teachers

I want to thank you for giving your time to assist me in this study. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has emphasized a new role for parents and has made it clearer than ever before that parents are the key stakeholders in their children’s education. No Child Left Behind represents a major shift in thinking about the role of the federal government in public education and the mandates controlling Title I funding. I am trying to determine how parents are now involved in the decision making process in the education of their children, how teachers would like parents to be involved, and what teachers do to encourage parents to be more involved in the decision making process. I would also ask you to think about what the school could do to encourage more parents to be involved in the decision making processes.

You are one of ten teachers who were randomly chosen from a list of all teachers at this school to be interviewed. All of the questions are matters of opinion, and I just want to know how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want. I would like to tape record the interview, so I am sure exactly what you say. No one at this school will hear any of the tape, and your name will not be on the tape. After the interview, the tapes will be taken to my home and transcribed. The notes from this transcription will also not have your name attached. You can decide to stop this interview at any time. If you decide after the interview is over that you do not want your interview to be used, the tape will be erased and the notes will be destroyed. Is it okay with you if we tape the interview?
1. What grade do you teach? Have you taught at any other school?

2. What is your philosophy concerning parent involvement at this school?

3. What are your impressions of the No Child Left Behind Act? Has your involvement with parents in the decision making process of your school increased, decreased, or stayed the same since its passage in 2001? In what ways?

4. No Child Left Behind mandates and is financially controlled at the local education agency through Title I funding. Has this been explained in any form to you as a teacher?

5. Does this school have a policy to involve parents? What does this school do to try to get parents involved? Are parents of diversity included in any way different from the majority of parents in your school?

6. Do you feel the parent should play a role in the decision making process of this school?

7. What are your impressions of the Title I program at either this school or other schools in this county? Do you believe that Title I is spending funds to increase parent’s decision making power in this school?

8. Have you ever completed a survey or been asked to evaluate the Title I program at this school? If so, has the program changed the following year? Positive or Negative?

9. What role should teachers play in involving parents in the decision making process of this school?
10. Do you feel that involving parents is important in this school? Why?
   Why not?

11. What has your school done to enhance a parent’s role in involvement and
decision making?

12. How could parents be involved that would help you the most?

13. What role could Title I play or is Title I playing to assist you in your
   relationship with parents?

14. How would you compare levels of parent participation in the decision
   making process prior to and following implementation of the newly
   required policy?

15. Are the evaluation findings of the Title I program used to develop decision
   making policies and do these findings promote the improvement of student
   academic achievement, the social and emotional welfare of students, and
   the school’s teaching and learning environment? Why? Why not?

16. Is there anything else about parent involvement and decision making that
   should be included that we have not discussed?
Interview Protocol for Administrators

I want to thank you for giving your time to assist me in this study. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has emphasized a new role for parents and has made it clearer than ever before that parents are the key stakeholders in their children’s education. No Child Left Behind represents a major shift in thinking about the role of the federal government in public education and the mandates controlling Title I funding. I am trying to determine how parents are now involved in the decision making process in the education of their children, how teachers would like parents to be involved, and what teachers do to encourage parents to be more involved in the decision making process. I would also ask you to think about what the school could do to encourage more parents to be involved in the decision making processes.

All of the administrators who are willing will be interviewed. All of the questions are matters of opinion, and I just want to know how you feel. There is no right or wrong answers. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want. I would like to tape record the interview, so I am sure exactly what you say. No one at this school will hear any of the tape, and your name will not be on the tape. After the interview, the tapes will be taken to my home and transcribed. The notes from this transcription will also not have your name attached. You can decide to stop this interview at any time. If you decide after the interview is over that you do not want your interview to be used, the tape will be erased and the notes will be destroyed. Is it okay with you if we tape the interview?
1. What is your position here? How long have you been an administrator in this school?

2. What is your philosophy concerning the involvement of parents in their child’s school?

3. Would you define parent involvement? Would you define parent involvement in the decision making process?

4. What role do you play in getting parents involved in the decision making process? Do parents help make any of the decisions about this school? Do you make an effort to involve parents of diversity in decision making? How?

5. What are your impressions of the Title I program at this school or other schools? Do you believe that Title I is spending funds to increase parent’s decision making power in this school?

6. The survey and evaluations of the Title I program cause you as the school leader to take what steps? Does your program change because of these evaluations?

7. What governance or advocacy roles would you like for your parents to play?

8. What is the most successful practice to involve parents in the decision making process that you have used or that about which you have heard?

9. What do you see as the biggest problem or deficiency at this school? Could parents help the school with this problem? How?

10. How could Title I involvement help you the most?

11. How do you compare the levels of parent participation in the decision making process prior to and following implementation of the newly required policy?
12. Are evaluation findings of the Title I program used to develop decision making policy, and do these findings promote the improvement of student academic achievement, the social and emotional welfare of students, and the school’s teaching and learning environment? Why? Why not?

13. How do you report evaluation findings?

14. How do you assess the effectiveness of parent involvement in the decision making process in activities, procedures, and policy in the improvement of your school?

15. Could you identify barriers that exist to greater participation by parents in your school?

16. Is there anything about parent involvement in the decision making process that should be included that we have not discussed?
Appendix D

Surveys

Parent Involvement Survey for Parents

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. I am conducting a doctoral study regarding the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on parent involvement. The surveys are confidential so please do not place your name on the paper. This is a voluntary survey. Note, circle Yes, No or Do Not Know to indicate your answer.

1) Do you as a parent or do other parents serve on the school’s advisory council, TCSSP committee, improvement team or other committees?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

3) Are parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups included in the school’s decision making?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

4) Are you involved in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

5) Are you involved in the school’s decision making process?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

6) Has your school helped develop you as a leader?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know

7) Are the services of Title I familiar to you?
   Yes  No  Do Not Know
8) Is NCLB something that you believe has benefited your children?

Yes  No  Do Not Know

9) Have you input into how Title I funding is spent?

Yes  No  Do Not Know

10) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting your child?

Yes  No  Do Not Know

11) Have the levels of decision making following passage of NCLB increased for parents?

Yes  No  Do Not Know

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey. If you desire information regarding the collection of the data from the surveys I would appreciate your contact. If you have any questions:

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., Assistant Director of Schools
Monroe County School System
Phone Number: 423-442-7104
Parent Involvement Survey for Teachers

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. I am conducting a doctoral study regarding the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on parent involvement. The surveys are confidential so please do not place your name on the paper. This is a voluntary survey. Note, circle Yes, or No to indicate your answer.

1) Do parents serve on your school’s advisory council, TCSPP committee, improvement team or other committees?
   Yes  No

2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?
   Yes  No

3) Do you include parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups in the school’s decision making?
   Yes  No

4) Do you involve parents in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?
   Yes  No

5) Do you involve parents in the school’s decision making processes?
   Yes  No

6) Do you help develop parents as leaders?
   Yes  No

7) Are Title I services an integral part of your classroom or school’s instruction?
   Yes  No

8) Has NCLB effected the beliefs that parents have about the benefits their children are receiving?
   Yes  No
9) Do you include parents in how Title I funding is spent?
   Yes   No

10) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting you students?
    Yes   No

11) Have the levels of decision making following passage of NCLB increased for parents?
    Yes   No

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey. If you desire information regarding the collection of the data from the surveys I would appreciate your contact. If you have any questions:

   Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., Assistant Director of Schools
   Monroe County School System
   Phone Number: 423-442-7104
Parent Involvement Survey for Administrators

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. I am conducting a doctoral study regarding the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on parent involvement. The surveys are confidential so please do not place your name on the paper. This is a voluntary survey. Note, circle Yes, No to indicate your answer.

1) Do parents serve on your school’s advisory council, TCSPP committee, improvement team or other committees?
   Yes  No

2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?
   Yes  No

3) Do you include parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups in the school’s decision making?
   Yes  No

4) Do you involve parents in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?
   Yes  No

5) Do you involve parents in the school’s decision making processes?
   Yes  No

6) Do you help develop parents as leaders?
   Yes  No

7) Are Title I services an integral part of your school’s educational operation?
   Yes  No

8) Has NCLB effected the beliefs that parents have about the benefits their children are receiving?
   Yes  No
9) Do you include parents in how Title I funding is spent?

Yes  No

10) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting your students?

Yes  No

11) Have the levels of decision making following passage of NCLB increased for parents?

Yes  No

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey. If you desire information regarding the collection of the data from the surveys I would appreciate your contact. If you have any questions:

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., Assistant Director of Schools
Monroe County School System
Phone Number: 423-442-7104
Appendix E

Cover Letter to Survey Participants

Dear Parent:

Please take a few minutes (approximately 10 minutes) to complete the attached survey. Mr. Elton F. Frerichs, Jr., a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee/Knoxville, is conducting a mixed methods case study titled: “The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on Parent Involvement in Selected East Tennessee Title I Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.” This survey is necessary to supply a parent’s perspective regarding this topic. Please return the survey within one week to the school. If you have any questions, please use the information found at the end of the survey to contact Mr. Frerichs or call me at the school. Thank you for your cooperation regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Principal
Appendix F

Interviewee Identification Codes

1st character = School
1 = North Elementary
2 = East Elementary
3 = West Elementary
4 = South Elementary
5 = Central Elementary

2nd character = Position
A = Administrator
P = Parent
T = Teacher

3rd character = Gender
M = Male
F = Female

4th & 5th character = Participant’s Number
Ranges from 01 to 25 Total Participants

6th character = Race
W = White
B = Black
H = Hispanic
A = Asian
O = Other

7th & 8th character = Site Experience for Administrators and Teachers
Ranges from 01 – 35 Years Experience

Parents # of children in school
Ranges from 01 – 05

9th & 10th character = Career Experience for Administrators and Teachers
Ranges from 01 – 35 Years Experience

# of years children of Parent in school
Ranges from 01 – 15 Years

(E.g., 1PF01W0415 = North Elementary School, Principal, Female, First Interviewee, White, 4 Years at this school, and 15 Years Career Experience)
### Appendix G

**Tabulation of Survey Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Averages (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey Questions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Do you as a parent or do other parents serve on the school’s advisory council, TCSPP committee, improvement team or other committees?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes: 12%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No: 56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know: 32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raw Data:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 11, No: 54, Do Not Know: 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2: 56 responses—Yes: 2, No: 37, Do Not Know: 17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 10, No: 33, Do Not Know: 21</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 10, No: 22, Do Not Know: 19</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 92 responses—Yes: 9, No: 54, Do Not Know: 29</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes: 88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No: 7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know: 5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raw Data:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 84, No: 11, Do Not Know: 0</td>
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<td>School 4: 49 responses—Yes 48, No: 0, Do Not Know: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 87, No: 2, Do Not Know: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Are parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups included in the school’s decision making?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes: 28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No: 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Not Know: 62%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Raw Data:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 27, No: 10, Do Not Know: 58</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 11, No: 4, Do Not Know: 42</td>
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<td>School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 24, No: 6, Do Not Know: 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4: 50 responses—Yes: 11, No: 7, Do Not Know: 32</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 92 responses—Yes: 28, No: 9, Do Not Know: 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) Does the principal make him or herself available to parents?

Yes: 91%
No: 4%
Do Not Know: 5%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 87, No: 4, Do Not Know: 4
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 54, No: 1, Do Not Know: 2
School 3: 62 responses—Yes: 61, No: 1, Do Not Know: 0
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 45, No: 2, Do Not Know: 0
School 5: 92 responses—Yes: 78, No: 5, Do Not Know: 9

5) Do you believe you are welcome at your school?

Yes: 97%
No: 2%
Do Not Know: 1%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 93, No: 2, Do Not Know: 0
School 2: 56 responses—Yes: 55, No: 1, Do Not Know: 0
School 3: 63 responses—Yes: 61, No: 1, Do Not Know: 1
School 4: 50 responses—Yes: 48, No: 2, Do Not Know: 0
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 88, No: 1, Do Not Know: 2

6) Are you involved in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?

Yes: 13%
No: 70%
Do Not Know: 17%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 12, No: 67, Do Not Know: 16
School 2: 56 responses—Yes: 5, No: 43, Do Not Know: 8
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 9, No: 43, Do Not Know: 12
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 6, No: 40, Do Not Know: 5
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 15, No: 58, Do Not Know: 18

7) Are you involved in the school’s decision making process?

Yes: 16%
No: 68%
Do Not Know: 16%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 15, No: 65, Do Not Know: 15
School 2: 56 responses—Yes: 7, No: 42, Do Not Know: 7
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 15, No: 36, Do Not Know: 13
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 7, No: 42, Do Not Know: 2
School 5: 92 responses—Yes: 14, No: 59, Do Not Know: 19
8) Has your school helped develop you as a leader?

Yes: 17%
No: 64%
Do Not Know: 19%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 16, No: 61, Do Not Know: 18
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 7, No: 42, Do Not Know: 8
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 16, No: 31, Do Not Know: 17
School 4: 50 responses—Yes: 8, No: 39, Do Not Know: 3
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 14, No: 56, Do Not Know: 21

9) Are the services of Title I familiar to you?

Yes: 35%
No: 45%
Do Not Know: 20%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 33, No: 43, Do Not Know: 19
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 37, No: 17, Do Not Know: 3
School 3: 63 responses—Yes: 19, No: 26, Do Not Know: 18
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 11, No: 30, Do Not Know: 10
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 26, No: 44, Do Not Know: 21

10) Is NCLB something that you believe has benefited your children?

Yes: 34%
No: 23%
Do Not Know: 43%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 32, No: 22, Do Not Know: 41
School 2: 52 responses—Yes: 19, No: 11, Do Not Know: 22
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 21, No: 19, Do Not Know: 24
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 14, No: 13, Do Not Know: 24
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 33, No: 17, Do Not Know: 41

11) Have you input into how Title I funding is spent?

Yes: 10%
No: 59%
Do Not Know: 31%

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 10, No: 56, Do Not Know: 29
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 5, No: 37, Do Not Know: 15
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 6, No: 38, Do Not Know: 20
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 6, No: 32, Do Not Know: 13
School 5: 92 responses—Yes: 9, No: 50, Do Not Know: 33
12) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting your child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes: 37%</th>
<th>No: 11%</th>
<th>Do Not Know: 52%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 35, No: 10, Do Not Know: 50
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 35, No: 4, Do Not Know: 18
School 3: 64 responses—Yes: 23, No: 9, Do Not Know: 32
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 12, No: 8, Do Not Know: 31
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 27, No: 8, Do Not Know: 56

13) Have the levels of involvement following passage of NCLB increased for parents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes: 19%</th>
<th>No: 15%</th>
<th>Do Not Know: 66%</th>
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Raw Data:
School 1: 95 responses—Yes: 18, No: 14, Do Not Know: 63
School 2: 57 responses—Yes: 10, No: 11, Do Not Know: 36
School 3: 63 responses—Yes: 14, No: 10, Do Not Know: 39
School 4: 51 responses—Yes: 8, No: 9, Do Not Know: 34
School 5: 91 responses—Yes: 18, No: 10, Do Not Know: 63
## Teacher Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Averages (Percents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Do parents serve on the school’s advisory council, TCSPP committee, improvement team or other committees?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes: 96%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No:  4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 10, No: 1</td>
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<td>School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 6, No: 2</td>
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<td>School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 30, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes: 88%</td>
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<td>No: 12%</td>
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<td>School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 11, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 0, No: 8</td>
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<td>School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 30, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Do you include parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups in the schools decision making?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes: 97%</td>
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<td>No:  3%</td>
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<td>School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 10, No: 1</td>
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<td>School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 7, No: 1</td>
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<td>School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 30, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Do you make yourself available to parents?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes: 100%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No:  0%</td>
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<td>School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 11, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 8, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<td>School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 30, No: 0</td>
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</table>
5) Does the principal communicate his/her expectations to you regarding parent involvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>School 5</td>
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</table>

6) Do you wish to involve parents at your school?

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<th>School</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

7) Do you involve parents in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>School 3</td>
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<td>School 5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
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8) Do you involve parents in the school’s decision making processes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Yes</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9) Do you help develop parents as leaders?

Yes: 67%
No: 33%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 6, No: 5
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 4, No: 4
School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 8, No: 2
School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 8, No: 2
School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 20, No: 10

10) Are Title I services an integral part of your classroom or school’s instruction?

Yes: 96%
No: 4%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 10, No: 1
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 8, No: 0
School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0
School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 9, No: 1
School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 29, No: 1

11) Has NCLB effected the beliefs that parents have about the benefits their children are receiving?

Yes: 41%
No: 59%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 5, No: 6
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 3, No: 5
School 3: 8 responses—Yes: 5, No: 3
School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 5, No: 5
School 5: 29 responses—Yes: 9, No: 20

12) Do you include parents in how Title I funding is spent?

Yes: 63%
No: 37%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 7, No: 4
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 6, No: 2
School 3: 9 responses—Yes: 4, No: 5
School 4: 8 responses—Yes: 3, No: 5
School 5: 28 responses—Yes: 20, No: 8
13) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting your students?

Yes: 93%
No: 7%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 10, No: 1
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 7, No: 1
School 3: 10 responses—Yes: 10, No: 0
School 4: 10 responses—Yes: 9, No: 1
School 5: 29 responses—Yes: 27, No: 2

14) Would you compare the levels of decision making following passage of NCLB to have increased for parents?

Yes: 39%
No: 61%

School 1: 11 responses—Yes: 4, No: 7
School 2: 8 responses—Yes: 3, No: 5
School 3: 9 responses—Yes: 3, No: 6
School 4: 9 responses—Yes: 3, No: 6
School 5: 30 responses—Yes: 13, No: 17
Administrator Responses

Survey Questions

Averages (Percent)

1) Do parents serve on the school’s advisory council, TCSP committee, improvement team or other committees?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Yes: 100%
No: 0%

2) Does your school have active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations?

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Yes: 80%
No: 20%

3) Do you include parents from diverse racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups in the schools decision making?

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<th>Yes</th>
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Yes: 100%
No: 0%

4) Do you involve parents in the revision of the school district’s curriculum?

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<th>Responses</th>
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<th>No</th>
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Yes: 100%
No: 0%
5) Do you involve parents in the school’s decision making processes?

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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Yes: 100%  
No: 0%

6) Do you help develop parents as leaders?

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Yes: 100%  
No: 0%

7) Are Title I services an integral part of your school’s educational operation?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Yes: 100%  
No: 0%

8) Has NCLB effected the beliefs that parents have about the benefits their children are receiving?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>School 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Yes: 100%  
No: 0%

9) Do you include parents in how Title I funding is spent?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes: 100%  
No: 0%
10) Do you believe that Title I is benefiting your students?

Yes: 100%
No: 0%

School 1: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 2: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 3: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 4: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 5: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0

11) Have the levels of decision making following passage of NCLB increased for parents?

Yes: 100%
No: 0%

School 1: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 2: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 3: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 4: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
School 5: 1 responses—Yes: 1, No: 0
VITA

Elton F. Frerichs, Jr. was born in Loudon, Tennessee. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a Master of Science degree in Guidance from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He later added an Education Specialist degree in Administration and Supervision from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. He has since completed study for a Doctor of Education in Educational Administration and Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Working experience has included time spent with the Tennessee Department of Corrections, and 24 years as a teacher, counselor, principal, Federal Programs Director, Assistant Director of Schools, and currently the Secondary Supervisor of Instruction for the Monroe County School System in Madisonville, Tennessee. He currently resides in an area bordering the Nantahala National Forest in western North Carolina.