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Elementary Principals' and PTA Parent Representatives' Perceptions about the Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement in Georgia Title I Schools

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ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS’ AND PTA PARENT REPRESENTATIVES’
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN GEORGIA TITLE I SCHOOLS

by
ZACK K. PHILLIPS
(Under the Direction of Walter Polka)

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this study is to explore the perceptions of elementary principals and PTA parent representatives about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in three Georgia Title I schools. This particular study evolved from firsthand experiences while working with less fortunate students in a Title I school setting. The affective factors include but are not limited to the perceptions of the elementary principals and parent representatives. Based upon findings in the review of literature, the researcher gained an understanding about how to structure interview questions in order to prompt in-depth responses from the interviewees.

Data collection methods included a school portraiture and interview questions. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and categorized in order to compare and contrast the responses of the different principals’ and parent representatives’ perceptions.

INDEX WORDS: Parental involvement, Perceptions, Title I, Principals, PTA parent representatives, Student achievement
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my mother, Carla T. Phillips.

Words alone can not explain how much I love you and appreciate you.

My daughters, Kayla and Taylor thank you for being such wonderful people. My son, Zack never stop believing in yourself. My lovely wife Jacinta Phillips, thank you for your continued support and love. My brother Kevin Phillips thanks for being my role model growing up.

K. J. and, Jadyn, my nephew and niece I am so proud of you. My sister-in-law Jacquelyn, thanks for your timely advice. Lastly, to my deceased father, Zack Phillips Jr. I will always love you!

I hope I’ve made everyone proud!
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The journey of a child’s education is one that cannot be achieved without a support system. In order for children to maximize their full potential educationally, parents and teachers must become advocates of education. The education system in America continues to experience changes in meeting the needs of all children. There have been many different education reforms that have taken place in American history to ultimately benefit the learning of students. With regards to children’s needs, educators must recognize every child’s ethnicity, and culture. Parental involvement\(^1\) is a key component in educational success no matter the race of the child. With the guidelines in place under the NCLB Act, parental involvement is a component that all Title I principals must account for. In order for the school and student to achieve academic success, unity must exist between both parents and teachers.

Unity
I dreamed I stood in a studio
and watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child’s mind
and they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher – the tools he used
were books, music, and art.
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,
and a gentle, loving heart.
Day after day, the teacher toiled with touch
that was careful, deft, and sure.
While the parent labored by his side
and polished and smother it o’er.
And when at last their task was done,
they were proud of what they had wrought.
For the things they had molded into the child
could neither be sold nor bought.

---

\(^1\) Parental involvement is the regular participation of parents that is two-way, and communication that is meaningful involving student academic learning and activities related to the school (NCLB, 2004).
And each agreed they would have failed
if each had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school
and behind the teacher, the home.

Author Unknown

(http://davisdrivems.wcpss.net/unity_poem.htm)

Parents and teachers must solve the problem of failing children (Paige, 2002).
Research shows a positive correlation between student achievement and parental
involvement. Students are more likely to experience success when they receive support
that is meaningful from adults in their lives (Adger, 2001). Parents want to be advocates
of their children’s education, but do not for reasons such as: (1) previous poor
experiences in school, (2) lack of trust for school, and (3) lack of time to devote to school
(Comer, 2005). Sometimes parents need reasons that are compelling to them in order to
get involved in the education of their children (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Desimone
(1999), stated that the best learning activities are the activities that occur at home.

School systems across the state of Georgia must first educate teachers so they will
know how to properly develop parental involvement. According to Baker, Kessler-Sklar,
Piotrkowski, and Parker (1999), teachers reported that their students’ parents didn’t offer
parental involvement outside of the classroom. Many times teachers complained because
parents were not involved in the education of their children. In order for a change to take
place in the education system, parents and the community must be involved in education
(Crozier, 1999).

Context of Study

The following is a journey into my educational experiences from a student to a
teacher. I have traced back to my early days as a student in school when I noticed the
importance of the roles parents play in the overall academic success of students. As a youth in elementary school, I noticed a dramatic difference between my academic gains and the academic gains of my friends with no parental involvement. When my teaching career began, I initially taught Pre-K at a high poverty stricken Head Start Center and a lot of my students had no parental support. Part of my duties was to go on home visits, give feedback to the parents and to assess their living arrangements for the betterment of the students. Those visits really humbled me as a person because I realized that a number of my students faced monumental obstacles that made me extremely sad. Since that time, I continued to notice parents not being involved in their children’s education which is reflected in the academic and social performance of the children. The few students who had parental support, thrived in the classroom.

This study was developed to understand the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. In addition to the qualitative research that has been studied, the researcher used school portraits, and individual interviews to compile additional qualitative data. Through this study, principals, teachers, parents, students, and community leaders may develop a new paradigm on the subject of the effects of parental involvement on student achievement.

While teaching kindergarten, I saw students coming into the classroom environment socially and academically behind because they were not exposed to positive educational experiences while they were young. When teaching third grade, I had students who were performing below grade level. As a teacher, I saw my role as an educator magnified because of the critical role I played in the development of the children in my classes.
I am passionate about this topic because as an educator, I have come into contact with so many students who had so much unrealized potential. Sometimes educators are looked upon as parents to students who want their attention, but often those educators choose not to intervene for any number of reasons. This topic is important because if things do not change, our nation will continue to produce adults who are not competent enough to survive in society. Parents must understand that they are their children’s first teachers and they must work together with educators to improve the educational experiences and opportunities of their children.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the various strategies employed by school principals in the implementation of effective parental involvement as defined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in Georgia Title I elementary schools. Due to the NCLB Act\(^2\), schools across the nation are being held accountable for student achievement. In order to enhance the learning environment of students while bringing parents into the learning partnership, regulations were set in place to accomplish parental involvement goals. Title I schools\(^3\) were mandated by the NCLB Act to accomplish parental involvement in an effort to document that schools are working to make parents their partners in education. Research has proven that students benefit academically when there is parental involvement in their education. No matter what socio-economic class students come from, students achieved when their parents were involved. Parental involvement is

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\(^2\) The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was based on four principals that presented a framework so that all communities, educators, and families can work together to improve teaching and learning for all students (NCLB, 2004).

\(^3\) Title I is a federally funded program that mandates all children are entitled to a high quality education and reach a level of proficiency on state assessments retrieved from [http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html).
at its highest when students are in their early grades, and tapers off as they get older.

Elementary schools provide an atmosphere where students set their foundation for learning. Elementary schools are only as good as their parents and the community. Researchers have stated that more parents are involved with their children’s education in the elementary school setting than at any other level.

Parental involvement, student achievement, and Title I of the NCLB Act, are all related to education accountability. School personnel, especially school principals, must show documentation related to facilitating parental involvement as outlined under the Title I, Part A section in the NCLB Act.

The missing piece in the research is the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement in elementary schools, and also, the relationship of parental involvement required at Title I elementary schools under the NCLB Act mandates. This study is a response to that gap in the research.

Research Questions

This study performs analysis of the perceptions of Georgia Title I principals\(^4\) about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement as corroborated by parent representatives. To develop an understanding of the perceptions of the effects of parental involvement on student achievement, I developed the questions to be addressed during the research process. The overarching question and three research questions that guided the study will be answered by the researcher based on the analysis from the information transcribed from the interviews and the relationship if any with the contemporary literature in the study.

\(^4\) In this work when the researcher uses this term it refers to any person holding a Level-5 certificate under Georgia certification or its equivalency who is appointed by a local board of education who is the official building level authority.
The overarching question is: What strategies have Georgia Title I elementary school principals found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement?

Specific research questions are as follows:

1. What are Georgia principals in Title I elementary schools doing to get parents involved with their children’s education, that has a direct impact on student achievement; and, are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

2. How are Georgia principals in Title I elementary schools keeping track of parental involvement in their schools to illustrate an increase in parental involvement contact hours; and, are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

3. How much time have Georgia Title I elementary school principals devoted to improving parental involvement and what strategies have these principals found to be most valuable and; are, these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

Preview of Literature Review

The literature review begin with an in-depth look at the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, challenges that schools faced, parental involvement, communication, and the state of Georgia’s education accountability. This research revealed to me how all of the previous stated components were interrelated for the overall success of student achievement in Georgia’s Title I schools. The researcher reviewed the accountability component that the NCLB Act place on education, and its impact in regards to student achievement in Georgia’s Title I schools. The researcher reviewed an extensive amount
of literature to see if challenges of schools, parental involvement, and communication were interrelated both negatively and positively. In regards to the components of parental involvement and communication, the researcher reviewed qualitative research conducted by Cassity & Harris (1996), Wenfan (1999), Ramirez (2000), and Griffith (2001).

No Child Left Behind Act

Educators overall must be held more accountable; the time for making excuses is over (Paige, 2002). The NCLB Act of 2001 compelled school administrators across the nation to assume accountability for increasing the amount of parental involvement. The use of guidelines set forth under parental involvement Title I, Part A section provided a list of expectations for all parents and schools that participated in Title I programs. Title I provides federal funding to low socio-economic schools. Under the Title I program, schools are challenged to devise a plan that involves parents (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996). Provisions have been made to strengthen the program so all Title I schools are able to obtain the parental involvement component which is a key factor to the overall success of the schools and student achievement.

The NCLB Act is the contemporary force that is driving the issue of parental involvement impact on student achievement. Also, the NCLB Act guarantees that all students have a quality education throughout their respective educational experiences. According to regulations associated with the NCLB Act, schools must ensure that all students, in spite of their race, socioeconomic background, or religion, are achieving and learning in environments conducive to achievement. One of the goals associated with the NCLB Act is to improve the education of all students regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, or family income (Lonergan, 2003). The focus of the NCLB Act was to improve
the education of all students while holding all schools accountable through test results. All schools across the nation must make adequate yearly progress (AYP)\(^5\) in order to show their respective students were achieving. Title I schools that do not meet AYP, are subject to sanctions that are imposed by the federal government (Million, 2003).

**Challenges of Schools**

Rod Paige, the former Secretary of Education in the United States reinforced the concept that schools cannot improve without the help of parents (Paige, 2002). Although several attempts were made to increase parental involvement, it continues to be a problem for school systems across the state of Georgia. However, research confirms that families play an important role in the overall success of students’ education (Wenfan, 1999). It has been, and continues to be, a challenge for schools to get parents involved in their child’s education for various reasons. These reasons include but are not limited to (1) parents lack of time to help the child, (2) parents lack of knowledge on the subject matter, and (3) parents entrusting that the teacher is the professional and will do what is best for the child (Crozier, 1999). Parents and educators do not always develop open lines of communication which hinder the development or enhancement of parental involvement. The relationship between educators and parents is vital to parental involvement (Hein, 2003).

Parental involvement that is aimed at improving student achievement often goes undeveloped in schools (Edwards & Warin, 1999). Schools across the United States are faced with the daily struggles of making sure students are achieving. Parental

\(^5\) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) refers to high standards of academic achievement for all public schools in the state of Georgia, that measures the progress in the subjects of reading, language arts, and math, to ensure that all students are making continuous and substantial academic gains (NCLB, 2004).
involvement is critical to ensure that learning is fostered for all children (Million, 2003). Schools should help parents create the best learning environment at home that is conducive to learning, rather than limit parents to being only visible in the school environment (Barbour, 1999). John Dewey, the major educator philosopher of the twentieth century, encouraged educators in the past to provide an environment for students in which they can learn to exercise their sound judgment to become productive citizens in society (Noddings, 1998). However, some of the real challenges that are faced by Title I elementary schools are: (1) the Title I requirements for parental involvement, (2) the requirements for funding the involvement of parents and (3) devising a plan for the involvement that will benefit student achievement (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has a positive correlation with student academic performance (Griffith, 1996). If parental involvement is going to become a key component of educational accountability, the communication between schools and parents had to be maintained. Parental involvement had to become a partnership between all stakeholders6 whose main focus is the success of all students no matter their background. Researchers indicate that the entire community benefits from the effects of parental involvement (Cassity & Harris, 2000). According to research findings, schools are making the extra effort to involve parents in a number of ways by (1) allowing parents to volunteer in the classroom (2) allowing parents to participate in fundraising activities and (3) providing a parent resource room where parents can go to get school related and parenting information (National Center of Educational Statistics, 1998).

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6 In this work when the researcher uses this term, stakeholder refers to any person in the community whether parent, teacher, administrator, and or community leader who has a vested interest in education for all students.
Schools need parents to understand that they are their child’s first and foremost teacher. The family itself plays a key role in the overall success of a child’s education (Lynch, 2002). According to another study, parents’ educational aspirations for their children showed a more positive correlation on student achievement than any other variable (Fan, 2001). Parents had to work with the school and teachers to provide a positive relationship that was important in building lines of open communication between the two parties. At present time, because of the NCLB Act, parents and schools do not have a choice because the act requires constant communication between the two parties and mandates that the process is efficient and effective which ultimately impacts the achievement of all students. The most powerful advocate for the education of children is a parent armed with information and options (Paige, 2002).

Many educators have acknowledged the importance of parental involvement on student achievement. Students are better prepared for school when there is an increased amount of contact between the home and school (Marcon, 1999). In order to foster the best learning opportunities, it takes a collaborative effort between the home and school. Parents have a clear understanding of their roles with their child’s school (Crozier, 1999).

Parental involvement when it is meaningful enhanced a student’s overall performance in life and school. In another study a positive correlation between parental involvement and overall student achievement was found (Griffith, 1996). Students whose parents and other visible adults in their lives that are active have a greater chance of being successful in school (Sanders, Allen-Jones, & Abel 2002). In order for parental involvement to be effective all parties involved had to be on one accord for increased improvement in student achievement.
Students who are able to do their homework in a structured environment at home with the supervision of their parents benefited academically. Wenfan (1999), found that children benefit academically when parents spend time with them while providing them with a structured environment at home in which they can flourish. Children who are involved in routines at home regarding instruction tend to make good grades in school (Finn, 1998). Parental involvement is a positive situation for all parties because through stronger relationships, parents become advocates of their children’s education not only at home but also at school.

Communication

According to Ramirez (2001), teachers reported that better communication was needed between parents and teachers to make parental involvement stronger. One of the primary components for student achievement was having parental involvement at home to reinforce and enhance lessons taught at school. Parents who are involved, monitor their children’s progress, and help with their homework are more likely to have children that perform well in school (Bogenschneider, 1997). When teachers and parents were appreciative of each other it made the ability to communicate much easier. Schools that realize the importance of involving parents in the education of their children will ensure that the school learning community believes in the academic development of all students (Cassity and Harris, 2000). Teachers were more acceptable to parents who were active and wanted to know about their child’s education. It is the responsibility of the schools to communicate concerns, goals, and progress to the parents (Smith-Fields, 2005). Stronger cooperation between the home and school, better supports the overall development of the child (Cordry and Wilson, 2004). According to the NCLB Act, parental involvement is
defined as meaningful two-way communication between the parent and school. However, teachers reported that better communication was needed between parents and teachers to make parental involvement stronger in another study (Ramirez, 2001). A strong relationship can form when both parties are willing to do their parts (Finn, 1998). Additional research has found that having encouragement from educators in turn produces more positive responses to education from parents (Dauber and Epstein, 1993).

**Georgia’s Education Accountability**

With the NCLB Act being a controversial issue with emphasis on parental involvement and education accountability in the United States of America, the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) hold school systems accountable for student achievement in Georgia. The CRCT\(^7\) is a test that is given to students across Georgia to test students’ efficiency in different content areas. Students must achieve scores between 300 to 450 to pass the CRCT test. As of 2005, students have to make a passing score on the CRCT reading and math sections to be promoted from third grade to fourth grade, and from fifth grade to sixth grade. The NCLB Act deals with making sure all students have a quality education throughout their education process. The NCLB Act deals with high stakes assessment based on the performance of students (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004). The GPS\(^8\) are standards that were developed by a number of teachers, national and state experts, and consultants. These Georgia standards are rigorous and similar to national standards (Jacobson, 2004).

\(^7\) CRCT is a test designed to measure how students acquire the knowledge and skill base described in the quality core curriculum for the state of Georgia retrieved from [http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/curriculum/testing/crct.asp](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/curriculum/testing/crct.asp).

\(^8\) Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) are standards whose four components are content standards, suggested tasks, samples of students work, and teacher commentary that maintains clear expectations for student learning under the old Georgia education curriculum retrieved from [http://www.georgiastandards.org/faqs.aspx](http://www.georgiastandards.org/faqs.aspx).
Limitations of Study

The study is designed to examine principals’ perceptions about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. There may be other variables associated with the effects of parental involvement on student achievement that this study does not measure. The principals’ and PTA representatives’ perceptions interview questions are self-reporting which may not accurately reflect exactly what the principal does. The honesty of the participants to respond accurately to the interview questions may skew the results. The study is limited to the state of Georgia and Title I elementary schools. The study may be limited by the number of principals’ and parents representing the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), that the researcher interviews to obtain data needed to complete the study.

Delimitations of Study

The study was delimited to nine factors: (1) Georgia Title I elementary school principals, (2) the number of years for principal experience in Georgia schools, (3) the race of the principal, (4) the socio-economic status of the student population, (5) the gender of the principal of Georgia schools, (6) the racial make-up of the student population, (7) the number of students enrolled at the Title I school (8) the geographic location of the school, and (9) parents who represent the PTA at each school. The study was not restricted to any subgroups.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because under the Title I, Part A section in the NCLB Act, schools have parental involvement mandates they must follow and document. These mandates must be implemented by the principals to ensure the schools were doing
everything possible to include parents in the education process of students. The population that answered the research questions was three successful Georgia Title I elementary school principals who had worked first hand with implementing parental involvement and the parent PTA representatives who critiqued the implementation of parental involvement at the school. It was important that the education community knew that parental involvement had the possibility of being a key component in education if developed and maintained for the betterment of all children.

This study was important because elementary education was the key to future successes while having parents promote their children’s education at an early age. The time, effort, and resources that were used both financially and mentally were well spent because ultimately students were benefiting by using education in their daily lives.

Preview of Methodology

The research design for the study was qualitative in nature. The justification for the researcher using a qualitative study was because it allowed the researcher to use open-ended interview questions that gathered more information from the respondents as opposed to a close-ended survey instrument. Three Georgia Title I elementary school principals were interviewed and three PTA parent representatives were interviewed from each school, regarding their perceptions of the implementation of parental involvement as per the NCLB Act through the use of interview questions. The interview allowed the researcher to develop school portraits, which allowed the researcher to give background information on each school. The sample of three principals and three PTA parent representatives was appropriate for the study because it represented a manageable number of participants from the total population. Having a small sample also allowed the
researcher to complete the study in a timely manner. The researcher expected to dictate the responses from a tape recorder and illustrate the findings through the use of summaries. The research was best suited for this method because of the small number of participants in the sample. This method was best suited to ensure that the respondents answer all interview questions without being bias. Data collection methods include school portraiture and individual interviews.

Participant Selection

The participants in the study were three principals representing high performing Georgia Title I elementary schools, and a PTA parent representative from each of the schools, ranging from Pre-k through fifth grades within Northeastern Georgia. The Georgia Title I elementary schools were identified using data from the Georgia Department of Education, (2006). These principals interviewed are employed in Georgia public schools with grade levels Pre-k through fifth grade as of January 1, 2006. Generalizability from the research study was applied to the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives in the state of Georgia.

Data Collection

The interview instrument for this research was developed by the researcher. The interviews with the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives were tape recorded. The eight interview questions that were posed to the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals required the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals to give precise statements related to the parental involvement effects on student achievement at their schools. The eight interview questions that were posed to the three PTA representatives required the parents to give
precise statements related to their perceptions of the implementation of parental involvement at the school. The responses that the respondents gave were tape recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

In this research study descriptive statistics was used by the researcher in comparing and contrasting the responses to the interview questions. The three Georgia Title I elementary school principals were given a report summarizing the findings. The reported information was shared with the three PTA parent representatives from each school by the school’s principal. The reports developed by the researcher included school portraits of each school represented in the study.

Summary

Since the implementation of requirements that hold school systems more accountable for student achievement, parents now have more opportunities to be involved in their children’s education. The NCLB Act holds every stakeholder accountable in the education of our youth. Yet, the researcher asks the question, who is holding the NCLB Act accountable? If the stakes are being raised to ensure that every child is achieving in an environment conducive to learning, every school should be equipped with the resources needed to enhance student achievement. In order to maximize student achievement there has to be a paradigm shift with more parents being advocates for their children’s education.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is an assessment tool of a school’s academic progress, yet who is assessing the parents of students when it comes to parental involvement? Sadly, parents can not do what they do not know, so it is the duty of all
stakeholders in education to make sure everyone is on the same page for the betterment of all students. If the gaps are not bridged, future leaders will be illiterate and ineffective leading the next generation down a path of lackluster student achievement. Poor student achievement equals a mind that never reached its full potential.

There is a wealth of research that supports the idea that when parents are involved in students’ education it has a positive affect on student achievement. I personally believe there is a significant difference in the way students perform in class when parents are advocates of their education as opposed to those students who have no parental support. These findings will give educators insight on how critical it is for parents to be involved in their child’s education.

Across our nation students are struggling on a daily basis during their early years of education. Parents and educators must bridge the gap between both parties while enhancing learning for students in early childhood education. The NCLB Act will hold all stakeholders accountable. It is that accountability that has raised the standards of education to an all new high. In hopes to level the education of all youth across the nation, every school no matter the demographics must have the resources needed to have a positive impact on student achievement. If resources allocated for different schools are not mandated we will continue to build for the future with students who will always have a disparity regarding student achievement.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

This research examined what elementary principals’ perceptions are, about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement, as corroborated by parent representatives, focusing on the perceptions of three Georgia Title I principals and three PTA parent representatives. Data was collected through school portraits and individual interviews. The purpose of this study was to determine the various strategies employed by school principals in the implementation of effective parental involvement as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act in Georgia Title I elementary schools.

Before starting the process of collecting data, the researcher conducted a review of literature focusing on eight primary bodies of literature: (1) multicultural education, (2) parental involvement across cultures, (3) education reform, (4) benefits of NCLB, (5) negatives of NCLB, (6) Title I, (7) types of parental involvement, and (8) benefits of parental involvement. This review was necessary because the study focused on the effects of parental involvement on student achievement and the history of education as it related to the NCLB Act. The information on education reform provided a picture of the history of education.

Multicultural Education

In the words of a famous civil rights leader, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in 1963, “I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (Carson, 1998). I want to live in a world where every soul counts – white, black, and yellow – all (Du Bois, 1911). The student population in schools is constantly changing
from years past. In 1990, 70% of students in America were Caucasian whereas, it is estimated by the year 2026, 70% of students in America will be from a minority distinct (Garcia, 1995). It is estimated by the year 2040, about 50% of all school-aged students in the United States of America will come from minority families; making minority students the majority in public schools (Olson, 2000).

According to Jones (2005), the world is becoming more diverse and cannot afford to become comfortable without recognizing other languages, philosophies, religions, and traditions. Since diverse children experience culturally inequities, it is not surprising that a disproportionate number of them are referred to as educationally “at risk” (Cuban, 1989). Prior to the focus of multicultural education in the 1990’s, different ethnic groups could not find a connection with the content being taught in classrooms. This cultural disconnect eventually leads to discipline problems, poor self-esteem, and poor grades among all ethnic minorities (Bazron, Osher, & Fleischman, 2005).

In the past, studies that were done were based upon the white middle-class definitions and lacked sensitivity to cultural variations of other ethnic groups (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). The minority student population continues to grow at a fast pace throughout school districts in the nation. The last ten years have seen a rapid growth in ethnic and racial diversity throughout schools in the United States of America (Bazron, Osher, & Fleischman, 2005). Administrators have to operate their schools in a bias free manner. According to Latham (1997), administrators must not only respect the diversity of students but also maximize the opportunity that diversity presents for teaching and learning. Schools must operate in a way which fosters the opportunity for parents and teachers to share expectations and create a partnership together (et. al, 2004).
Hiring practices that represent diversity in the work environment is a must. Educators need to consider employing bilingual front office staff in providing a service to parents (et. al, 2004). Educators must also make a conscious effort to connect different ethnic groups academic lessons. According to Strickland (1994), teachers must be weary about a one size fits all curriculum. Educators’ understanding about different ethnic groups is greatly enhanced when they explore multicultural literature for students (Mathis, 2001). According to Latham (1997), providing a quality education for all students is a complex task. The goal is that students will ultimately see the big picture of culture (Shin, 2001).

Parental Involvement Across Cultures

According to Baumann & Thomas (1997), when parents and teachers celebrate cultural richness a critical relationship is developed. As Puerto Rican families migrated to the United States of America for other opportunities, they had to adapt to a new way of life. Latino families’ goals were to achieve white middle-class behavior patterns (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). Latino students struggled in school and as a result parental involvement was extremely low. Mizio (1974), stated at one end of the Puerto Rican family system there are the traditional parental involvement values; while at the other end there are American values. Bias on educators’ behavior play a role in the many barriers that come about. While at home research renders that an environment exists that is structured and well organized. Interdependence among family members is expected (et. al, 2004). According to Smar (2002), even though educators agree that parental involvement is a critical component in a child’s success, many do not know how to build relationships between the school and home properly.
Asian American parents are active in the child’s education and learning environment (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). Chinese Americans began to migrate to the United States of America during the gold rush of 1848. A disconnect between the school and home existed due to racial prejudice against their ethnic group. Schools were more interested in excluding students from their schools, than building a partnership with the parents (et. al, 2004). The value of education is one that is seen by many as high importance. Unlike the Western world, attaining an education is a matter of enhancement of the family as opposed to individual achievement (Sue, 1997).

Parental involvement is designed to have an on-going communication between the home and school. The term parental involvement needs to be looked at more broadly to include the extended family, which has great significance in the Chinese culture (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). This paradigm differs in the Chinese home environment because of their extended family. Current literature states that Chinese parents are not the only ones that play an active role in education (et. al, 2004). Having an environment at home that is relevant to education is warranted. Siu (2001), stated that time, money, and energy are given by Chinese parents to their children to help them receive good grades from school.

Regardless of the ethnicity, Chinese parents want their children to have the same opportunities in education as American-born children. This is very much evident in the court case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), which demonstrated how Chinese parents demanded an equal education for non-English proficient students (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). In a more recent court case of *Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District* (1994), the court ruled in favor of Chinese families because the San Francisco Unified School
District had to implement a new student enrollment plan that would ultimately provide an equal education for all students (Asian Week, 1997).

According to George Santayana, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it (http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/George_Santayana). The purpose of understanding and remembering history is not to return to the past (Smith-Fields, 2005). Fifty years after the Brown v. The Board of Education decision, the discussion on parental involvement marginizes the views of Black American,⁹ and favors the views of white-middle class families (Smith-Fields, 2005). Black American parents have a vested interest in their child’s education that is deeply rooted in the family. Black Americans pursuit of education was evident during slavery when they risked their lives to learn to read (Walker, 2000).

Preconceived notions that Black American parents do not care for their children’s education is one of many barriers between the home and school. Teachers often perceive Black American parents as being disinterested and uninvolved in their children’s education (Chavkin, 1993). Parents are a resource that must be utilized to see the true reward. Research supports that Black American parents during segregated times knew their place in the school (Edwards, 1993).

A child’s community can play a vital role in the development of that child. The village raising a child shelters them from discrimination; while increasing their chances for success (Smith-Fields, 2005). Presently, like with any other minority group, there is a lack of trust that continues to exist between home and school. Contemporary educators

⁹ The researcher chooses to use the term Black American even though the literature refers to use the term African American.
must think of ways to develop trusting relationships with Black American parents and other races and ethnic groups as well (Smith-Fields, 2005).

As the research has shown, there are many similarities of parental involvement across different ethnic cultures. Three of the most common similarities that exist are: (1) parents love and care for their children, (2) historically speaking, parents have always supported their children’s education, and (3) parents have made personal sacrifices for their children’s education (Banks & Banks-McGee, 2004). Historical research shows that Black American parents played an active role in their child’s education (Smith-Fields, 2005). During the time of slavery, slaves risked being severely punished for an education that equated to freedom (Smith-Fields, 2005).

Education Reform

Former President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, viewed the space program as an unnecessary expense until the Russians successfully sent a manned spacecraft into orbit for ninety minutes around the earth (Smith, 2004). Over forty years ago America was rocked by the successful launch of the Soviet Satellite Sputnik (Kinnaman, 1998). The education system in the United States of America was looked upon as being insufficient. Federal support of Science and Math education came about because of the fear that the Soviet Union was more technologically and educationally superior (Cookson, 1995).

It was through this unforeseen event that funding for education became a priority. Also during this time, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 was passed which gave financial assistance to students, schools, and states for the betterment of
education (Flynn, 1995). The goal of the NDEA was to make education in America consistent with the needs of the society (Freund, 2002).

A Nation at Risk (NAR) came about in 1983, during former President Ronald Reagan’s administration because of the deficiencies that existed in education. The document criticized public schools in America for being mediocre (Cookson, 1995). No longer were schools going to be measured by the amount of resources it had. A move was triggered to hold schools accountable by its students’ achievement (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). A national reform effort was called for to ensure that the United States of America could compete successfully in a global economy with emphasis on Science and Technology (Congressional Digest, 1994).

The idea behind the implementation of Goals 2000, transformed under former President George Bush’s administration in 1989. The national goals movement transpired in 1989, when former President Bush and forty-nine state governors met to improve public education (Holland, 1999). Former Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, stated that the destiny of a nation is defined by a child’s education as well as values (Olson, 2000).

Goals 2000 consisted of eight objectives that would be used in accelerating education in America through student achievement. Student achievement after all is what “Goals 2000” is all about (Campbell, 2003). Voluntary standards were called for to ensure that students were achieving and objectives were being met under Goals 2000. The improvement of the American education system is not possible without standards being used to evaluate individual students and schools (Congressional Digest, 1994).

The NCLB Act, was implemented under current President George W. Bush’s administration. In January 2002, President Bush signed into law the NCLB Act and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which marked his education reform (Mathis, 2003). The act was driven by current issues facing students in the public education system with hopes of providing an efficient education for all students. The NCLB Act is based on the educational community collaborating together, while reflecting and acting on current issues in education (Forrest, 2004).

According to Darling-Hammond (2004), “the broad goal of NCLB is to raise the achievement levels of all students, especially underperforming groups, and to close the achievement gap that parallels race and class distinctions” (p. 3). While being held accountable for student achievement, the NCLB Act also places great emphasis on the
component of parental involvement. The Title I funds are provided to low-socioeconomic schools to improve student achievement through parental involvement of all students regardless of race and ethnicity. If schools do not meet adequate yearly progress for student achievement then they will face other sanctions under the NCLB Act. Sanctions may include schools being taken over by the federal government and/or parents given a choice to transfer their child to another school (Cook, 2005).

Benefits of NCLB

In the words of President George W. Bush, “If you teach a child to read and write, it shouldn’t bother you whether you measure” (Olson, 2005). The NCLB Act contains goals that every state should follow to ensure student learning. According to Rose (2003), the goals of NCLB are good because they talk about success for all children including those who are low achievers, while providing annual testing and tutoring for those who need support. When students are tested annually, the data will show where improvement is needed (Johnson, 2005). Secretary of Education, Margarett Spellings, stated on October 19, 2005, during a telephone briefing that she was pleased with the progress seen amongst African-American and Hispanic students (Olson, 2005). The benefit of NCLB is that by the year 2014, 95% of all student groups will reach predetermined state test standards (Mathis, 2003).

The accountability of everyone involved in the NCLB Act needs to be accepted in order to change education. Schools no matter where they are located or who they serve must ensure that all students are learning (Hardy, 2003). Educators have to embrace accountability because we owe it to ourselves, society, and our children (Mathis, 2003).
There must be an emphasis on making sure that students are being taught by competent teachers who can accelerate learning. A new provision under the NCLB Act requires that every school must have a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by 2006 (Hull-Watts, 2003). According to Magee-Porter (2004), the provision for highly qualified teachers, recognizes the correlation between teacher quality and student outcomes. If funds are used consistently and pervasively, the benefit will be student achievement. The NCLB Act offers schools new opportunities to use their funding to enhance student performance (Hull-Watts, 2003). No one student learns the same as their counterpart; furthermore, it is critical that all groups of students no matter race or ethnicity are accounted for. NCLB recognizes the different subgroups in its accountability system, and the problems that exist with some subgroups being too small to be measured accurately (Hull-Watts, 2003).

Negatives of NCLB

Researcher Gerald Bracey was cited in an article stating the NCLB Act, “is a weapon of mass destruction with the target being the public school system” (Ohanian, 2003). It is similar to a search for weapons of mass mis-instruction that simple is not there (Houston, 2005). The 37th annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll indicated that the more information people find out about the NCLB Act, the more they dislike the way it is being implemented (American School Board Journal, 2005).

There is a lack of support for the NCLB Act among educators. The NCLB Act may go down in history being known as the most unpopular education legislation ever (Ohanian, 2003). According to McColl (2005), the NCLB Act is a moving target that makes educational leaders constantly revise their educational strategies. The money
needed to adequately implement the NCLB mandates continues to go unfunded. Superintendents and principals across the nation are frustrated by the law because it put constraints on the effectiveness instead of giving additional funding (Johnson, 2005). Some Democrats are noted for saying if they would have known the intentions of the administration not to fund the NCLB Act, they never would have voted for it (Ohanian, 2003). According to Rose (2003), if there is not a commitment nationally, the NCLB Act will be useless, rhetoric. The education of all children under the NCLB Act will require investments in education spending (Mathis, 2003). No students educationally finish at the same time at the same place (Jarrell, 2005). When giving the option to transfer to a high performing school, students are still not being allowed to transfer due to capacity at the school. The lack of choice options given to schools and the problem with staffing the faculty ultimately undermine the law (Sack, 2005).

Title I

According to Goodwin (1991), Lyndon B. Johnson, the former President of the United States of America, went to Congress and stated, “this program is much more than a beginning, it is a total commitment by this President and this Congress and this nation to pursue victory over the most ancient of mankind’s enemies” (p. 188). Title I was implemented to closing the achievement gap between children who are poor and those more advantaged (Borman, 2000). Since over forty years of existence, Title I has funded many programs for less fortunate students. According to Roza (2001), Title I can have a drastic impact on disadvantaged students’ education. One billion dollars were sent to districts across the nation with no parameters to eliminate poverty while educating children in poverty (Cook, 2005). Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA),
was implemented in 1965. According to Borman (2000), Title I was a key component of former President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty”. The infamous Title I program, that is used to give aid to the poor, is at the heart of ESEA (Meyerson, 1999).

Title I has and continues to be the largest federal resource given for reforming high-poverty schools (Borman, 2000). The impact on student achievement through Title I funds are positive when programs are implemented correctly. The achievement gaps have gotten worse even though overall funding of Title I has increased (Mast, 2003).

During the 1960’s and 1970’s the Title I program was characterized by its inadequacies of both the implementation and design (McDill & Natriello, 1998). According to Mast (2003), research from the early 1970’s to 1980’s, shows that the gap between black-white achievement narrowed. It was during the time period from 1981 to 1994 that the Title I program took on a new name called Chapter I. Title I was replaced by Chapter I as part of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA), (McDill & Natriello, 1998). If implemented correctly Chapter I could have helped students but was too weak to be an effective intervention program to accelerate students (Reading Today, 1999). In 1994, Chapter I was replaced by Title I under former President of the United States Bill Clinton’s administration (McDill & Natriello, 1998). The program continued to support poverty stricken schools across the nation. Ultimately, the true measure of the Title I program is the acceleration of learning for all students while working in an environment conducive to learning. To improve the total learning opportunities of Title I students, schools must work with parents in creating strong educational environments in the classroom and within the home (Borman, 2000).
Types of Parental Involvement

According to Sullivan (1998), the academic performance of students is enhanced when family and parent involvement is increased. Parental involvement is a term that has been used in education for many years. Parental involvement is looked upon as the solution in improving public schools (Baldauf, 1997).

There are many types of parental involvement as defined by different researchers yet, there are a lot of similarities among all their explanations. Parental involvement was grouped among four level (1) traditional, (2) receives information, (3) involvement at school, and (4) decision making (Jones, 1989). According to Epstein (1995), parental involvement is divided up among six categories: (1) communicating, (2) community participation, (3) decision making, (4) learning at home, (5) participation, and (6) volunteering. It is the recommendation of the National PTA that community leaders, educators, and parents work together in implementing the national standards (Sullivan, 1998). The researcher will concentrate on the six factors of parental involvement as defined by the National PTA.

The National PTA identified six factors in regards to parental involvement as:

- Communication – meaningful two-way communication between home and school.
- Collaboration With Community – Schools, families, and student learning that is strengthened through resources in the community.
- Decision Making and Advocacy – decisions made for children and families by advocates who are their parents.
- Parenting – skills from the parents that are promoted and supported.
• Volunteering – assistance by parents as partners in the school.

• Student Learning – the enhancement of student learning by participating active parents (Jacobson, 1997).

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement at home is dramatically important because it gives parents the opportunity to build upon the classroom lessons on a daily basis whether the parents are visible or not in the school (Thornburg & Hoffman, 1991). Parental involvement when implemented correctly can enhance a student’s overall performance in life and school. According to Seeley (1985), successful learning does not start with just the home and school but the relationship that exists between the two parties. Parents are a critical component in the process of improving schools (Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2005). Parental involvement does not have a certain race or gender. Shockingly, parents showed more involvement with girls than boys (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). Any parent can become more active in their child’s education. According to Robinson & Fine (1994), no matter a parents background, what race they are, or how much money they make; if they are actively involved it will have a positive effect on student achievement. Research shows that the success of student’s academics increases when parents are included in the education process of their children (Ramirez, 2003).

Modeling appropriate behavior for the youth can benefit students with knowing how to act appropriately in the community. According to Bloomstran (2002), children need to experience life long lessons by being around positive adults in which they can translate the positive experiences into their daily lives. According to Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow (1995), parental involvement creates successful opportunities for children to
succeed. When parents become advocates, children begin to see how passionate their parents are about their education and tend to strive to make their parents happy about their success in and out of the classroom. The major outcomes that are developed through the parental involvement process are the children’s skills, knowledge and personal sense of efficacy for their success in school (et. al, 1995).

Summary

Education for all students should be the primary focus of school systems across the nation. When implementing multicultural education effectively, all nationalities, ethnicities, and races are included in the common goal of educating students. Research has shown that there is a discrepancy when it comes to effective multicultural education. School systems and building administrators must make it a point to advocate for equal education for all students. Building administrators can take the initiative to make the school climates warm and welcoming while communicating to parents that they are a critical component to the overall success of their children.

No matter the race of the parents, research has proven that parents are concerned and want to be involved in their child’s education. Parental involvement, as previously stated in the research, is a critical component in student achievement. The research shows that no matter the race of a child’s parents most take pride in their child’s education. There are a lot of similarities when it comes to parental involvement across different cultures. Similarities that were obvious in the research are that parents love their children, parents have always been supportive, and parents have made personal sacrifices for the betterment of their child’s education.
The American education system continues to experience changes. Sputnik shook up the education system, sending people into an uproar because the Soviet Union had beaten the United States of America on a mission into out of space. Shortly after, research shows that funding became a top priority in the nation with the passing of the NDEA Act of 1958, which would be used for the improvement of the United States of America education system. Title I came about in 1964, with emphasis on closing the achievement gap between poor and advantaged students through the use of federal funding. The Title I program has been in place for over forty years contributing billions of dollars to education. However, the NAR in 1983, provided evidence to show how ineffective the education system appeared to be in the United States of America.

America 2000 was the next education reform act that transpired in 1991. This act was never passed by legislation. Goals 2000 came about shortly after and was transformed off the ideas of America 2000. Goals 2000 also had eight objectives with the vision of accelerating student achievement.

There is the NCLB Act of 2002, which holds everyone accountable for the education of students. The vision of the NCLB Act is no child will be left behind when it comes to their education. Many programs have been implemented through various Presidents of the United States to improve education in the United States of America. However, researchers have stated many inadequacies in education over forty years.

There are many benefits to the NCLB Act and also some negatives. The greatest benefit is the accountability component that is mandated in the NCLB Act. Perceived negatives to the NCLB Act are that it is greatly unfunded for the things educators are asked to do to ensure students are learning, and some of the options under the NCLB Act
are not being implemented correctly. Research also points out as a positive that the needs of low achieving students are being examined with safety nets to ensure that they have the resources and programs needed to succeed in school.

Lastly, according to the review of literature there are many different types of parental involvement. One of the greatest injustices is that a lot of educators have a different opinion concerning what parental involvement is. Just because a parent is not visible in the school building does not mean they are not involved. The types of parental involvement that the researcher wrote about were the communication, collaboration, decision making, volunteering, and having parent skills which impact student learning. A positive correlation exists with the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. A paradigm shift must take place with emphasis being on parents knowing how powerful they are to the success of their children. Education is the key to a bright future but it is even brighter when parents are involved in the education of their children.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives towards the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. This chapter presented research questions, research design, procedures for data collection, data analysis, and data representation.

This study had two foci. The first focus was parental involvement as defined by the NCLB Act. The second one was student achievement in Title I schools. This framework represented one way that administrators can explore ways to enrich parental involvement. The chapter ended with a summary.

Research Questions

Three Georgia Title I elementary school principals were interviewed and tape recorded to identify their perceptions towards the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. The research design was qualitative in nature and focused on one overarching question and three research questions. The overarching question and three research questions that guided the study will be answered by the researcher based on the analysis from the information transcribed from the interviews and the relationship if any with the contemporary literature in the study.

The overarching question was:

• What strategies have Georgia Title I elementary school principals found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement?

Specific research questions are as follows:

• What are Georgia principals doing in Title I elementary schools to get parents
involved in their children’s education that has a direct impact on student achievement and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

- How are Georgia principals in Title I elementary schools tracking parental involvement in their schools to illustrate an increase in parental involvement contact hours and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

- How much time have Georgia Title I elementary school principals devoted to improving parental involvement and what strategies have these principals found to be most valuable and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

The researcher studied the perceptions of three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three parent representatives towards the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. The researcher attempted to distinguish similarities and differences in three Georgia Title I elementary school principals’ perceptions towards the effects of parental involvement on student achievement.

**Research Design**

The research design for the study was qualitative in nature because it allowed the researcher to use open-ended interview questions that gathered more information from the respondents as opposed to a close-ended survey instrument. The researcher interviewed three Georgia Title I elementary school principals’ and a parent representative from each school’s PTA regarding their perceptions of the implementation of parental involvement as defined by the NCLB Act. Interviews can be used to understand an individual or group perspective (Fontana & Frey, 1998). Marshall & Rossman (1999) stated that “Qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing” (p. 108). The researcher also developed school portraits, which
provided backgrounds for three research project schools. The researcher will use structured interview questions to generate responses that allow the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of the interviewees (Patten, 2002). Choosing three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives was appropriate for the study because it represented amanageable number of participants from the total population and it allows the researcher to complete the study in a timely manner. The researcher tape-recorded the responses and illustrate the findings through the use of summaries.

Interviewing was the primary data collection method used in this study. Prior to participating in the interview, the principals received a letter (See Appendix A) and the PTA parent representatives received a letter (See Appendix B) from the researcher to inform them of the purpose of the study and expressed appreciation for their time and commitment. During a structured interview, the interviewer asks the respondents the same set of questions in the same order (Fontana & Frey, 1998). The interviewees were tape recorded and transcribed. The tape recorder offers a record that is complete and allows the researcher to give the attention needed to stay focus during the interview (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Marshall & Rossman (1999) stated that “The process of preserving the data and meanings on tape and the combined transcription and preliminary analysis greatly increased the efficiency of data analysis” (p. 149). The most precise transcriptions include grammatical errors, changes in focus, digressions, and other indications of mood (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview tapes will be transcribed by the researcher since transcribing his own tapes, the interviewer will know his
interviewees better (Seidman, 1998). A gift certificate to a local restaurant was given to the interviewees upon the completion of the interview.

Participant Selection

The participants of the study were three principals representing high performing Georgia Title I elementary schools, and three PTA parent representatives from the schools, ranging from grades Pre-k through fifth within Northeastern Georgia. The Georgia Title I elementary schools were identified using data from the Georgia Department of Education, (2006). The researcher used three research school sites Monroe Primary School, Palmer Stone Elementary School, and C. J. Hicks Elementary School. These principals were employed in Georgia public schools that had grade levels pre-k through fifth grade as of January 1, 2006. The sample for the research study consisted of three Georgia Title I elementary school principals, and three PTA parent representatives from the school. Generalizability from the research study was applied to the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and the three PTA parent representatives in the state of Georgia.

Any study involving human subjects required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The (IRB) application contained the investigator’s assurance statement regarding ethical practices in doing research. The introduction, research questions, design, instrumentation, population, sample, human subjects, data collection, data analysis benefited the research and the acknowledgement of confidentiality was included on the application. The IRB had to approve the interview questions.
Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods included school portraiture and structured interviews. The study explored the perceptions of the Georgia Title I elementary school principals who were employed by the Walton County School System, Newton County School System and the Rockdale County School System about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Also, the study explored the perceptions of the PTA parent representative from each school about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement.

Permission for the participants was obtained from each principal and parent candidate before any data was collected. Confidentiality of the information gathered was maintained throughout the study. Through the use of qualitative interviews the researcher can reconstruct events and understand experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The instrument for the proposed research study was interview questions developed by the researcher. The researcher interviewed three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives with the use of a tape recorder. The majority of qualitative researchers depend on audiotapes, which are transcribed verbatim and analyzed at a later date by the researcher (Easton, McComish, & Greenberg, 2000).

The interview consisted of two different sets of eight questions or statements that required the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives to give precise statements related to the parental involvement effects on student achievement at their schools. The first set of questions was given to the elementary school principals. The second set of questions was given to the PTA parent representatives. The researcher interviewed each principal and parent representative at
their school for approximately thirty minutes. The responses provided by the respondents were tape recorded and transcribed at a later date.

Role of the Researcher

I am currently employed at a Title I school in the Walton County School System. I serve as the assistant principal under one of the selected participants at Monroe Primary School. I do not have a professional relationship with the other two selected participants. While working in a Title I school setting, my desire to help less fortunate students intensified. My role in the research is to schedule the times and dates for the selected participants to participate. I will interview three Title I principals and three PTA parent representatives on their perceptions about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. I will be responsible for the information given to me pertaining to my interview questions. Once the interviews are complete, I will transcribe the information and present it in Chapter IV.

School Portraiture

The three schools within the Walton County School System, Newton County School System, and the Rockdale County School System are involved in the study: Monroe Primary School, Palmer Stone Elementary School, and C. J. Hicks Elementary School. The purpose of providing a school portraiture was to give the reader an overview of the school, community that the school is located in, and background knowledge on the educational program. It is through the school portraiture that the reader was able to visualize the school. Please refer to the Walton County School System Disclaimer Statement (See Appendix H).
Monroe Primary School

Monroe Primary School is located in a rural community in the city of Monroe, Georgia. Monroe Primary School is one of two primary schools located in the Walton County School System and was recognized by the USA Today as being the 57th fastest growing county in the world. Monroe Primary School serves approximately 745 students ranging in grades Pre-Kindergarten to second grade within the city of Monroe and outer areas surrounding Monroe. Monroe is considered a high poverty area with the family income being less than $15,000 annually. The majority of the students are from low to moderate-income families reflecting a free and reduced lunch rate of eighty percent. Most of the students reside in single parent homes, section eight housing, section eight apartment complexes, and trailer parks.

The mission of Monroe Primary School is to provide teaching and learning through cooperation (T. L. C.). The vision of Monroe Primary School is to develop tomorrow’s citizens for a diverse world through an integrated, child centered learning environment. Monroe Primary School was recognized as a 2002 National Title I Distinguished School and a 2002 and 2004 Title I Distinguished School for the state of Georgia.

Palmer Stone Elementary School

Palmer Stone Elementary is located in Oxford, Georgia. The school was built in 1955 as part of the Newton County School System. Palmer Stone Elementary serves 600 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade within the county of Newton. It’s friendly and professional faculty offers many different programs to enhance and enrich the education of all students at Palmer Stone Elementary School.
C. J. Hicks Elementary School

C. J. Hicks Elementary School is located in Conyers, Georgia. The school was built in 1969 as part of the Rockdale County School System and was last renovated in 1995. C. J. Hicks Elementary serves 461 students and has 41 certified staff members. The mission of C. J. Hicks Elementary School is to Help Individual Children Know Success = HICKS! The faculty strives to provide an educational environment that encourage children to achieve to their fullest potential.

The chart below reports information for the three counties the researcher will be using in the study. The information on the chart was broken down among counties, schools, race and ethnicity, and free and reduced lunch rate. The information that was reported by the researcher is only for the three schools that participated in the study.

Table 1
Demographics of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walton</td>
<td>Monroe Primary School</td>
<td>White 45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black 51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton</td>
<td>Palmer Stone Elementary School</td>
<td>White 68%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black 29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockdale</td>
<td>C. J. Hicks Elementary School</td>
<td>Black 98%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other 2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structured Interviews

Structured interview questions were developed by the researcher to assess elementary principals’ and PTA parent representatives’ perceptions of the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. The interview questions remain unchanged
throughout the interview process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The data gathering instrument is the researcher whose listening, observing, and understanding skills are critical (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During the structured interview, the researcher presented eight interview questions to three Georgia Title I elementary school principals to assess their perceptions towards the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. The researcher also presented eight interview questions to three PTA parent representatives from each school regarding their perceptions of the implementation of parental involvement at the school. The most important component in collecting qualitative data is listening skills, which is the most difficult to learn (Dilley, 2000). Immersion in the data collecting setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and experience reality through the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Validity in qualitative research largely depends on how careful the construction of the instrument is to ensure that it measures what it is suppose to measure (Patton, 2002). The intent of this study was to measure the perceptions of three Georgia Title I elementary school principals and three PTA parent representatives about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement.

After the participants signed the informed consent form, a structured tape recorded interview was scheduled and conducted by the researcher with each principal and PTA parent representative. An informed consent form was received from the participants after he or she has been truthfully informed about the research they agree to participate in (Fontana & Frey, 1998). To provide a comfortable environment, interviews were completed at each individual principal’s home school. The questions were designed to determine possible bias on their perceptions of the effects of parental involvement on
student achievement. The first set of questions was for the principals (See Appendix C) and the second set was for the parent representatives (See Appendix D).

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher analyzed the transcriptions to determine whether or not the perceptions and/or behaviors of the participants contained any similarities or differences that were compared and contrast. The researcher dictated the responses from a tape recorder and illustrated the findings through the use of graphs, charts and summaries to determine which of the perceptions were viewed as being the most effective in developing and maintaining parental involvement at the school and its direct impact on student achievement.

Data Management

All of the data collected during the research process by the researcher was stored in a secure location. The only individuals that were allowed access to the information were myself and my dissertation committee chair. The audiotapes and transcription notes were kept in one location. The data was entered into the researcher’s computer and stored on the hard drive, floppy disk, and CD. A hard copy of the information was also stored in a secure location.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis is moving from raw interviews to interpretations that are evidence based that guide the foundation for published reports (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In the proposed research study descriptive statistics were used by the researcher in comparing and contrasting the responses to the interview questions and giving the three Georgia Title I elementary school principals a report summarizing the findings. The reported information was shared with the three PTA parent representatives from each
school by the school’s principal. The report developed by the researcher included school portraitures of each school represented in the study.

Data Representation

Conclusions were drawn by the researcher to make recommendations for future research. There were five chapters. In Chapter I (Introduction), the readers were introduced to context of the study, research purpose, research questions, preview of literature review, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, significance of study, and preview of the methodology. In Chapter II (Review of Literature) eight bodies of literature related to the researcher’s topic were reviewed: (1) multicultural education, (2) parental involvement across cultures, (3) education reform, (4) benefits of NCLB, (5) negatives of NCLB, (6) Title I, (7) types of parental involvement, and (8) benefits of parental involvement. Chapter III (Methodology), explained the qualitative and methodological explanation for the researcher’s research. The data collection illustrated in the study was school portraitures and individual interviews. Chapter IV (Data Presentation), the researcher presented the data collected from school portraitures and individual interviews. Chapter V (Summary, Findings, Concerns, and Future Directions), the researcher presented the summary of the dissertation study that included the components of findings, concerns, recommendations for further research, and implications of the study.

Summary

While working as a classroom teacher in a poverty stricken environment, I became concerned with why students struggled so much in school. The three research questions and one overarching question were used by the researcher to guide the study. The
researcher used the research questions to try to determine the perceptions of Georgia Title I elementary school principals about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. The design the researcher used was qualitative. The qualitative study best suits the investigation and allowed the interviewees to have respondents to the research questions. The data collection used for this study was interview questions. The interview questions served as the instrument of the study. The validity of the instrument was determined by the interview questions measuring what they are supposed to measure. After receiving approval from IRB at Georgia Southern University (See Appendix E), the researcher was allowed to conduct the interviews.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the perceptions of elementary principals and their respective PTA parent representatives about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in Georgia Title I schools. Structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and tape-recorded, kept in a locked safe, and transcribed, to analyze the data. The study had two foci. The first focus was parental involvement as defined by the NCLB Act. The second one was student achievement in Title I schools. The overarching question and three research questions that guided the study were answered by the researcher based on the analysis from the information transcribed from the interviews and the relationship if any with the contemporary literature in the study. The overarching question was: What strategies have Georgia Title I elementary school principals found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement?

Specific research questions are as follows:

1. What are Georgia principals doing in Title I elementary schools that get parents involved with their children’s education that has a direct impact on student achievement and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

2. How are Georgia principals in Title I elementary schools keeping track of parental involvement in their schools to illustrate an increase in parental involvement contact hours and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?
3. How much time have Georgia Title I elementary school principals devoted to improving parental involvement and what strategies have these principals found to be most valuable and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives?

Research Design

The research design for the study was qualitative in nature because it allowed the researcher to use open-ended interview questions which gathered more information from the respondents as opposed to a close-ended survey instrument. The researcher interviewed three Georgia Title I elementary principals and three PTA parent representatives from their respective schools on their perceptions about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Each of the participants was located within schools in Northeastern Georgia. The three Georgia Title I principals and three PTA parent representatives were chosen because they represented a sample of Title I schools that have consistently met AYP and or designated as a Title I distinguish school for Georgia from the total population which afforded the researcher the opportunity to complete the study in a timely manner.

School Portraiture

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the schools and participants interviewed by the researcher, the names of each school, the principals and PTA parent representatives were deleted from the data and responses were coded. School portraiture were written to assist the reader in connecting each school to the principal and PTA parent representative. Schools have been given “fake” names for the purpose of presenting this data.
Perseverance Elementary School serves over 700 students in the Perseverance County School System. The demographics of the school are 45% white, 51% black, and 4% other\textsuperscript{10} as stated by the principal at the respective school. Perseverance Elementary School’s free and reduced population is 80% which means that 80% of the children attending this school are living in households with incomes below the economic poverty level. Jackie is the principal at Perseverance Elementary School and has worked as the principal for over six years. Jenny is the school’s PTA parent representative at the school and she has served on the school’s PTA for over five years.

Achiever Elementary School serves over 600 students in Achiever County School System. The demographics of the school are 68% white, 29% black, and 3% other as stated by the principal at the respective school. Achiever Elementary School’s free and reduced lunch population is 53% which means that 53% of the children attending this school are living in households with incomes below the economic poverty level. Bruce is the principal at Achiever Elementary School and has worked as the principal for over eleven years. Linda is the school’s PTA parent representative at the school and she has served on the school’s PTA for over seven years.

Determination Elementary School serves over 400 students in the Determination County School System. The demographics of the school are 98% black and 2% other as stated by the principal at the respective school. Determination Elementary School’s free and reduced population is 84% which means that 84% of the children attending this school are living in households with incomes below the economic poverty level. Tina is the principal at Determination Elementary School and has worked as the principal for

\textsuperscript{10} In this work when the researcher uses the term other, it refers to any student whose race is not African American or Caucasian.
over two years. Jill is the school’s PTA parent representative at the school and she has served on the school’s PTA for over four years.

Principals’ Interviews

In this section responses from each principal’s interview are documented. In order for the participants to feel relaxed, they were interviewed at their respective schools. The population for this study consisted of three Georgia Title I elementary school principals within Northeastern Georgia. In order to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participants, the researcher scheduled the interviews around the times that best suited them. Jackie scheduled her interview early in the morning before school started. Bruce scheduled his interview around his school winter break. Tina scheduled her interview during the school day. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Their responses were organized according to their responses as they related to the interview question. An analysis of their data responses were provided for each interview question that the researcher asked the participants. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, they were given “fake” names as indicated previously. Therefore, the names of Jackie, Bruce, and Tina were used to hide their identity.

Demographic Profile

Jackie is a Black American female who received her Bachelor’s in Early Childhood Education, Masters in Early Childhood Education, and Specialist degree in Education Administration from the University of Georgia. She has over twenty-four years of experience in education, and has been the Principal at her current school for six years. She is currently working on her Doctorate in Educational Administration at Georgia Southern University. Tina is a Black American female who has been in education for
fifteen years. She received her Bachelor’s in Elementary Education from Florida A&M University, Masters in Instructional Technology from Georgia State University, and Specialist in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. She has been Principal at her current school for a little over two years. Bruce is a Black American male who has over thirty years of experience in education. He has been Principal of his current school for eleven years. He received his Bachelor’s in Health and Physical Education from Tuskegee University and Masters in Education Administration from the University of West Georgia.

Interviews with Principals

The analysis of Part I were the three individual principal’s interviews that were tape recorded and transcribed from the eight interview questions that were developed and asked by the researcher.

**Researcher:** What is your definition of parental involvement?

**Jackie** - My definition of parental involvement includes the school and the parent working collaboratively together in the best interest of the student. Parental involvement can, uhm, stem from the parents physically coming over to the school to help and aid the school in various task needed for, uhm, student achievement such as mentoring or it can be parental involvement without the parent being physically, uhm, present at the school by offering donations and, uhm, just doing all kinds of involvement things that stem from the school. So in sum my definition of parental involvement can either be the physical presence of the parent or the non-physical, uhm, presence of the parent, uhm, just as long as the parent is supporting the school and supporting ah student achievement for their child.
Bruce - I think parental involvement to me becomes a two-fold situation. I’ll explain, I guess I will explain it by what happens here. We have a core group of parents that are in and out of our building on a very frequent basis but at the same time given the fact we have a lot of parents who work, we have a number of parents that if we call on them to come up, they will be here. They may not be here as much as that core group but they are called on. So I think when you look at it is not just the parents who are here when you haven’t called them but they are trying but I think those that if you call on them they will be there to help whether it is school parties, whether we are having some type of event in the school or even like our SACS study, uhm, we have parents who are involved on our leadership team or counsel so you have those people out there so there again when the need arises for them to come in, uhm, they are here and you know they will be here so I think they are people you can count on, uhm, you know to help you when the needs arise.

Tina - I would say parental involvement would be collaborative efforts between the home and school, uhm, getting parents actively involved in all components of the instructional program at the school. It could be volunteering, tutoring, serving on committees and allowing parents to have an active voice in the decision making in the school as a whole.

After analyzing the responses, the researcher concluded that parental involvement had many different definitions as defined by the three principals. There was no one activity that the participants characterized as parental involvement yet, it was a plethora of activities or actions by the parent that fell in the realm of being an advocate for the education of all children. It is a collaborative effort between the home and the school that ultimately benefited the education of students. As previously stated in the literature,
Parental involvement is characterized and divided up into six different categories for parents to choose from which are communicating, community participation, decision making, learning at home, participation, and volunteering (Epstein, 1995).

Researcher: What strategies have you found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement?

Jackie - The factors that I found most, uhm, most strong for our school would be to have a parental involvement coordinator present and that parental involvement coordinator acts as a liaison with the community. The parental involvement coordinator includes the parents into the things that the school deem necessary for involvement such as maybe re-shelving books or serving as a mentor to a child that’s focusing on student achievement or just at any capacity level, uhm, you would need a coordinator who would work specifically with the parents. Now as far as parental involvement on behalf of the administrators, uhm, the principal if they have a parental involvement coordinator already would work cooperatively with the parental involvement person to make sure that the school reflects an open and inviting and a caring atmosphere and making sure that the parents are able to come into the school and check out resources out the parental, uhm, resource room and know where to direct parents if they need assistance with their child with any kind of student achievement or academic achievement.

Bruce - What strategies, ahh, I think one thing is trying to do things that will recognize kids, uhh, not just in the honors programs, uh we do student of the month here, we uh we have teachers uh lets just say uh as part of their curriculum they are studying a different culture, uhm, they may decide that they are going to cook something different you know and ask parents to contribute, you know. I think when you start to do things that are centered around the children, they will come. Uhm, I think when they realize its
something that is going to help promote the well-being of our school such as our chili
supper when we have our book fair uh we at one point had to get staff members to man it
but now we have a group of parents you know the containers come in, they set it up for
the media specialist, they run it, they do the whole thing, close it up so it is really again
centered around improving of the school, around the children, uh and just constantly
talking with them about the fact it takes a village. You know and uh so some of the things
that we do as far as getting parents in we have set twice a year what we call early release
days for conferences you know and uh and one of them will take place say from 4:30-
7:30 and the other one takes place immediately once we dismiss school like 12:30-3:30
so it offers parents the opportunity you know to either one day right after school or the
next day late night type of thing so we get pretty good responses from that. Uhm, you
know field days we get a lot of parents uh you know we try to do a lot of different things
again that will get parents involved in either with the life of the school or with their
children and, uhm keeping them informed of what is going on. Uhm, we send out a
monthly activity calendar and on the back of it we have our lunch menu, uhm, that type
of thing you know just to name a few of some of the things we try to do as far as
communicating and getting them involved with the life of the school.

Tina - Uhm, the strategies that I usually use entail, uhm, help and support upfront and
tackling a particular initiative or something, uhm, by asking them to come in so their
voice can be heard. So it will definitely be informing parents you know initially and
recruiting help and support, uhm, in whatever efforts it is at the school and keeping them
actively informed on what is going on regarding events, projects, decisions or anything
that actually come up.
Strategies used by each individual principal varied but the ones that stood out were having a parental involvement coordinator that was used as a liaison in recruiting parents into the school and making them a valuable asset in the school. Giving parents ample notice on things that were occurring at the school was another strategy that was discussed in the interview. All of the strategies were geared toward the improvement of the school and fostering an environment that ultimately was warm and welcoming to all parents. Parents needed to be given the opportunity to take ownership for their involvement at the school rather that is with school activities or decisions being made at the school. These findings are in direct correlation with the findings of the National Center of Educational Statistics (1998), which stated that schools across the nation are making a conscious effort to involve parents in a number of ways.

**Researcher**: What strategies have you found to be least effective in promoting parental involvement?

**Jackie** - Least effective would be for a title one school not having a parental involvement coordinator because during the day as an administrator we wear various hats and in effect the no child left behind act, uhm, principals or administrators are acting as instructional leaders and, uhm, making decisions collaboratively with the teachers and the parents but to have that primary focus on the parents and to have them to know what is needed in the school as well as having parents who want to help. At our school we have found out that parents do not attend meetings when they aren’t getting feed free food. It’s good to have a coordinator present to kind of help that, uhm, be at a strong level. Uhm, a person does need to be designated to help in that capacity.

**Bruce** - Oh, that’s a tough one. If we don’t have something to show with our students involved uh with it parents won’t show up. You know so and that’s just one thing we
come to realize that if you got to have some type of draw or something that will draw them here uh in some situation or otherwise you will get them, uhm, there expectations. We don’t get what we have every year at the beginning of the year a third and fifth grade promotional meeting where we sit down and talk with the parents, uhm, about third and fifth grade CRCT test and things that we are doing here you know whether it is taking test online you know what the teachers are doing and, uhm, we don’t other than just the general information uh for the past two or three years the number of parents that come you know it dwindles. Uh you know and it is information you think they would want to know but, uhm, but they don’t so we have to work a different way to get that information out but we still have to have that meeting but there again it is one of the things we found out that they just won’t come out and be involved in that and its affecting their child.

Tina - Least effective, really does not work if parents don’t know what is happening, uhm, last minute you know details or getting things out and recruiting and asking for help and support. I would say last minute communication doesn’t work.

*Last minute communication between the home and school was something that was found to be least effective in pulling parents into the school. It was stated that parents tend not to attend informative meetings because their children were not performing in a program or they were not getting fed when they attended a meeting. Meetings that were offered by school personnel that would be beneficial to the parents and students don’t have good attendance because parents tend not to be interested if the were not benefiting from coming. In essence the home and school can only be on one accord when you have parents who want to work with the school for the betterment of students. Schools are willing to provide services to parents but parents still have to be willing to do their part*
on affording schools the opportunity on keeping them informed about things at the
school. According to Crozier (1999), schools face many challenges when it comes to
parents becoming advocates of their child’s education which are not limited to a parents
lack of time, knowledge based on the subject matter being taught, and parents believing
that the teacher will do what is best for the student.

Researcher: What are you doing as a principal to get parents involved in their child’s
education?

Jackie - Making sure that I include parents in part of the decision making process, uhm,
its tough in a Title I school to get parents involved during the school day. We have the
other avenues that are after hours for parents who work but I constantly keep the parents
abreast of school events by my newsletter also by channel 62, a local cable T.V. channel;
letting parents know what’s going on within the school. Also through the, uhm,
newsletter which is on the back of the lunch menu, uhm, as a principal, uhm, if parents
are needing to talk with me about positive things needed for the school they can set up a
meeting with me and, uhm, that’s basically it. As an administrator I make sure the
parental component is added by having our monthly meetings, uhm, scheduled in our
agenda, uhm, for fun nights and making sure the parental involvement coordinator is
being active with our parents and meeting their needs.

Bruce - Uhm, what am I doing. One I just continue to encourage not only encourage but
work with teachers, uhm, about keeping parents informed about what is taking place in
their classes, assisting teachers if there are parents for whatever reason that can’t get here,
 uhm, using different ways of helping of encouraging the parents to be here it is important
for them to be here. Uhm, we spend, uhm, a great amount of time just in personal
conversation with parents, uhm, about the need for them to be involved, uhm, I feel like I
am in a unique situation in that given the length of time that I have been here, uhm, a number of my parents are my former students from middle school so or I know families because of having families earlier that come through. So, so, so to that end, uhm, it helps me in terms of my personal conversation with them and always talking with them about being involved with the life of their child, uhm, we really encourage parents to come in and talk to us, uhm, we stress an open door policy. Many times we have conferences with parents and they haven’t set up a time they just kind of come in and we will take the time or my assistant and I will stand in the hallway each morning and afternoon so it’s just something I have encouraged her to do and I think its just personal contact when, uhm, we have with parents. We talk to a lot of parents, uhm, and it’s a good thing with what’s going on just to let them know they are here and we are here to help them and we also need their help. Uhm, and, uhm, it’s one of the things that parents have stressed to us that they if they had an experience at another school that they really appreciate about us here is that we are open and more accessible you know to them and here them and it’s a word that actually gets out and people just kind of come to expect that and it goes back to what I said earlier, even though those parents won’t be here as frequently as some others we know that we can call them and they will be ready to help us any way they can.

**Tina** - Uhm, we have a couple of things going on. One of our big things that we have here is called Pace Academy and that is parents achieving collaboratively through collaborative efforts. It is similar to like a parent university that you here about throughout the nation, uhm, that one way. We offer parent workshops on things that are going on in school, then we also poll the parents at the beginning of the year about workshops they would like to participate in and we offer it through PTA meetings,
through other meetings throughout the week and weekends. If they come in and volunteer and participate in those workshops they receive points toward a degree and at the end they could have earned their bachelor’s, masters, or doctoral degree and then there is an actual graduation. That’s one of the things we do to try to get them to pull in and you know just the usual carnivals, uhm, movie nights and things like that.

Principals were using a multiplicity of innovative practices to pull the resources of the parents into the school culture. It was obvious through the principal’s responses that they recognized the importance of parental involvement and that as society changes they were willing to change while not getting caught up in traditional recruitment practices of parents. If the environment was warm and welcoming to the parents and they felt comfortable they would continue to come back because it gave them some sense of ownership. Constant communication was another component that stood out in the responses from the principals while affording parents many different avenues so they can communicate with someone at the school if they deemed fit. As previously stated in the literature by Smith-Fields (2005), schools have a moral responsibility to communicate everything that is going on at the school with parents.

Researcher: How do you keep track of parental involvement contact hours at your school?

Jackie - Our parental involvement coordinator keeps the sign in sheets and we have sign in sheets and visitor sheets in the main office area for the, uhm, parents who come in and volunteer to do different things within the school. So there are sign in sheets and the use of our parent resource room there is a sign in sheet for that and checking out different materials is how we monitor, uhm, parental involvement in our school.
Bruce - To be honest, we don’t keep track. We just we don’t keep track in terms of hours but we do keep track on a sign-in sheet. Say like at conference time, uhm, we keep track of the number of parents that teachers actually meet with, uhm, and that type of thing because it is, uhm, a two-day event both, uhm, in the fall and then I guess at the beginning of each semester or six weeks into each semester is when we will do that and, uhm, we keep that and we will do some comparison one semester to the second semester or then in some cases we will look at this year’s total versus last year’s total. But now keeping up with parent contacts, no we don’t.

Tina - We have a volunteer and a sign in sheet for all the activities that we have. Then the parents actually have a Pace Academy card they have to keep up with that is stamped every time they come to a particular activity at school.

Based on their responses, there was a log sheet or similar artifact that was maintained at each individual school to document parental involvement. One particular school was able to designate their Parent Involvement Coordinator who kept track of parents coming into the school and attending meetings. Overall, documentation was universal across all of the schools because being that they are Title I they have to keep up with the parental involvement component as defined by the NCLB Act. Even though it was a challenge, all of the schools were actively trying to implement the parental involvement component in their schools. According to Epstein & Hollifield (1996), Title I elementary schools across the nation are faced with the challenge of the requirements for parental involvement in Title I schools.

Researcher: Has parental involvement had a direct impact on student achievement at your school?
Jackie - Yes, I find as a principal, that the more the parents are involved at any capacity be it indirect or direct the children generally, uhm, perform better academically.

Bruce - Uhm, I would say yes to that. Uhm, we have found, uhm, in being here eleven years and again I think talking with parents and knowing the students we have seen too many students who have turned a corner academically and behaviorally, uhm, when the parents actually join forces, uhm, with us to help guide their child in the right direction. I mean there are many that come to mind in fact and yes it is something that is really important and, uhm, you know it does have a direct impact. Now there are those students in most cases who rise above their situations because there is no parent involvement and so there is usually someone else here or maybe another relative that helps step up to the plate and they rise above that situation but we have seen more and more parents get involved with that. In fact, one of the things we’ve seen on the increase is the number of parents because they know we do it and we would ask them the number of parents who ask us when the CRCT is going to be available on line so the children can go online and practice test at home. We are having more and more calls about that which kind of lets you know the word is getting out and the interesting thing about it if a teacher hadn’t gone on to do it we get calls that say look my child has been doing this and its not there so it really helps us to keep a gauge you know as far as if things are being done and also that parents are out there.

Tina - I really feel that it has. Uhm, we have put a lot of things in place at school to make sure the parents are involved in checking for homework or checking reading logs and things like that. One of the two things that we check and monitor the parents and the students for, uhm, we have a student agenda that we give every child as a Title I school
we give it to everyone instead of having them purchase one and those kids have to get those agendas signed daily by the parents verifying they saw the homework and they bring them back and we have like weekly and monthly incentives for the students as well as the parents. And the same for the reading log the students have to participate in the reading log every night and the parents have to sign off on that. Periodically we will put a question in the newsletter and the kids would have to have their parents sign it and let us know they are actually reading the newsletter and we try to reward the parent and student both ways showing ok mom we know you are checking homework because your child did not miss any day for the last 4 weeks getting their log signed.

All three principals agreed that they thought parental involvement does have a direct impact on student achievement. Constant communication with the parents was talked about because it allowed parents the opportunity to see that the school wanted them to be involved in their child’s education. Several things were put in place to pull parents into the school. According to Griffith (1996), there is a positive correlation that exists between the variables of parental involvement and student achievement.

Researcher: How do you determine what activities parents can participate in at school for parental involvement?

Jackie - That determination comes with, uhm, myself and the parental involvement coordinator working collaboratively together. We, uhm, designate again family fun night and the parent involvement coordinator, uhm, designates themes for different nights and we make sure the themes we are offering the parents work right along with our school improvement plans and work right along with what our goals are as a school and that is to, uhm, enhance our reading and enhance our math. Therefore, our family nights are, uhm, based on that. It is almost time for us to take the CRCT and our next parent night in
March we are making preparations for parents and how they can help their child be successful on the CRCT.

Bruce - Uhm, I don’t necessary determine that. Our leadership team, uhm, my belief for the most part is that the parents we have on our leadership team has some indirect involvement with the budgetary process, uhm, you know we have got to make decisions on purchasing certain items and whether or not we are going to do them in that year. We have parents involved and we have accelerated reader program here and we wanted it to fit us and our parents gave us some ideas we never would have thought of because they gave it to us from that parent perspective even though just about everyone on the leadership team is a parent because of what we do everyday we tend to think more as educators and not able to pull ourselves away from that and so they gave us some great ideas and we did it. There are just some areas that parents and staff members don’t have the say but for the most part parents are going to have a one example is our yearbook, our school doesn’t get involved. It is done solely by parents who determine how it is going to be put together. We talk about the price range and they determine the layout of the book and it’s something that goes over quite well. Uhm, you know we had a picture company come in and we weren’t so satisfied and we had parents that went out and found someone who had a small business who said ok let’s try them. Parents really have a lot to contribute to the life of this school more than a lot of things we do it’s a good number that has been generated by parents.

Tina - Hmm, well probably a combination again of what we do a survey at our first PTA meeting and our last PTA meeting of the previous year asking what are some things you would like to see or be involved in at the school, uhm, from a parent perspective as far as
workshops do you want parenting skill workshops or do you want somebody to come in and talk to you about getting a resume together or do you want someone to come in and talk about discipling your child or something like that so we pull from the items that are interesting to them and then as a staff we also implement the items we thing they need to be made aware of like testing workshops and bring your parent to school day those kinds of things so it’s a combination of what they feel they need to be involved in and what we think.

The responses ranged from the activities being determined by the goals and school’s improvement plan such as monthly family nights, parents sitting on the leadership team, and parents being allowed the opportunity to respond to a survey at the school’s first PTA meeting. No one response was better than the other, it just reinforces the idea that what might work for one school might not work at another school. It really depended on the population that the school was serving that determined the strategy used. Finn (1998), stated that when the school and home are willing to work together a stronger relationship is formed.

Researcher: How much time have you devoted to improving parental involvement at your school?

Jackie - That is the majority of the time. Uhm, I have an open door policy and, uhm, parents are able to come in and speak with me sometimes without appointments. Uhm, we also have the parent resource room, which is open, uhm, during school hours along with our library. So we pretty much have an open door policy and I do believe that once the parents are involved, uhm, we win as a school because the kids are going to be successful academically.
**Bruce** - How much time have I devoted? I really can’t calculate that in hours, I really couldn’t calculate that in time. It’s just something we try to keep at the forefront, uhm, in terms of what we are doing and, uhm, with SACS coming we have had to back up and look at some things we weren’t doing and question those things, uhm, to say ok maybe we need to look at some things differently here, uhm, you know but again I don’t try to calculate and keep up we just again try to keep it in the forefront. I am a believer in the situation that is needed you want as many eyes and minds to look at it and think about it so you can come up with the best possible solution because it’s about the organization moving forward and that’s not solely on the shoulders of one or two people. It’s basically everybody involved, parents, teachers and even to some extent our business community because when I say our business partners because sometimes we get input from them in terms of things that are going on. Again, I don’t calculate it; it is just something I try to work at.

**Tina** - Oh God, it’s an ongoing part of my job I mean it just not a specific time. Because daily I spend my time dealing with parental involvement issues and meeting with the administration team and the leadership team or meeting with PTA executive council or school council to try to address specific areas if it’s a facilities need where we have been begging for a new facility for three years you know because of the roofing or meeting with our business partners on how they can continue to bring money because we have an old building. We get $2000.00 from Office Depot for wiring or something like that through a parent who is employed there. It is an ongoing job if I have to put a percentage on it I would probably say a good 45-50% if I have to I guess.
The principals felt the process of improving parental involvement was on-going. Time was something that couldn’t be calculated in hours but the principals did spend the majority if not half of their day trying to improve the parental involvement at their school. They constantly looked at their program to try to determine what needed to be revamped and improved to benefit parental involvement at the school. According to Machen, Wilson & Notar (2005), the component that is needed in the process of improving schools are parents.

PTA Parent Representatives’ Interviews

In this section responses from each of the previously reported principal’s elementary schools were documented. In order for the participants to feel relaxed, the researcher interviewed them at their respective schools. The population for this study consisted of three PTA parent representatives within Northeastern Georgia. In order to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participants, the researcher scheduled interviews around the times that best suited them. Jenny was the PTA parent representative for the school where Jackie served as principal. She scheduled her interview late one afternoon after school was dismissed. Linda was the PTA parent representative for the school where Bruce served as principal. She scheduled her interview during the school day. Jill was the PTA parent representative for the school where Tina served as principal. She scheduled her interview during the school day. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher chose to organize their responses according to the interview question that was asked. An analysis of their data responses was provided for each interview question that the researcher asked.
the participants. To ensure the anonymity of the participants the names of Judy, Linda, and Jill were used to hide their identity.

Demographic Profile

Jenny is a Caucasian female who is employed at a local bank. She has over three years of experience serving on the school’s PTA. She is married with two children. Linda is a Black American female who is a teacher in a school district. She has over seven years of experience serving on the school’s PTA. She is married with two children. Jill is a Caucasian female who is a student at a local college. She has over four years of experience serving on the school PTA. She is married with four children.

Interviews with PTA Parent Representatives

The three individual PTA parent representatives interviewed. They were tape recorded and transcribed from the eight interview questions that were developed and asked by the researcher.

Researcher: Does your school offer a warm and welcoming environment for parents?
Jenny - Yes, I have been involved here for 5 years and I’ve always felt welcomed to go throughout the whole school in an open environment to see all of the teachers.
Linda - Yes, I believe we do offer a warm and welcoming environment for parents.
Jill - Yes very much so.

Overall all of the PTA parent representatives felt that their school offered a warm and welcoming environment for parents. Schools that realize the importance of parents being involved in their child’s education is important ensures that the learning community believes in the academic development of all students (Cassity & Harris, 2000).

Researcher: What strategies has the principal used to promote involvement at the school?
**Jenny** - We’ve sent out welcome newsletters, we’ve held not only PTA meetings on a monthly basis. We also have parent involvement nights on a monthly basis to get parents involved and we have an agenda sent out with daily activities.

**Linda** - For parents, we have workshops for parents, uhm, they come it’s like what they call pace academy and parents come and attend workshops for reading to help their children with reading. Uhm, anytime PTA is doing any fundraiser we have done several fundraisers we just did like valentine, uhm, we had a carnival anytime we have a fundraiser we try to invite the parents in to assist us with that. Parents are asked to come in and volunteer to help the teachers in the classrooms you know with anything the teachers may need at that time. We have times when the parents come in to read to the classroom during certain times like for American education week in particular there are times that we have various activities and the parents are invited in for career day. We have even had “I brought my parent to school today” where parents come in and shadow their child that day to kind of see what is going on.

**Jill** - Well we have, uhm, our committee that meets and then we have parents that are own that committee, uhm, called our school council. Parents are elected to serve on the school council, uhm, but our PTA, is a very involved group of ladies. We do different things in the community chili suppers, fall festivals, uhm, reading nights things like that bingo night, uhm, we also do a school newsletter that goes out to keep the communication open with the parents. He’s very visible in the hallways and he’s very much approachable.

*There were several similarities between the PTA parent representatives’ responses.*

*Newsletters, fall carnivals, monthly PTA meetings, family nights, workshops, fundraisers,*
reading nights, bingo nights, and other innovative activities were stated to have been used by their principal to promote involvement at the school. According to Epstein & Salinas (2004), parents need reasons that are compelling to them to become involved in the education of their child.

**Researcher**: How much time do you spend promoting parental involvement in the school?

**Jenny** - I’d say about 10 hours a week, not just with my children across the board and that has to do with the fact that I have been PTA president for 2 years in a row and prior to that served other positions on the PTA.

**Linda** - As PTA treasurer, I spend a lot of time trying to get the parents to come in. We have had a couple of movie nights this year also it’s one of our fundraisers for our yearbooks because the cost of our yearbooks are so high and a lot of the kids can’t afford them so one of the things we did this year was lower the cost and we are trying to offset that cost with the fundraisers, uhm, like one of the fundraisers was the movie night which has been real successful where kids come in we have four screens and we offer the kids a choice of four movies and you know we had an arts and craft day. So as PTA treasurer along with the President and Vice President since I am at here at the school I find myself spending a lot of time trying to involve the parents to come up here and talk to me, call me since I am easily accessible here at the school.

**Jill** - Quite a bit because I have children here, uhm, so I’m here quite a bit but I do other things such as the school newsletter, uhm, before I was a student I was up here reading with kids like going into the classrooms and reading to a small group or individual.

The consensus between the PTA parent representatives’ responses identified that they spend an incredible amount of time promoting parental involvement at their school. They
promoted parental involvement not only because they were apart of the school’s PTA but also because they liked being active in their child’s education as well as other students. Cooperation between the home and school supports the overall development of the child (Cordoy & Wilson, 2004).

**Researcher**: What is your definition of parental involvement?

**Jenny** - My definition of parental involvement is not only showing an interest in my individual child needs but showing an interest in the whole school’s body needs and showing the children you are interested and you are here for all of them.

**Linda** - Hmm, to me it’s kind of self explanatory you know the parent being involved in their child’s education, uhm, being a parent I try to do as much as I can to support my children in their education or just anything that they do. So that means if the school is offering something or doing something I try to make sure that we go. I want my children to see me being a part of their education and being involved and not just say go ok fine I will drop you off but actually going and being involved and let teachers and coaches see me there and knowing I do care and that if they need anything that I’ll be there. So to me doing all those things is parental involvement and there are some parents who can’t come to the school and, uhm, volunteer time but being a teacher on the flip side it is hard for me to do those things with my children during the day because that means if I am with them I am not with my children in my classroom. So it is a catch twenty-two being a teacher and being a parent. One thing the parents need to understand is that being an involved parent does not necessarily mean always being at the school. I think sometimes you ask parents to be involved or donate their time, they think that oh I am going to have to miss work to come in and be involved but that’s not true. I always try to tell parents
that anything you can do that will help your child’s class or the school even if that means if the teacher needs copies. If their doing an art activity or something and they need things cut out, anything that you do toward helping your child or the school that is parental involvement.

**Jill** - I think a parent who is not only visible in the school you know a lot of moms work a lot of dads work but I think parents who are familiar with the school and the, uhm administrators the teachers, uhm, they will feel comfortable and welcomed to come in with problems, concerns, suggestions, uhm, and are willing to get involved on a committee. Let’s say a parent doesn’t like the way our playground looks, they are willing to step in and get involved in ordering equipment or doing a playground clean-up day.

*The PTA parent representatives’ definition of parental involvement was a combination of ideas. It was the ability to take an interest in not only their child’s needs but all students at the school. Parental involvement allowed students the opportunity to see their parents actively engaged at home and or at school for their academic success. Parental involvement does not necessarily mean having a physical presence at the school but having a cooperative attitude related to the success of your child. According to Thornburg & Hoffman (1991), having parental involvement at home gives parents the opportunity to build on the classroom instruction on a daily basis.*

**Researcher:** Do you feel parents are given an ample opportunity to provide parental involvement?

**Jenny** - Yes, I do but I don’t feel like parents here take advantage of those opportunities. I think this school has provided ample opportunities for parents from all age groups to be involved whether it is from reading to individual classes or being on different committees that the school has for parental involvement.
Linda - Uhm, yes I do. We have enough things going on at the school for them to be involved. Uhm, in anything from PTA or activities at the school. With PTA we try to assist with anything the school is doing any support they need whether it be financially or just bodies we try to solicit or just give that help so with just the slew of things going on around the school I think that parents have plenty of opportunities to be involved at the school. We don’t have the best parental involvement statistic wise to the number of students. I try to think of ways we can tap into what our parents are into. It’s good to get the kids on board but we need to feel the parents and see what types of things would interest them and get them more involved.

Jill - Yes I do, we have, uhm, committees to sign-up for at the beginning of the year. Any parent who is interested in serving on any committee or wants to be contacted about anything have the right at the beginning of the year to sign-up and they are contacted throughout the year. And if they don’t sign-up at the beginning, we still call on people as we find out people have interests in certain areas or have weaknesses or strengths in certain areas we try to pull those parents in.

The PTA parent representatives felt that their school did offer parents many opportunities to provide parental involvement at the school yet, parents did not always take advantage of those opportunities. For those parents that were hard to reach, the PTA parent representatives had to think of innovative ways to reach them. According to Comer (2005), parents want to be involved in their child’s education but do not because of poor experiences in school, lack of trust for the school, and lack of time to volunteer to the school.

Researcher: What strategies has the principal used to promote parental involvement that you have disagreed with?
Jenny - I have not disagreed with any. I admire the principal’s strategy.

Linda - Hmm, there really, uhm, I can honestly say there is nothing she has tried to do that I have disagreed with and again this year I have really come forward with a lot of ideas like lets do this lets do that and she has always supported it. As a matter of fact I just came forth today with something from my daughters school something their doing for their school like a family art night and I showed her the flyer for her school and she said lets try it and see if it works.

Jill - I can’t think of anything that I would disagree with. I haven’t disagreed with anything that he’s done to try to get people involved or anything like that.

There were no disagreements among the PTA parent representatives about the strategies used by principals to promote parental involvement. According to Baldauf (1997), parental involvement is looked upon as being the solution to improving public schools.

Researcher: How long have you served on the school’s PTA?

Jenny - I served on the PTA for 5 years.

Linda - I have always been a member but this is my first year serving as an officer. So I have been a member for six years and an officer for one year.

Jill - Over four years, I previously served as the President and Vice President for two year terms each. And know I’m just a member like everybody else.

The PTA parent representatives have served on their school’s PTA for an average of five years. The average term for parents to hold a position on a school’s PTA board was two years. They have served in many different positions during that time. According to personnel from the National PTA information center, the average years to serve on the
PTA are 2.8 years. According to Robinson & Fine (1994), regardless of a parents race, background, or the amount of money they make; student achievement will increase if parents are actively involved.

**Researcher**: Does the principal collaborate with the PTA to promote parental involvement?

**Jenny** - Yes, the principal is very active one on one with me with trying to come up with different ways to get the parents involved in our meetings which is always open and receptive to most of them.

**Linda** - Yes, we have meetings, uhm, the executive board, officers, principals, parents, and teachers we sit down to come up with ways and things we can do to get parents involved and keep them involve. One of my ideas is to do a parent survey to send out to the parents to get a feel of those parents that are not involved and to get them in.

**Jill** - Yes, yes he attends the monthly board meetings which we basically come up with ideas or setting calendars or depending where the money needs to go and things like that.

In analyzing the PTA parent representatives’ responses; they all felt that their principal collaborated with the school’s PTA to promote parental involvement. The principals collaborated with the school’s PTA by attending many of the meetings that take place for the betterment of the school. The relationship that is built between educators and parents is vital to parental involvement (Hein, 2003).

**Response to Research Questions**

One overarching question and three research questions guided this study. The overarching question sought to find out what strategies were found to be most effective by Georgia Title I elementary principals in promoting parental involvement. Research question number one asked what were Georgia Title I principals doing to get parents
involved that had a direct impact on student achievement. Research question number two examined how Georgia Title I principals were keeping track of parental involvement contact hours at their schools. Research question number three took an in-depth look at how much time Georgia Title I principals devoted to improving parental involvement and the strategies they found to be most valuable. The overarching question and three research questions were answered with an analysis of the findings by the researcher for each specific question.

The overarching question was:

- What strategies have Georgia Title I elementary school principals found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement? In response to the overarching question, principals stated that the most effective strategies they have used in promoting parental involvement consisted of a variety of approaches. Holding book fairs and dinners at the school has been beneficial. Communicating to the parents through monthly meetings or sending home monthly calendars has kept parents actively engaged. Having a parental involvement coordinator that serves as a liaison between the home and school and is constantly celebrating and recognizing student’s successes has gained support from parents. Lastly, having an active administration team that parents can see engaged with the students and the school builds a healthy relationship with parents.

Specific research questions are as follows:

- What are Georgia principals doing in Title I elementary schools to get parents involved in their children’s education that has a direct impact on student achievement and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives? Principals
often gave parents the opportunity to have representation on the many different school committees, parenting workshops, being easily accessible, having an open door policy, monthly meetings, fun events, and constant communication via newsletter, local television channel, and surveys. These initiatives were corroborated by the PTA parent representatives.

- How are Georgia principals in Title I elementary schools tracking parental involvement in their schools to illustrate an increase in parental involvement contact hours and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives? In order to keep track of parental involvement contact hours, principals utilized the school’s parental involvement coordinator, where one existed, who kept track of contact hours via sign-in sheets, visitors sign-in sheets located in the front office, parent resource room sign-in sheets, parent/teacher conference sign-in sheets, and a parent academy card that was stamped each time it was used. One particular principal did not have a system in place to keep up with parental contact hours at the school. All of the information was corroborated by the PTA parent representatives.

- How much time have Georgia Title I elementary school principals devoted to improving parental involvement and what strategies have these principals found to be most valuable and are these corroborated by PTA parent representatives? The majority of the information stated by the participants was not qualitative in terms of time. Collectively the principals felt they spent the majority of their work day devoted to parental involvement. They kept parental involvement on the
forefront of the thinking and on-going focus at each of the respective schools. All of the information was corroborated by the PTA parent representatives.

Table 2

Schedule of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>February 22, 2006</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>February 23, 2006</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>February 23, 2006</td>
<td>8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>February 27, 2006</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.- 9:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>February 27, 2006</td>
<td>9:45 a.m.- 10:15 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>March 3, 2006</td>
<td>10:30 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

After receiving clearance from the IRB at Georgia Southern University to conduct the research, the researcher started to collect data on the perceptions of three Georgia Title I elementary principals and three PTA parent representatives on the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Parental involvement varies from school to school. The data from this research supports this conclusion. All of the participants were located within Northeastern Georgia. The demographic profile of each participant represented a wide range of diversity, experience, and educational background. The number of participants represented a manageable number of participants to interview from the total population and also ensured that the researcher would be able to complete the study in a timely fashion. The interviews were scheduled with the
participants at a time that best suited them. The researcher ensured that the participants would remain comfortable by interviewing them at their school in an environment that was familiar to them. The three Georgia Title I elementary principals and three PTA parent representatives were each asked eight interview questions. Each interview took approximately thirty minutes to complete. The researcher’s role in the study was to schedule the interviews, interview the participants, tape-record and analyze their responses to the interview questions in the study. The analysis of the interview questions was referenced to the literature to show a positive correlation. The study was guided by one overarching question and three research questions that the researcher answered using the data that was collected and analyzed. The three specific research questions were collected and analyzed for the study which was corroborated by the PTA parent representatives.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is an analysis of the research findings, discussion of research findings, conclusions based on the findings, implications and recommendations based on the analysis of the data in the study. There are twelve findings that emerged from the study:

(1) Several initiatives were used by principals to promote parental involvement. (2) Principals gave parents the opportunity to voice their opinions for the betterment of their respective schools. (3) Principals were not limited to their traditional initiatives when promoting parental involvement. (4) Principals kept documentation of the amount of parental contact hours at their respective schools. (5) Principals spent the majority of their time at work trying to improve parental involvement. (6) Principals believed that a positive correlation existed between parental involvement and student achievement. (7) Principals wanted challenging parents to be involved in their child’s education. (8) Principals felt that making parental involvement the school’s focus was their most successful strategy. (9) Parents were always aware of things going on at school because of the communication offered by the school. (10) Parents were allowed to provide feedback on volunteer activities at the school. (11) Parents felt that the principals worked with them. (12) Parents felt that their respective schools offered a welcoming environment.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of elementary principals and PTA parent representatives about the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in Georgia Title I schools. The effect of parental involvement on student achievement is well documented in the related literature. Accordingly, students who are
supported by parents in their learning experiences are more likely to experience academic success.

Parents taking an active role in the education of their children result in higher student achievement. The study of elementary principals in Georgia Title I schools was warranted because principals, parents, and students all benefited from the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Parental involvement influences student achievement at an early age and makes all stakeholders accountable for that achievement. This study had two foci: one being parental involvement as defined by the NCLB and the other being student achievement in Title I schools.

The population of the study consisted of three Georgia Title I elementary principals and three PTA parent representatives from each of their respective schools within Northeastern Georgia. Each group of participants was asked eight different set of interview questions. The completion rate for the tape-recorded interviews in the study was 100%. The data collected by the researcher was collected during February, 2006. The researcher scheduled the interviews with the participants at their respective schools so they would feel comfortable. The interviews were tape-recorded, kept in a locked safe and transcribed by the researcher. The data that was transcribed from the tapes was coded to protect the identity of the participants and their respective schools. After the tapes were transcribed the researcher destroyed them. The data was analyzed by the researcher before reporting the findings.

This research is important to parents, teachers, students, community leaders, PTA representatives, and Georgia Title I Principals. The research is important because the findings afforded all stakeholders the opportunity to see the positive correlation that
exists between parental involvement and student achievement. The variable of parental involvement is the component that benefits all students no matter their race or ethnicity. The findings supported the contemporary literature referred to in the study. The researcher will communicate the findings to educators and parents via several venues. These include but are not limited to publication of the study, public presentations via staff development programs, parent orientations and conferences.

Findings

As I interviewed with my participants, I found that principals relied on a variety of delineated ideas and initiatives to promote parental involvement in their schools (Finding 1). This is consistent with the literature as stated by the National Center of Educational Statistics (1998), schools across the nation are using a variety of ways in their efforts of involving parents in the education of their students. The researcher believes that it is through these different initiatives that parental involvement developed into a school’s most useful resource and ultimately helped to improve student achievement. Jackie had something different going on at her school when she stated, “The parental involvement coordinator includes the parents into the things that the school deem necessary for involvement such as maybe re-shelving books or serving as a mentor to a child that’s focusing on student achievement” (Chapter IV, p. 64). A direct correlation exists with the overarching research question that highlighted the different strategies principals found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement.

Principals afforded parents the opportunity to be heard in the school through representation on different committees (Finding 2). This is consistent with the literature and research question number one which examined the initiatives principals are using to
get parents involved that has a direct impact on the achievement of students. According to Smith-Fields (2005), schools have the responsibility of communicating everything going on at the school to the parents. The researcher believes that when stakeholders’ voices are heard, it builds a climate that facilitates communication that is for the betterment of all students.

Principals’ initiatives and ideas that promoted parental involvement were not limited to monthly meetings, newsletters, and fundraisers (Finding 3). This is consistent with the contemporary literature and research question number one. According to Cordoy & Wilson (2004), the development of a child is supported by the cooperation between the home and school. Tina stated, “One of our big things that we have here is called Pace Academy and that is parents achieving collaboratively through collaborative efforts. If they come in and volunteer and participate in those workshops they receive points toward a degree and at the end they could have earned their bachelor’s, masters, or doctoral degree and there is an actual graduation” (Chapter IV, p. 70). Research question number one discussed what principals have accomplished to get parents involved that had a direct impact on student achievement. The literature supports the statement that principals went beyond the call of duty to make sure that parental involvement was an on-going experience at the school. It is the researcher’s belief that the nontraditional strategies that are used for parental involvement speak clearly to the parents that the school is interested in actively engaging them in their child’s education.

Principals kept track of parental contact hours with the school via the use of a sign-in sheet or other similar documentation (Finding 4). This is consistent with the literature by Epstein & Hollifield (1996), which states Title I schools have to show proper
documentation for their parental involvement component as defined by the NCLB Act. It was through the researcher’s observations during the structured interviews that the principals and PTA parent representatives stated overwhelmingly that schools have some form of sign-in sheet to keep track of the visitors that come to the school. The researcher also believes that the three Title I principals interviewed are doing an excellent job keeping track of their parental involvement component. Tina stated, “Parents actually have a Pace Academy card they have to keep up with that is stamped every time they come to a particular activity at school” (Chapter IV, p. 71). Also, the researcher believes that this finding is supported by the literature for research question number two which questioned how principals are keeping track of parental involvement contact hours at the school.

Principals felt that the majority of their time was devoted to improving parental involvement at their school (Finding 5). The participants interviewed by the researcher talked about the difficulty of measuring the amount of time they devoted to parental involvement. All of the principals interviewed recognized the importance of having parental involvement and the numerous hours spent towards strengthening their parental involvement program. As found in the literature Machen, Wilson & Notar (2005), supports this finding because the necessary component needed in improving schools across the nation are parents. Bruce summed up the responses of most of the participants when he stated, “I really can’t calculate that in hours, I really can’t calculate that in time. It’s just something we try to keep at the forefront” (Chapter IV, p. 76). This finding answered with no qualitative amount being given research question number three which questioned how much time principals devoted toward improving parental involvement.
Principals believed that parental involvement had a positive effect on student achievement (Finding 6). This study illustrates the researcher’s belief that parental involvement has a direct impact on student achievement as stated in the literature which according to Griffith (1996), a positive correlation exists between the two variables of parental involvement and student achievement. Many similarities existed in the three PTA parent representatives responses to their definition of parental involvement because they felt a relationship had to exist which would ultimately benefit the students. Jackie stated, “The more the parents are involved at any capacity be it indirect or direct the children generally perform better academically” (Chapter IV, p. 72). The research supports that principals are doing several different things in their respective schools to incorporate parental involvement which has a direct impact on student achievement. The research supports that the principals are doing several different things that have a direct impact on student achievement.

Principals wanted parents to be involved in their child’s education but experienced the challenge of connecting with parents who were hard to contact (Finding 7). This was consistent with the contemporary literature of Crozier (1999), that stated schools are faced with a number of challenges that are not limited to the lack of time parents had to offer, parent’s knowledge base for the different content being taught in the schools, and the parent’s belief that teachers educating their children will always do what is best for them. Bruce stated, “Information you think they would want to know, they don’t so we have to work a different way to get that information out. We still have to have that meeting but there again it is one of the things we found out. They just won’t come out and be involved and it’s affecting their children” (Chapter IV, p. 67). The researcher
believes that these challenges alone will only change over time when parents become more informed about their vital role in the overall success of the students’ academic success. However, in this study, there was no connection with this finding and the overarching questions and/or research questions that guided the study because the questions did not ask about the challenges faced by principals in Georgia Title I schools.

Principals felt that making parental involvement the school focus was the strategy that worked best for improving parental involvement (Finding 8). This was consistent with the contemporary literature previously stated by the researcher and had a direct correlation with the findings for research question number three which also took an in-depth look at the strategies found by principals to be most valuable in improving parental involvement. Keeping parental involvement as a focus is what Tina did when she stated, “Informing parents initially and recruiting help and support in whatever efforts at the school was going on regarding events, projects, and decision” (Chapter IV, p. 65). The researcher does believe that keeping parental involvement as the school’s focus keeps all of the stakeholders aware and abreast of how pivotal parental involvement is to student achievement.

Parents stayed abreast of the events going on in the school because of constant communication offered by the schools (Finding 9). Consistency in the literature existed with the overarching question which asked principals what strategies they used that were most effective in promoting parental involvement. According to Epstein & Salinas (2004), parents need reasons that are compelling to them to get involved in their child’s education. Jill stated, “Yes he attends the monthly board meetings which we basically come up with ideas or setting calendars” (Chapter IV, p. 85). As previously stated in the
literature some consistency does exists. The researcher believes that if schools continue to communicate with parents affording them the opportunity to work collaboratively, student achievement and parental involvement will continue to rise.

Parents were given the opportunity to provide feedback on surveys about the activities they wanted to accomplish when volunteering at the school (Finding 10). There is a direct correlation that exists with the findings of the study and the literature. According to Finn (1998), a strong relationship is formed between the home and school when both parties are willing to work together. This is consistent with the findings for research question number one which asked what are principals doing with parents that have a direct impact on student achievement. Jill stated, “We still call on people as we find out people have interests in certain areas or have weaknesses or strengths in certain areas, we try to pull those parents in” (Chapter IV, p. 83). The researcher believes that when parents are afforded the opportunity to provide feedback they develop a sense of ownership for the school.

Parents felt that their principals collaborated with them for the betterment of the school in a productive manner (Finding 11). As previously reviewed in the literature, Hein (2003), stated that the relationship that is developed between educators and parents is vitally important to the success of parental involvement. Jenny summarized the responses of the participants when she stated, “The principal is very active one-on-one with me with trying to come up with different ways to get the parents involved in our meetings” (Chapter IV, p. 85). Some consistency existed with the findings of the overarching questions and research questions number one and two. The overarching question inquired about the most effective strategies used by principals in promoting
parental involvement. Research questions one and two asked about the things principals are doing with parents that have a direct impact on student achievement and what schools are doing to track parental involvement contact hours at the school. The researcher believes that when principals are approachable and operate their schools in a team-oriented atmosphere, their schools will continue to excel because of the partnership between educators and parents guiding the school.

Parents felt that their respective schools offered an environment that was warm and welcoming (Finding 12). The finding was consistent with the contemporary literature previously stated in the study. According to Cassity & Harris (2000), the school community believing in the overall academic development of its students is the result of schools acknowledging the importance of having parents involved. Linda summarized the thoughts of the participants when she stated, “I believe we do offer a warm and welcoming environment for parents” (Chapter IV, p. 78). The researcher believes that a relationship does exist with the overarching questions and research question number one. The researcher does not believe a relationship exist with research questions number two and three because both questions did not ask the principals about effective strategies used by them to connect with the parents. Overall, the researcher believes that a school is a reflection of the people working inside of it. When a school is warm and welcoming not only are parents more willing to come into the school but the environment will be conducive to teachers teaching the curriculum with students excelling in the learning.

The interviews provided the researcher with reliable data pertaining to the principals and PTA parent representatives experience with parental involvement and its impact on student achievement. Title I elementary schools need to be aware of the benefits that
parental involvement offers students. According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title I elementary schools must show proper documentation that support the initiative of improving parental involvement at the school. It is through these major findings by the researcher that the study showed the positive impact of parental involvement on student achievement in Georgia Title I elementary schools according to selected principals and PTA parent representatives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the study by the researcher. Educators across the state of Georgia need to build on-going relationships with parents since those relationships will ultimately have a direct impact on student achievement. In order to build relationships that are beneficial for all stakeholders, there needs to be a program that teaches educators the appropriate way to develop long lasting relationships with all parents regardless of race, ethnicity, social economic status, and/or other demographic factors.

Research about the effective practices used by Title I elementary principals who implement the parental involvement component of NCLB at all Georgia Title I schools needs to be on-going. The researcher believes that if principals of low performing Title I schools knew the appropriate way to implement the parental involvement component it would have a positive impact on student achievement. The researcher believes that local school leaders need to analyze local applications of the six categories of parental involvement as defined by the literature. The six categories are communication, collaboration with community, decision making, parenting, volunteering, and student learning.
School leaders should identify the trends of parents who volunteer which will be helpful to school leaders and PTA parent representatives in keeping parents motivated about parental involvement. This research can help school leaders validate the activities that they deem most effective in their efforts of reaching those parents with whom the principals have the most difficulty getting involved. Once the interest of parents are brought to the forefront of a school’s focus, being an advocate for their child’s education can be easily maintained. Research needs to be conducted from the students’ perspective in Georgia Title I schools on their views about the effects of parental involvement on their academic achievement and were these reasons contributed to intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Researchers should conduct a quantitative study on students’ perceptions about the effects of parental involvement on their achievement in Georgia Title I schools. There needs to be additional research that supports the various perspectives that students possess related to the impact of parental involvement on their education.

Implications

The implications for this study are that elementary education is the key to the academic success of all students. Having parents that are actively involved in their child’s education ultimately enhances their child’s overall academic development. It is important for principals and parents to understand the relationship that exists between parental involvement and student achievement. Parents are a child’s first and foremost teacher with education beginning when a child is still in the womb. Educators and parents must realize the importance of producing children that are well educated. If this nation continues to produce children who are not experiencing success at school and who are consequently under educated, then we will continue to have citizens who may not live the
most productive life possible. This in itself is an implication because it ultimately affects education and our future generation.

The short-term implications of the findings are that educators and parents have demonstrated that they can work together for the academic success of all students. The positive results warrant and justify that when parents are advocates for their child’s education there is a positive impact on student achievement. Parents enjoy being active and feel a sense of ownership in the education of their children when they are engaged. Long-term implications to the findings are that all students can experience success at school when their parents are actively involved. Educators and parents must build relationships that are healthy for all parties involved. The NCLB Act holds everyone accountable for student achievement. No longer can we as a nation accept that some children will fail educationally because of their environmental deficits. Parents will begin to recognize their value in their respective schools and hold themselves accountable for providing a better education for their child.

Conclusions

In conclusion, education is a continuous process that starts at an early age. If parental involvement were to ever become a common focus in education and if it became widely accepted by educators and parents its impact on student achievement would be drastic. Parents must understand that they are their child’s first and foremost teacher before they enter the formal schooling process. It is in these formative years that parents are able to give their children a strong foundation that will have a direct impact on their experiences in formal education. As a result of this study, it can be concluded that there is a direct relationship between parental involvement and student achievement according to selected
Georgia Title I principals and PTA parent representatives. Both the principals’ and PTA parent representatives’ perceptions on the effects of parental involvement on student achievement are well documented. Overall, the findings suggested that parental involvement is the key factor in students experiencing academic success throughout their education.

Also, the findings suggested that principals are actively engaged at their schools trying to implement the parental involvement component as defined by the NCLB Act. It is through their use of innovative initiatives and the warm, welcoming environment that the schools displayed, that parents felt they were welcome and became actively engaged in their child’s education both at school and home. Principals spent the majority of the time working collaboratively with the PTA parent representatives trying to connect with inactive parents because they realized the importance that all parents play in the overall success of student achievement. PTA parent representatives felt that their opinions mattered and as a result had a sense of ownership in the success of their schools educational program. However, the study confirmed that parental involvement is a contemporary educational concept that has many meanings and interpretations to parents and school administrators.

The common factors expressed by all of the participants were that parental involvement was the act of being active at home or school and always willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that their child has the best education possible. The strategies that principals found to be least effective in promoting parental involvement were having functions at the school that did not include the students’ performances or free food being
offered as an incentive. The best source of determining the activities that parents could do were solicited from the parents.

It is the researcher’s belief that in order for students to benefit from a good, rigorous, life-long education, parents and educators must build relationships that are positive and healthy for the overall development of students. No longer can we as a nation continue to accept mediocrity for our students’ education. Partnerships between the home and school must be fostered and developed for the overall success of student achievement. The research shows a strong positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. There are a lot of similarities in the findings of the research and the poem entitled “Unity” that was referenced in chapter one of the literature. A healthy relationship existed between a parent and a teacher for the betterment of a child. Both parties worked together to mold this simple piece of clay that represented a child’s mind. The teacher molded different content areas into the clay while the parent used a gentle hand to add the things that were dear to their heart. When it was finally time to see their finished product that they worked so hard on, the child who was a boy had made them proud of what he had become. It was only after the work was done when both the parent and teacher realized how important each person’s role played in the success of the boy. Both parties stood together for the one common cause of making sure the child could live an educated, happy, and productive life.

The researcher believes that the key to failing schools and uneducated youth across America can be found in reading the poem entitled “Unity”. It is the researcher’s belief that if parents and educators work together for a common cause there will be a dramatic impact that takes place on the future lives of students throughout our nation. Since, it is
obvious based on the research conducted by this researcher that a positive relationship exists between parental involvement and student achievement; then educators have a moral obligation to make this partnership become a daily occurrence in schools across the nation. Parental involvement is vitally important in a child having a bright, productive future. If this relationship between educators and parents is never fostered, the education that some students will continue to receive will be at a minimum level. A minimum level of education correlates to a portion of our society that will be marginalized and limited in accomplishing their goals in contributing to the improvement of society. Goals not conquered will result in dreams unfulfilled which will have a direct impact on the future in America.
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Dear Principal,

My name is Zack K. Phillips, and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University. Currently, I am an Assistant Principal at Monroe Primary School in the Walton County School System. To complete my dissertation, I am conducting an interview to examine principals’ perceptions of the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in Georgia Title I schools. This information can be used by educators to provide insight on how the parental involvement plays a vital role in student achievement.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data for making recommendations for schools and school system to use in regards of enhancing parental involvement. If you agree to participate, the researcher will tape record and transcribe you information to be compared and contrasted with other finding in the study. Completion and participation in the interview will indicate permission to use the information you provide in the study. Please be assured that your responses will be held confidential. The data from this section will be analyzed and summarized. Information from the remainder of the interview will be reported in a summary form and will not be reported to individually by the school or school system so most of the information will be blinded. The study will be most useful if you responded to each item in the interview; however if you chose not to respond to every question, your answers can be used in the study. The data gathered from this study will be included in my dissertation which will be on public file.

If you have questions or concerns about the interview questions, you can contact me at (678) 968-4421 or (678) 596-2208. My e-mail address is zphillips@walton.k12.ga.us. My academic advisor is Dr. Walter Polka. You can contact him at (912) 486-0045 or wpolka@georgiasouthern.edu. Your rights and concerns as a research participant are available at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465.

Thank you for your participation in this study. I realize that your busy schedule may make it difficult to set aside time to participate. This interview should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. The results of the study should provide Georgia educators with valuable information when enhancing their parental involvement in their school.

Respectfully,

Zack K. Phillips
APPENDIX B

INTERESTS LETTER TO PTA PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

Dear PTA Parent Representative,

My name is Zack K. Phillips, and I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University. Currently, I am an Assistant Principal at Monroe Primary School in the Walton County School System. To complete my dissertation, I am conducting an interview to examine principals’ perceptions of the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in Georgia Title I schools. This information can be used by educators to provide insight on how the parental involvement plays a vital role in student achievement.

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Respectfully,

Zack K. Phillips
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What is your definition of parental involvement?

2. What strategies have you found to be most effective in promoting parental involvement?

3. What strategies have you found to be least effective in promoting parental involvement?

4. What are you doing as a principal to get parents involved in their child’s education?

5. How do you keep track of parental involvement contact hours at your school?

6. Has parental involvement had a direct impact on student achievement at your school?

7. How do you determine what activities parents can participate in at school for parental involvement?

8. How much time have you devoted to improving parental involvement at your school?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PTA PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

1. Does your school offer a warm and welcoming environment for parents?
2. What strategies have the principal used to promote involvement at your school?
3. How much time do you promote to parental involvement in the school?
4. What is your definition of parental involvement?
5. Do you feel parents are given an ample opportunity to provide parental involvement?
6. What strategies have the principal used to promote parental involvement that you have disagreed with?
7. How long have you served on the school’s PTA?
8. Does the principal collaborate with the PTA to promote parental involvement?
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465 Administrative Annex
Fax: 912-681-0719 Ovsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

To: Zack K. Phillips
5500 Peachtree Landing Dr.
Ellenwood, GA 30294

CC: Dr. Walter Polka
P.O. Box 8131

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IIBC/IRB)

Date: February 10, 2006

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: ‘H06131’, and titled ‘Elementary Principals' and PTA Parent Representatives' Perception About the Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement in Georgia Title I Schools’, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, whether or not it is believed to be related to the study, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator prior to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a Research Study Termination form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
### APPENDIX F

#### QUALITATIVE ITEM ANALYSIS

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
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<td>Griffith (1996)</td>
<td>To examine the relationship of empowerment on parental involvement and its effects on student achievement.</td>
<td>Parents of 41 schools in a suburban school district.</td>
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APPENDIX H

WALTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISCLAIMER

The Walton County Public Schools approved the conduct of this study. However, this approval is not an endorsement of the design of the research or the methodology used. Nor does the Walton County Public Schools endorse the findings of this study.