AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: A Survey of Family Involvement in Schools: The Corvallis, Oregon

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During the 1992-93 school year, the Family Involvement Advisory Committee

(FIAC) of the Corvallis, Oregon School District conducted a survey to measure levels of

family involvement in their district's elementary, middle, and high schools. The

instrument employed in this study was a survey that was developed using FIAC's

Family/School Partnership Model, which was adapted from Epstein's (1990a) recent

conceptualizations of family/school involvement.

Subjects surveyed included 504 parents/guardians of children enrolled in

Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, randomly selected in a manner that made

them proportionally representative of all children enrolled in the elementary, middle,

and high schools in the district.

Overall findings supported Epstein's (1990a) conceptualizations of family

involvement which move beyond the traditional concept of parent involvement as one

of direct participation by parents in children's learning at school. Results of this study

illustrated the complex and multidimensional nature of parents' involvement in their

children's education relative to such areas as creating a healthy home environment,

two-way communication between family and school, support for learning at school,

support for learning at home, and appropriate shared decision making. Families can be

or are involved in their children's educations in a variety of ways. Results of the

present study describe ways in which families in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools are or are not involved in their children's educations, and differences that might occur in family involvement among children at various school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). Findings are discussed relative to past research, along with limitations and suggestions for future research, and their implications for Corvallis, Oregon School District schools.

A Survey of Family Involvement in Schools:
The Corvallis, Oregon School District
Family/School Partnership Project

by

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P.K. McCoy, Author

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INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Six years ago in Corvallis, Oregon, a group of parents interested in promoting family involvement in their neighborhood schools began networking informally two or three times a year. The primary focus was to share ideas and support for expanding ways to meaningfully involve parents in their children's education. In 1990, the group officially became the Family Involvement Advisory Committee (FIAC), and its membership expanded to include teachers, counselors, administrators, and classified staff from the school district. From 1990 until the end of the 1992-1993 school year, the Family Involvement Advisory Committee met approximately once a month to explore family/school involvement issues and promote family involvement in their home schools. FIAC's current philosophy was adapted from Joyce Epstein's (1990a) five component model of family involvement.

Early in the 1992-1993 school year, members of FIAC joined together in an effort to assess the family involvement in schools of the Corvallis School District. With Epstein's (1990a) model as a starting place, FIAC developed and conducted a telephone survey of over 500 families in the school district during the 1992-1993 school year. The sample was drawn from every school in the district in an effort to represent involvement at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This paper is a summary of FIAC's philosophy, the development and implementation of the survey, and the results of the family involvement survey broken down by school level.

Review of Literature

During the 1970's parent involvement began to resurface in the literature as an important element in a child's educational growth and academic achievement (Epstein,

1990a; Henderson, 1987; Hester, 1989; McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969; Nicolau & Ramos;

1990, Ziegler, 1987). Traditionally, parent involvement has been referred to as the

direct participation of the biological parents of children in a situation directly related

to a learning activity, usually at school. In light of the changes in family structure,

responsibilities, and commitments in contemporary society, family involvement has

taken a new form. One of the most comprehensive and practical models of family

involvement has been developed by Joyce Epstein (1990a). Her five component model

includes basic obligations of parents, basic obligations of schools, parent involvement

at the school, parent involvement in learning activities at home, and parent

involvement in governance and decision-making (Epstein, 1990a).

FIAC adapted Epstein's model to their own needs and created a definition and

model for family involvement for the Corvallis School District. Their vision to develop

and maximize the family/school/community partnership to ensure student success is

supported by the following definition and model of family/school involvement. FIAC's

definition of family/school involvement reads:

> A strong home-school partnership is a fundamental
> component of school success for all students K-12.
> Ensuring the educational success for all Corvallis students
> is a challenge so great that it cannot be met by parents or
> teachers working in isolation. The partnership model
> describes home-school relations as a set of overlapping
> spheres of influence. Evidence indicates that a child's
> development is shaped by the ongoing interactions of
> family, school, and community. In the partnership model
> home, school, and community work together to enhance
> the success of all students (FIAC, 1993).

The five major areas of FIAC's partnership model, which are based on Epstein's

five areas, include a healthy home environment that meets the physical and emotional

needs of children, two-way communication between home and school, support for

learning at school, support for learning at home, and appropriate shared decision-

making. The model is presented in a circular form to ensure all areas are represented

Family/School Partnership Model: Overlapping Areas of
Responsibility for Families and Schools

Support for
learning at
school

Appropriate shared
decision making

Two-way
communication

Increased
Academic
Success for
Children

Support for
learning at home

Healthy home
environment
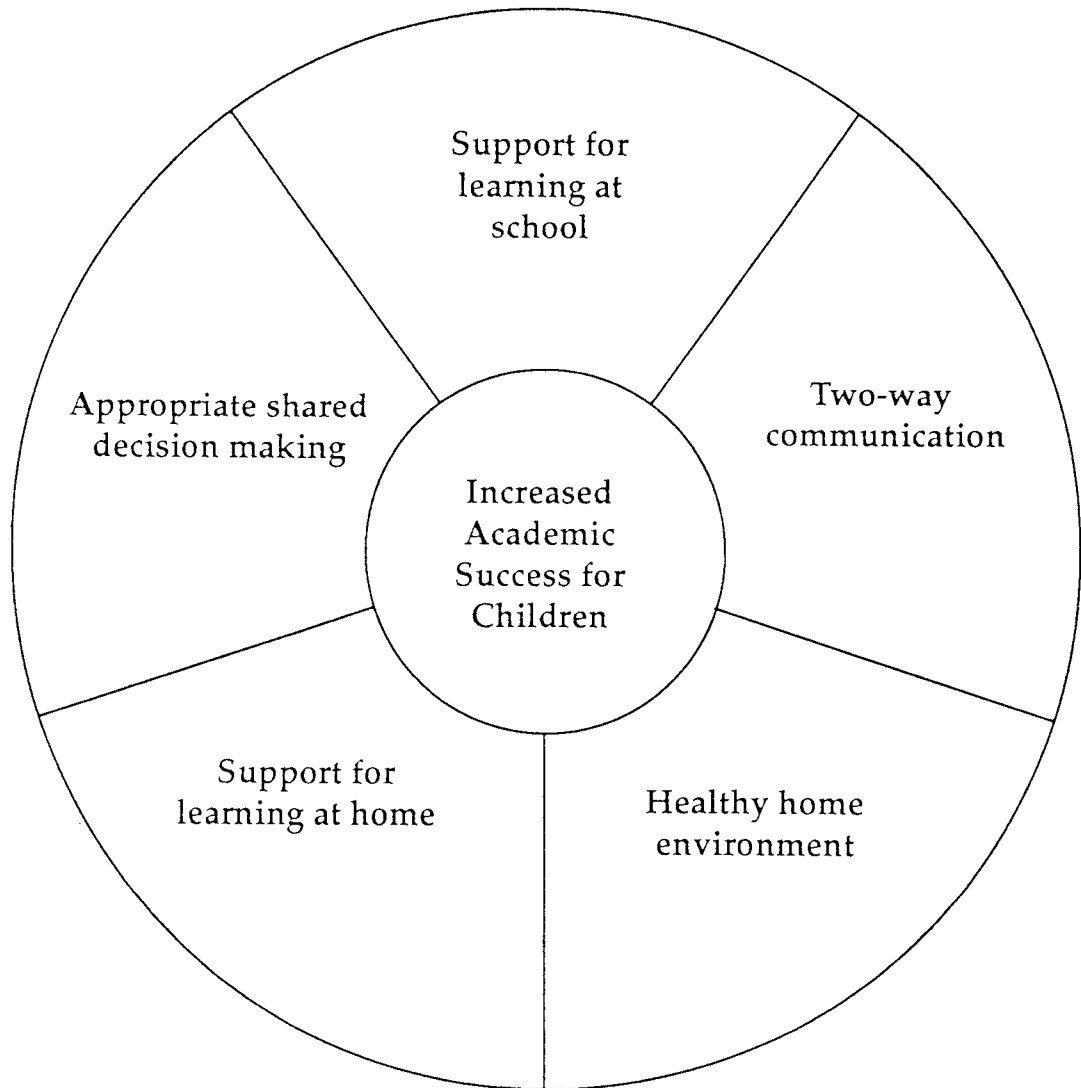
(FIAC, 1993)

as equally important in increasing the academic success of children (see Figure).
Research has shown that each of the five areas in the partnership model is related to
increased academic success for children (Henderson, 1987; Ziegler, 1987). Within this
model, families and schools both have significant roles and responsibilities in the five
areas of involvement.

Healthy Home Environment

In the first area, described as providing a healthy home environment that
meets the physical and emotional needs of children, families are responsible for
supporting the needs of children so they come to school ready to learn. This includes
providing food, shelter, and clothing, and providing a discipline structure which
supports the child's self-esteem and sets reasonable expectations and limits (Brandt,
1989; Epstein, 1990a; FIAC, 1993). Schools are responsible for providing opportunities
for parents to develop understanding and gain skills to build the home environment.
Examples would be providing information about child development and parenting
skills, and connecting families with community support services and resources
(Epstein, 1990b; FIAC, 1993).

Dorothy Rich (1987b) supported the importance of a healthy home environment
when she emphasized the responsibilities of parents in helping their children to
acquire the basic characteristics of confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility,
initiation, perseverance, caring, teamwork, competition, common sense, and problem
solving. She stressed that these characteristics are integral to a child's perception of
self and others, and are positively related to their readiness to learn in a school setting.

A discipline structure that supports a child's self-esteem and sets reasonable
expectations and limits has also been identified as a factor in academic success. Hazel
Leler (1983) examined twelve studies that looked at achievement for students whose
parents participated in workshops to improve their child rearing skills. There were no

negative results and eight of the studies showed positive effects on student achievement. Reginald Clark's (1983, 1987) work with families of high achievers revealed that these families began early to build their children's self-confidence, self-control, and self-esteem while providing verbal support and warm communication filled with admiration and respect. The high-achieving children were provided with clear and consistent limits, while less successful children had less parent vigilance and supervision.

Two-Way Communication

In the area of two-way communication, families are responsible for sharing information and insights about their children which are relevant to their school performance. Families are also responsible for communicating to the school their goals, questions, concerns, and ideas. Examples of communication from families include sharing information about the child's successes, informing the school of changes at home that might affect learning, and participating in parent-teacher conferences (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990a, 1990b; FIAC, 1993).

The role of the school includes communicating information about school programs, school and district policies, student progress, and learning. Encouraging parental input and mutual problem-solving are also the school's responsibility. Examples of ways schools can facilitate communication are distributing questionnaires asking about parent goals and concerns, writing notes, making phone calls, extending open invitations for parents to communicate, and publishing class newsletters (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990a, 1990b; FIAC, 1993).

Open, frequent communication between families and schools is instrumental in developing cohesion and consistency between home and school. Through communication teachers and families bring together the separate worlds of home and school. When children see this they gain a sense of consistency and caring in both

their home and school environments which can contribute to academic success (Ost, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). The value of education is also reinforced for children when they see their families in close contact with their schools.

In 1987, Anne Henderson reviewed 53 studies that examined different types of family involvement. Henderson found evidence that children scored higher on standardized tests when their parents were in touch with their school than children whose parents were not in touch (Henderson, 1990). Other research has shown that parents of high achieving students initiated frequent school contact (Clark, 1983).

However, two-way communication is often not enough to ensure successful communication. Open and mutually respectful communication is key to a healthy home/school partnership. The initial contacts between teachers and parents can set the tone of the relationship and any further interactions (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991). Evidence has suggested that parents' positive perceptions of their relationship and influence with teachers are related to their participation in school activities which in turn is related to student achievement (Herman & Yeh, 1980).

Support for Learning at School

In the FIAC partnership model, support for learning at school reflects the more traditional definition of involvement for families. However, it differs from the traditional approach in that it clearly recognizes an equal responsibility of the school. Families work as educational support people in the school by doing such things as assisting in the classroom or in other areas of the school with staff and administrators. Families also support their children at school by attending children's performances or sports events. Schools in turn provide a range of opportunities for parents to work as educational support people with training, support, and recognition. Schools may do things like conduct an assessment of parent skills and interests, offer a variety of volunteer opportunities, and provide volunteer training (Brandt, 1989; FIAC, 1993).

Support for learning at school is beneficial for students, teachers, and parents. The degree of parent participation in school activities is positively related to student achievement. Having parents at school has also been shown to be positively related to teachers' interactions with other parents (Epstein, 1990a; Herman & Yeh, 1980). How these interactions are related to student achievement may in part, be explained by Suzanne Ziegler's (1987) suggestion that parents who learn to help facilitate learning in the classroom are likely to take those skills home with them. Having parents in the schools also works to bring some of the home environment into the schools, thus creating more consistency and similarity between home and school.

In 1988, Dornbusch and Ritter studied the link between parent participation and student achievement at a San Francisco Bay area high school. Parental attendance at school events such as programs for parents and student performances was consistently related with higher grades. Parents involved in the study thought these findings were obtained because their involvement actively reinforced for their children the sincerity of their values about education. Parents also thought that having been a part of their child's world at school allowed them to communicate better with their children (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988).

Support for Learning at Home

Within the area of support for learning at home, the family's role is to support the child at home with encouragement and opportunities for learning. Parents may read aloud, help with school work and activities, provide a place at home and supplies for school work, and support interests and hobbies. Families can talk about what happens at school, discuss school issues and educational values, and make connections between school learning and everyday life. Schools are responsible for providing information that parents need to help their children at home. Information about things such as home-learning activities, how to respond to a child's report card, or

ways to recognize children's accomplishments can be distributed through newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, or informal conversations (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990a; FIAC, 1993).

Research about home-learning has found that programs working with parents to help them facilitate their child's learning at home have a significant impact on student achievement (Chrispeels, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Leler, 1983). A study in Boulder Valley, Colorado looked at the effects of teacher-designed home-learning activities on student achievement. Children who received help at home through parent-directed activities scored significantly higher on standardized tests and were able to maintain their gains over a longer period of time than children who did not receive home stimulation (Boulder Valley, 1975).

In 1985, 6,000 families in schools in ten states received weekly home-learning "recipes." These "recipes" were designed by Dorothy Rich and her colleagues to help parents learn to "teach reading, writing, and math in unschool-like ways." The "recipes" were used voluntarily by 91% of the families. Ninety-nine percent of the families reported that the activities led to enjoyable time spent with their children, and 98% felt their children learned useful things in using the activities (Rich, 1987a).

Joyce Epstein discovered that parents want to learn about how to help their children learn at home more than any other type of involvement (Brandt, 1989). Parents say that they could spend more time helping their children learn at home if they were told how to help (Epstein, 1990a). Parents have generally been found to respond positively and actively to teachers' requests that they help their children at home (Ziegler, 1987). Researchers have found that parents who were frequently asked by teachers to be involved with their child's learning at home, recognized that the teacher worked hard to interest and include parents, received most of their ideas for home-learning from teachers, felt that they should help their children at home, and

understood more about the curriculum than when they were less involved (Epstein, 1990a; Hester, 1990).

It may be that the home curriculum stimulates children to learn because it becomes an extension of and an opportunity to use what is learned in school (Clark, 1983; Nicolau & Ramos, 1990). Clark (1983) said that classroom instruction by itself is not enough to generate the "automaticity that leads to above average performance of high achievers and effective learners." Henderson (1987) suggested that learning to teach their own children can increase parents feelings of competence, leading to a cycle of success reinforcement, which, in turn, may motivate their children to perform better. She also pointed out from her extensive review of parent involvement studies that "parents who help their kids learn at home nurture in themselves and their children attitudes that are crucial to achievement" (Henderson, 1990).

Parents' ideas and attitudes about the importance of education and learning are of primary importance in a child's development of values and beliefs about education (Warner, 1991). Parents of high achievers have been found to frequently discuss school issues, provide encouragement of academic pursuits, and monitor their children's use of time, while parents of low achievers showed no positive reinforcing pattern of school-home encouragement (Clark, 1983, 1987). Other research agrees that strong encouragement and support from families and teachers are positively related to the overall success of children (Bloom, 1985; Sloane, 1991). Parents who convey high expectations and encourage positive attitudes toward education through modeling at home often have children who achieve academically (Henderson, 1990; Mayeske, 1973; Warner, 1991; Ziegler, 1987). Ziegler (1987) also discovered in her review that certain characteristics of students' home environments are positively related to their decisions to stay in school.

Appropriate Shared Decision-Making

Finally, in the area of appropriate shared decision-making, families are responsible for taking part in the schools' advisory and decision-making processes. Schools must provide the opportunities for and encourage parents to participate in school and district based advisory committees, site councils, and decision-making about their own child's education (Brandt, 1989; FIAC, 1993).

In 1977, James Comer (1990) began working with schools in New Haven, Connecticut, facilitating a highly successful program that involved parents in several ways, including involvement in governance and decision-making. In a later review of the New Haven program, Ziegler (1987) concluded that parent involvement in governance may have been related to significant gains in achievement when the involvement was essential to the school's policy-making and operation. Ziegler further contended that parents must play a legitimate and integral role when they are involved in school decision-making if their involvement is to be related to student achievement (Ziegler, 1987).

Motivation from the parents to be involved in decision-making is not always enough to ensure desired results. Willingness from the schools to permit and encourage parental input in decision-making has been found to be positively related to strengthened parent involvement. At the same time parental influence in decision-making has been positively related to parent satisfaction with schools (Bauch, 1987; Herman & Yeh, 1980). If parents feel competent and respected they may not only be inclined to reinforce these good feelings through greater involvement, but their more positive attitudes and feelings about themselves may likely be related to their children's school performance. As children see their parents become influential in school, their motivation to achieve may increase. Children are also likely to learn through the behaviors and attitudes modeled by their parents (Leler, 1983). Children

could learn that being involved with school is important, valuable, and personally rewarding.

Other Successful Family Involvement Programs

Programs are often designed to include more than one area of the partnership model, previously described. In one inner city primary school in Illinois, with the help of an Urban Partnership Grant, a rather exciting parent involvement program that focused on support for learning at school and support for learning at home was implemented (Chapman, 1991). Parents accompanied children and teachers on trips to museums, zoos, and other educational events. Following each outing, the parents and students worked together in writing about the experience either at school or at home. The researchers reported that "by the end of the school year, virtually every student was telling stories of their experiences in greater detail, using larger vocabularies, and creating sentences that were more complex than had been the case at the beginning of the year." This may have been expected as a result of the children maturing in age, however, parents who participated also improved in their vocabularies and writing skills, which attests to the impact of the parent-child involvement component of this program. Perhaps, the most important thing parents learned from the experience was how to help their children learn at home (Chapman, 1991).

In another study of Chicago's inner city schools, parent involvement programs in the areas of a healthy home environment, support for learning at home and at school, and two-way communication were implemented (Walberg, Bole, & Waxman, 1980). Students, parents, teachers, the principal, and the superintendent all signed contracts stipulating that parents would 1) provide wholesome food, appropriate clothing, and a special place at home for school work, 2) encourage the child daily through discussion while attending to and praising the child's progress, 3) show children how to care for and use books and supplies, and 4) cooperate with the teacher

in school work, discipline, and attendance. In addition to the other signatures, each child signed a pledge on the contract to work everyday to improve their school achievement. Students who participated in the program gained in achievement by 1.1 grade equivalents on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills, while uninvolved students made a gain of only .5 grade equivalents (Walberg, Bole, & Waxman, 1980).

School Level Differences in Family Involvement

According to much of the research on parent involvement, as children grow older and move into higher grades, parents become less involved in their education (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe, 1985; Ziegler, 1987). Joyce Epstein (1986, 1990a) discovered that teachers in the upper grades were much less likely to use parent involvement practices than teachers in the lower grades. This not only results in less parent participation, but also contributes to the feeling of inadequacy parents tend to feel about their ability in helping their older children with school. Parents in Epstein's (1986, 1990a) studies reported that they received fewer ideas about how to help their children, and believed that upper grade teachers did not want parents to help at home.

The structure of the schools and classrooms themselves may add to the difficulty of involving families of older children. The self-contained classroom in most elementary schools makes it easy to know which teacher is responsible for the families of children in their classrooms. Middle and high schools generally serve a larger population and with the nature of rotating classes it becomes unclear as to which teacher is responsible for which families (Liontos, 1992; Rich, 1987b). Elementary school teachers are generally responsible for 20 to 30 students, while high school teachers may be responsible for between 120 and 180 students, making their obligation to communicate with and involve parents much more cumbersome.

In addition to these parent involvement barriers in middle and high school, children may themselves inhibit parents from being involved. As teenagers begin

asserting their independence and discovering their own identities apart from their parents, they may resist the efforts made by their moms or dads to be part of their school lives. Parents may become confused and frustrated with their children at this developmental stage and opt to back out of school involvement as a way of encouraging their children's independence or of avoiding conflicts with them (Liontos, 1992; Rich, 1987b).

In spite of all these parent involvement barriers related to their children's education, however, parents have made it clear that they want to be involved (Epstein, 1990a). Not only are parents very capable of helping their children with school related activities, but the research shows that parent involvement is important at all grade levels. In fact, parent involvement at the high school level can be as effective as involvement at the elementary levels (Henderson, 1987; Epstein, 1990a; Ziegler, 1987). In a study of 20 American high schools, McDill, Rigsby, and Meyers (1969) found parent involvement to be a crucial factor in the achievement and aspirations of high-schoolers. Well-planned parent involvement has also shown to significantly increase the achievement scores of at-risk high school students (Ziegler, 1987). Timothy Keith's (1991) research, however, showed that while involvement did not have a significantly positive effect on high school students' achievement test scores, it did have a positive effect on these students' grades. He points out that this is particularly interesting, since grades and not achievement test scores are what reflect students' efforts. Involvement at the high school level has also been related to lower student drop-out rates (Hester, 1989; Ziegler, 1987). It seems clear then that parent involvement in the higher grades is also beneficial. Determining if and when parent/family involvement falls off in the Corvallis school district may lead to speculation about the barriers and solutions that can make or break family/school partnerships.

Summary and Purpose

The review of literature just summarized clearly documents the importance of family/school involvement. Such involvement has advantages for everyone who participates, but the most well documented advantage is the positive relationship between family involvement and student achievement. Furthermore, as children grow older and move into higher grade levels, parents become less involved in their children's education. In spite of this fact, parents' involvement in their children's education can be just as significant during high school as it is during the elementary school years.

At the present time, Epstein's (1990a) model represents one of the most comprehensive and practical descriptions of family involvement in school-related activities. Adapted by the Family Involvement Advisory Committee (FIAC) of the Corvallis, Oregon School District, a survey was developed to assess family/school partnerships in five areas of involvement, including a healthy home environment, two-way communication, support for learning at school, support for learning at home, and appropriate shared decision-making. This survey was administered to a random sample of parents of children enrolled in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Corvallis, Oregon School District. The primary purpose of this study, therefore, was to describe the results of this survey, and to make selected comparisons relative to differences in family involvement that might occur among families with children at the different school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school).

METHODOLOGY

Development of Survey

At the time the survey project began the Family Involvement Advisory Committee (FIAC) of the Corvallis, Oregon School District included some 30 members. Six of these members, including the author of this paper, came together to form the "Survey Committee," and began meeting to brainstorm ideas about what exactly FIAC wanted to address or discover with the survey, how to structure the survey, what would be included in the survey, how to draw a sample, and how to administer the survey. At the same time, FIAC's "Strategic Task Force Planning Committee" focused on developing a vision/goal statement for FIAC, planning for distributing the results of the district-wide survey and worked on developing a plan for using the survey results to enhance family/school involvement in the Corvallis, Oregon School District.

Both committees worked separately to develop a vision/goal statement for FIAC and the survey. Two members of the Survey Committee served on the Strategic Task Force Committee, providing congruence and consistency between the two committees. The committees came together with other members of FIAC at general monthly meetings, and after gathering input from the members of FIAC, a vision/goal statement was developed. FIAC's vision statement presently reads, "To develop and maximize the family/school/community partnership to ensure student success." FIAC worked toward two goals: 1) to educate families, schools, and communities about family involvement and 2) to provide resources and support to increase family involvement in school related activities. In order to accomplish these goals, a survey needed to be developed. Such a survey would be instrumental in assessing the current levels of family/school involvement in the Corvallis School District schools, highlighting areas of involvement and non-involvement. The survey would also provide information about what the

family/school involvement educational needs were, how to meet these needs, what resources were available, and how to provide them.

In developing the survey, the Survey Committee decided to use a telephone survey format. It was thought that, using a telephone survey approach would guarantee a larger response rate in comparison to mailed questionnaires, and could be more controlled in terms of how the survey was conducted. Survey interviewers could be centrally trained as a group to uniformly administer the survey, and to answer questions respondents might have. The committee further decided to interview 500 families in the school district. This sample size was chosen on the basis of Hays' statistical table (Zemke & Kramlinger, 1986, p. 161) to provide at least a .03 level of significance. Having chosen such a large sample size the committee then agreed that the length of the survey needed to be limited to 15 to 20 minutes in order to be able to complete all the interviews in a reasonable length of time.

The Survey Committee began developing the survey questions by using the family/school partnership model (FIAC, 1993) previously described in the "Review of Literature" section. For each area in the model, the Survey Committee brainstormed several possible questions that could be included in the survey, always mindful of how each question would be coded and analyzed. The committee then put all of the questions identified in the form of a survey for refinement.

After several meetings revising the survey, the committee developed an initial draft of the Family Involvement Survey to be used in what was referred to as a "baby pilot" study. This draft included both open and closed ended questions in all five areas of the family/school partnership model. The first section asked parents about their involvement at school. Since this represented the most traditional form of parent involvement the committee believed that parents would be familiar with some of the ideas in this section of the survey. According to Dillman (1978), beginning the survey with a familiar area that respondents are comfortable with, including questions that

they could answer affirmatively would lead to a higher interest and response rate from respondents. The second section of the survey dealt with involvement in decision-making, and included questions about parents' participation in groups at both the building and district levels. The third section contained questions that dealt mostly with two-way communication between the school and home. Included were questions about contacts between parents and teachers, and contacts between parents and schools. The fourth section dealt with family involvement with the child's education at home through questions pertaining to homework practices. There were also questions that asked about information received from schools about how to help students at home. Both sections three and four contained questions about a healthy home environment. In the two-way communication section, there was a question about communication practices in the home. In the section about involvement at home, there were questions about limit-setting practices in the home, and participation in parenting skills classes offered by the school district.

Following these main sections of the survey, there was a set of questions that asked parents for their perceptions about school atmosphere and staff effectiveness. The final section of the survey asked for demographic data about the respondents' households. This preliminary draft of the survey was then presented to some of the Corvallis School District principals and to members of FIAC for their feedback. All comments and concerns were considered and/or incorporated into the survey by the Survey Committee.

Following these revisions of the survey, the Survey Committee decided to conduct a "baby pilot" study to obtain feedback about the survey from individuals whom they felt could provide them with helpful suggestions about the survey. The committee thought this was an important step to take before the formal pilot study was conducted. Each member of the Survey Committee received three copies of the survey, and called three individuals they knew who could give them experienced and insightful

suggestions. People who responded in the "baby pilot" study included FIAC members, parents, college professors, and teachers. Some respondents knew of the survey project, while others had no previous knowledge of the survey. None of these respondents came from the large population of parents of school-age children from which the final sample for this study was drawn.

Results from the "baby pilot" study indicated that several areas in the survey needed to be revised. It was evident that the survey needed to be further shortened and some questions needed to be reworded to flow more smoothly. The question and answer lay-out or format needed some modification to allow for more convenient and accurate recording of answers. Finally, some of the questions that dealt with more personal issues such as limit-setting associated with television and bedtime elicited some defensiveness on the part of respondents and produced very unclear answers. On the basis of these results, the Survey Committee met two more times to make the necessary revisions before presenting it once again to FIAC for feedback, and prior to conducting a formal pilot study.

Sample

At the time of this study, there were approximately 7,000 children enrolled in the Corvallis School District schools. Based on information presented in Hays' statistical table (Zemke & Kramlinger, 1986, p. 161), the committee agreed that a sample size of 500 parents of these children would be desirable. Such a sample would guarantee that at least 7% of the school district's population would be surveyed, and since many of the 7,000 children belonged to the same families, the total number of families in the district was less than 7,000. This meant that the sample would likely represent much more than 7% of the total population of families. In addition 500 respondents seemed to be the maximum number of surveys that FIAC could feasibly do, since most of the telephone interviews would be done by volunteers.

The testing and evaluation specialist for the school district agreed to draw the sample. He began with a list of every child in the Corvallis School District and used a computer to generate a randomly selected list of 590 names. Ninety extra names were chosen to provide enough subjects for the pilot study, and to account for any wrong or disconnected telephone numbers or families choosing not to participate.

The entire sample was drawn in a way that would provide a proportionally correct representation of each school in the total district population. For instance, if 10% of all school-age children in Corvallis attended Jefferson Elementary then 10% of the 590 names were drawn from Jefferson.

Each family in the sample was sent a letter (Appendix A) describing the survey and its purpose. They were informed that they would be called in the next month and had the option of participating or declining when the interviewer called. The letter also explained that any answers given would be confidential and anonymous.

A script was written by the Survey Committee (Appendix B) for the volunteer interviewers to read when they initially got respondents on the phone. The script was designed to maintain anonymity of the respondents, and to get the parent on the phone who could best answer questions about the family's involvement. The script introduced the survey, guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and informed the respondent that he/she was free to refrain from answering any question(s) with which he/she felt uncomfortable.

Pilot Study

Twenty-five of the 590 sample names were randomly selected for the pilot study. This pilot sample included families of children in elementary, middle, and high schools. Five of the Survey Committee members were each given five surveys and five of the pilot subjects' phone numbers. Committee members spent the next few days making phone calls, using the script as an introduction to the survey. The callers understood

the importance of choosing a time and place from which to make the calls, where there would be no outside distractions to interrupt them during the interview.

The pilot study was completed within a week, with 23 of the 25 respondents successfully contacted. The results of the pilot study indicated that the length of the survey was between 15 and 20 minutes, and the format was user-friendly. A few more stage directions for the interviewers were added, and within a week the final draft of the Family Involvement Survey was ready to be printed. The script was slightly modified so that it felt more conversational and not quite so long. Since the survey was modified after the pilot study, the data from the pilot study were not used in final data analyses.

Volunteer Recruitment and Training

During the entire span of the survey, members of FIAC were busy recruiting volunteers to help with the actual administration of the survey. All of the volunteers were asked to attend one of two, two-hour training sessions about one week prior to the survey starting date. One or two members of the Survey Committee facilitated the training sessions. They went over the questions in the survey individually, explaining stage directions, and answering questions. The facilitator explained the introductory letter, read the script, and conducted a role play activity for the interviewers to practice surveying. Some of the volunteers had suggestions of ways to make some questions clearer or to make recording responses easier. Once again, these suggestions were incorporated into the final survey format. A copy of the final Family Involvement Survey is included in Appendix C.

Administration of the Survey

Several of the administrative staff members of the Corvallis School District were willing to help FIAC by allowing them the use of their desks and phones in the district office for the telephone interviews. This allowed one central location from which all

of the survey calls were made. The calls were made on weeknights from approximately 6:45 to 9:00 p.m. and on Sundays, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m.

One or two Survey Committee members arrived at the district office a few minutes before the telephone interviews occurred to set up. When volunteers arrived they were given three or four surveys, a script, a copy of the introductory letter, and were taken to a desk where they could conduct their telephone interviews. FIAC members provided refreshments for the volunteers, and made a visual chart of the progress of all of their efforts.

There was one central desk where volunteers turned in their completed surveys and received new ones. The central desk volunteer was always a member of the Survey Committee. This person kept track of all the surveys that went out and came back. She/he also checked over all surveys returned, to make sure that answers were legible, clear, and codable.

Interviewers tried to reach each respondent at least three times. If after three tries there was no answer, the survey of that respondent was put aside until all other respondents had been called. Some respondents asked to be called at specific times during the day. These people were called at the times they requested by a member of the Survey Committee from a setting where there were no external distractions.

About two weeks into the administration of the survey, the sample of 590 names had been depleted and only about 430 surveys had been completed. Names were deleted from the sample because of wrong telephone numbers, disconnections, no answers, refusals to participate, and having already answered the survey for another child in the family. The district testing and evaluation specialist randomly drew 90 more names in the same manner as he drew the original sample. These 90 families were sent an introductory letter and a week later the telephone interviews resumed.

After three weeks (i.e. approximately 36 hours), 504 interviews were completed by 51 volunteers. At the end of this process, a party was given by FIAC for the

volunteers, where they gave away several prizes that had been donated by or purchased from local businesses. During the survey process, whenever a volunteer brought a completed survey to the central desk, his or her name was put into a jar. During the party, names were drawn from the jar for the prizes.

Data Entry and Analysis

The answers to closed-ended questions were coded and entered into a data base by a district staff member and Survey Committee members. Two of the Survey Committee members went through all of the surveys by hand and recorded the comments and responses to open-ended questions. These comments were separated by individual schools and typed up by a district support staff. In the present thesis, these comments will be used in the summary and discussion section to expand upon the quantitative findings obtained.

To analyze the quantitative data obtained from the survey, a number of statistical tools were used. First, descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages were used to illustrate the school involvement of families with children enrolled at the various school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). Secondly, the $x2$ statistic was used to explore differences in family/school involvement across the total sample as well as among families with children from the various school levels.

RESULTS

The purposes of this study were to describe the results of a survey that examined family involvement in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, based on FIAC's Family Involvement Partnership Model and to make selected comparisons relative to differences in family involvement that might occur among families with children at various school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). The FIAC Family Involvement Partnership Model is a model adapted from Epstein's (1990a) model for family involvement, including the dimensions of a healthy home environment, two-way communication, support for learning at school, support for learning at home, and appropriate shared decision making.

Subjects for this study included 504 parents/guardians of children enrolled in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, randomly selected in a manner that made them proportionally representative of all children enrolled in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the district.

The following chapter summarizes the results of the survey including those associated with a sample description, the areas of family involvement consisting of a healthy home environment, two-way communication, support for learning at school, support for learning at home, appropriate shared decision making, and school atmosphere.

Sample Description

Results of data analyses related to sample description are found in Table 1. Of the 504 parents/guardians who responded to the survey, 78.82% were female, a larger number than the expected value, $x2$ $(1, N = 491) = 163.12$, $p < .001$. In addition, there was no significant difference between the sexual composition of these respondents at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, $x2$ $(2, N = 491) = .451$, $p > .10$.

Table 1. Sample Description by Sex, Age, Parenting Adults, Full-Time Work, Part-Time Work, Educational Background, and Family Size

A. Sex of Parent/Guardian

	Female	Male
Total	78.82%	21.28
Elementary	80.00	20.00
Middle	77.78	22.22
High School	77.31	22.69

B. Sex of Child

	Female	Male
Total	49.00%	51.00
Elementary	47.29	52.71
Middle	51.28	48.72
High School	50.40	49.60

C. Age of Child (Years)

	Mean	Range
Total	11.4	3 to 19
Elementary	8.3	3 to 15
Middle	12.8	11 to 18
High School	16.3	9 to 19

D. Number of Adults in Home Responsible
   for Parenting Child

	One	Two+
Total	15.17%	84.83
Elementary	9.69	90.31
Middle	21.37	78.63
High School	20.63	79.37

E. Number of Parents/Guardians Working Full-Time

	Zero	One	Two
Total	8.17%	58.76	33.07
Elementary	8.88	61.39	29.73
Middle	6.84	57.26	35.90
High School	7.94	54.76	37.30

Table 1 continued.

F. Number of Parents/Guardians Working Part-Time

	Zero	One	Two
Total	69.46%	28.74	1.80
Elementary	63.32	33.98	2.70
Middle	76.07	23.08	0.85
High	76.00	23.20	0.80

G. Educational Background of Responding Parent/Guardian

	Some HS/HS Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Advanced College Degree
Total	9.56%	28.49	31.27	30.68
Elementary	10.42	33.98	25.48	30.12
Middle	5.98	19.66	41.03	33.33
High School	11.11	25.40	34.13	29.37

H. Educational Background of Other Parent/Guardian

	Some HS/HS Graduate	Some College	College Graduate	Advanced College Degree
Total	11.19%	22.61	28.90	37.30
Elementary	11.49	22.98	27.23	38.30
Middle	4.26	23.40	36.17	36.17
High School	17.00	21.00	26.00	36.00

I. Number of Other Children Living at Home

	Zero	One	Two	Three	Four+
Total	16.53%	41.04	24.30	11.95	6.17
Elementary	8.49	42.08	26.25	15.06	8.11
Middle	18.80	42.74	21.37	8.55	8.54
High	30.95	37.30	23.02	8.73	0.00

No significant differences were found between the sex of children chosen for the survey across the total sample (i.e. boys' n = 255; girls' n = 245), $x2$ (1, N = 500) = .20, p > .10, as well as at various grade levels, $x2$ (2, N = 500) = .645, p > .10. The age range of elementary school children was from 3 to 15 years (m = 8.3), for the middle school children from 11 to 18 years (m = 12.8), and for high school children from 9 to 19 years (m = 16.3). The number of children at each of these grades were 259, 117, and 126 respectively.

When parents/guardians were asked how many adults in the home were responsible for parenting the child, results of the $x2$ analysis indicated a significant difference relative to the total sample, $x2$ (1, N = 501) = 243.12, p < .001. In a large majority of families there were two or more (84.83%) adults in the home. In addition, a significant difference was found in the number of adults in the home among students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 501) = 12.44, p < .01. There were more two parent/guardian families among elementary school children (90.31%) than among middle (78.63%) and high (79.37%) school students.

In addition, when parents/guardians were asked about their work status, results of the $x2$ analysis revealed a significant difference in the number of parents/guardians working full-time for the entire sample, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 192.8, p < .001, but no significant difference among parents/guardians of children at various school levels was found, $x2$ (4, N = 502) = 2.95, p > .05. In a majority of families (58.76%), one parent/guardian worked full-time, followed by two parents/guardians (33.07%), and none (8.17%). With respect to the number of parents/guardians in a family working part-time, the $x2$ value also revealed a significant difference for the entire sample, $x2$ (2, N = 501) = 348.33, p < .001. In a majority of families (69.46%) no parent/guardian was found working part-time, followed by one parent/guardian (28.74%), and two parents/guardians (1.80%). There was also a significant difference found among parents/guardians of children at various school levels, $x2$ (4, N = 501) =

10.48, p < .05. There were fewer families at the elementary school level with no parent/guardian working part-time (63.32%) than there were at either the middle (76.07%) or high school (76.00%) levels. At the same time there were more families at the elementary school level with one parent/guardian working part-time (33.98%) than there were at the middle (23.08%) and high school (23.20%) levels.

Regarding the educational background of parents/guardians in this study, results revealed a significant difference between the educational background of parents/guardians of children at various grade levels, $x2$ (6, N = 502) = 15.48, p < .05. Parents/guardians of middle school children appeared to be the most highly educated, with 41.03% having a college degree, and 33.33% having an advanced degree. Overall, however, the entire sample was highly educated, with 90.44% having more than a high school education, including 31.27% having a college degree, and 30.68% having an advanced degree.

With respect to the educational background of the other parent/guardian (if present) in the household, no significant difference was found among these parents/guardians of children at various grade levels, $x2$ (6, 429) = 9.61, p > .10. As with the respondent parents/guardians in this study, however, these other parents were also highly educated, with 28.90% having a college degree, and 37.30% having an advanced degree.

Finally, in reference to the number of other children living at home, results of the $x2$ analysis revealed a significant difference among the students for the total sample, $x2$ (5, N = 502) = 279.19, p < .001. More children came from two (41.04%) and three (24.30%) child families than from one (16.53%), four (11.95%), and five-plus (6.17%) child families. In addition, there appears to be significantly fewer children living alone at home among high school (30.95%) students than among elementary (8.49%), and middle (18.80%) school students, $x2$ (10, N = 502) = 45.45, p < .001.

Healthy Home Environment

In the area of healthy home environment, the survey focused primarily on parents'/guardians' acquisition of parenting information from parent education classes, the parent library, school newsletters, counselors, teacher(s), principals (or other administrators), and the family-school liaison (see Table 2).

With reference to parent education classes, the $x2$ value calculated for the total sample revealed that the number of parents/guardians who did attend parent education classes was significantly lower than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 499) = 65.66, p < .001. There was no significant difference between parents/guardians who attended parent education classes among students at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 499) = 2.32, p > .10.

Regarding seeking or receiving parenting information from the parent library, the $x2$ value for the total sample revealed that the number of parents/guardians who sought or received parenting information from the parenting library was significantly lower that the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 179.28, p < .001. However, there was a significant difference between the parents/guardians seeking and receiving parenting information from the parent library among students at the various school levels. Significantly more parents of children at the elementary (22.39%) and middle (23.93%) school levels used the parent library as a resource than did parents of children at the high school (11.90%) level, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 7.18, p < .05.

With respect to the school newsletter, the $x2$ value for the total sample revealed that the number of parents/guardians who used the school newsletter as a resource for parenting information, was significantly higher than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 263.94, p < .001. In addition there was a significant difference between the number of parents/guardians who used the school newsletter as a resource for parenting information among students at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 7.01, p < .05. More parents/guardians of students at the elementary (89.19%) and middle

Table 2. Parent/Guardian Responses to Healthy Home Environment Questions

A. Parent Education Classes

	Yes	No
Total	31.86%	68.14
Elementary	30.08	69.92
Middle	37.61	62.39
High School	30.16	69.84

B. Parent Library

	Yes	No
Total	20.12%	79.88
Elementary	22.39	77.61
Middle	23.93	76.07
High School	11.90	88.10

C. School Newsletters

	Yes	No
Total	86.25%	13.75
Elementary	89.19	10.81
Middle	87.18	12.82
High School	79.37	20.63

D. School Counselor

	Yes	No
Total	25.70%	74.30
Elementary	23.17	76.83
Middle	31.62	68.38
High School	25.40	74.60

E. School Teacher(s)

	Yes	No
Total	32.27%	67.73
Elementary	41.70	58.30
Middle	29.91	70.09
High School	15.08	84.92

F. School Principal/Other Administrator

	Yes	No
Total	21.71%	78.29
Elementary	22.39	77.61
Middle	19.66	80.34
High School	22.22	77.78

G. Family Liason (Elementary Only)

	Yes	No
Total	14.73%	85.27

(87.18%) school levels used the newsletter as a resource than parents at the high school (79.37%) level.

Associated with the use of the school counselor as a resource for parenting information, the $x2$ value for the total sample revealed the use of the school counselor by parents to be significantly lower than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 118.60, p < .001. No significant difference was found in the use of the school counselor by parents of students at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 3.03, p > .10.

With regard to the use of teacher(s) as a resource for parenting information, the $x2$ value for the total sample revealed that the number of parents/guardians who used teacher(s) as a resource was significantly lower than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 63.12, p < .001. However, there was a significant difference between the number of parents/guardians who used teacher(s) as a resource among students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 27.87, p < .001. Apparently, elementary school parents/guardians (41.70%) used teachers as a resource most frequently, followed by parents of middle (29.91%) then high school (15.08%) students.

As to the principal or other administrators as a resource for parenting information, the $x2$ value for the total sample indicated that the number of parents/guardians who used the principal or other administrators as a parenting resource was significantly lower than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 160.66, p < .001. No significant difference was found in the use of principals or other administrators as a resource among parents/guardians of students at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = .38, p > .10.

Finally, the $x2$ value computed for the parents/guardians of elementary school students who used the family-school liaison (i.e., the family-school liaison existed only at the elementary school level) as a resource for parenting information, indicated that this number was significantly lower than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 258) = 118.38, p < .001.

Two-Way Communication

In order to obtain information about communication between parents/guardians and the school, the survey asked questions related to five areas. These included questions associated with parents'/guardians' contact with the schools, parent-teacher conferences, ways in which parents/guardians obtained information about school activities, how informed parents/guardians were about what goes on in their child's classroom(s), and information parents received about how to help their child's learning at home.

Associated with the topic of parents'/guardians' contact with the school (see Table 3), the first question asked focused on when parents'/guardians' initial contact with the school occurred. Across the total sample, the number of parents who had initial contact sometime before school started or within the first month of school was significantly larger than the number of parents who did not have contact until the third month of school, $x2$ (3, N = 469) = 36.66, p < .001. However, analysis of parents'/guardians' initial contact scores among students at various school levels revealed a significant difference between them, $x2$ (6, N = 469) = 143.20, p < .001. Apparently, a larger number of parents of elementary school students had their initial contact before the school year began (43.02%) or during the first day or week of school (39.92%), while a larger number of parents of middle and high school students had their initial contact during the first month (i.e., 43.81% and 47.17%, respectively) or the first three months (i.e., 20.00% and 29.25%, respectively) of school.

The second question asked had to do with the form in which the parents'/guardians' initial contact with the school occurred. Across the total sample, the number of parents who had their initial contact at an open house event (42.06%) or a parent/teacher conference (24.79%) was significantly larger than the number of parents whose initial contact took the form of a letter, phone call, or home visit, $x2$ (3, N = 359) = 62.25, p < .001. A separate analysis of data associated with the form in which

Table 3. Parent/Guardian Responses to Two-Way Communication Questions:
Time, Form, and Initiator of First Contact

A. Time of Initial Contact

	Before School Began	1st Day or 1stWeek	1st Month	1st Three Months
Total	31.56%	27.51	27.72	13.22
Elementary	43.02	39.92	13.18	3.88
Middle	19.05	17.14	43.81	20.00
High School	16.04	7.55	47.17	29.25

B. Form of Initial Contact

	Parent-Teacher Conference	Letter Home	Open House	Phone Call/ Home Visit
Total	24.79%	16.16	42.06	16.99
Elementary	31.87	28.75	20.00	19.37
Middle	27.55	6.12	53.06	13.27
High School	10.89	5.94	66.34	16.83

C. Initiator of First Contact

	Parent/ Guardian	Teacher	School
Total	38.89%	25.00	36.11
Elementary	49.39	37.25	13.36
Middle	27.52	12.84	59.63
High School	26.79	9.82	63.39

parents'/guardians' initial contact with the school occurred indicated a significant difference between parents of children at the various school levels, $x2$ (6, N = 359) = 76.57, p < .001. It appears that among parents of elementary school children, parent-teacher conferences (31.87%) and a letter home from the teacher (28.75%) were the forms most frequently associated with their initial contact, while for middle (53.06%) and high school (66.34%) students the open house was the form most frequently associated with parents'/guardians' initial contact.

Finally, the third question about parents'/guardians' initial contact with the school asked had to do with who the initiator of the first contact was. Across the total sample, parents (38.89%) and schools (36.11%) initiated contact more often than teachers (25.00%), $x2$ (2, N= 468) = 15.16, p < .01. A separate analysis of data associated with who the initiator of the first contact was revealed a significant difference between parents/guardians of children at various school levels, $x2$ (4, N = 468) = 121.62, p < .001. Among parents/guardians of elementary school children, either the parent (49.39%) or the teacher (37.25%) was the most frequently identified initiator of the first contact. However, among parents/guardians of middle (59.63%) and high school (63.39%) students the school was most frequently identified as the initiator of the first contact.

Two questions were asked in the survey relative to parent-teacher conferences (see Table 4). The first question in this area had to do with whether parents had attended a parent-teacher conference during the 1992-93 school year. Across the total sample, the number of parents who attended parent-teacher conferences was significantly larger than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 488) = 86.96, p < .001. Analyses of data among parents of children at various school levels indicated a significant difference, $x2$ (2, N = 488) = 208.62, p < .001, between them. It appears that as children move on through various school levels from elementary to high school, attendance at parent-teacher conferences decreased (i.e., elementary = 92.52%, middle = 76.52%, high

Table 4. Parent/Guardian Responses to Two-Way Communication Questions:
Attendance at and Opportunity for Parent-Teacher Conferences

A. Attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences

	Yes	No
Total	71.11%	28.89
Elementary	92.52	7.48
Middle	76.52	23.48
High School	20.17	79.83

B. Opportunity for Parent-Teacher Conferences (High School Only)

	Yes	No
Total	59.17%	40.83

school = 20.17%). Secondly, since parent-teacher conferences are not regularly offered at the high school level (i.e., they usually occur at the parents' request), parents/guardians of high school students were asked whether they would like to have an opportunity to attend such conferences at a designated time. The $x2$ value computed relative to this question was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 120) = 4.04, p < .05, indicating that the number of parents/guardians of high school students who wanted such parent-teacher conferences was significantly higher than the expected value.

The third set of questions asked in this survey relative to parent-school communications had to do with how parents obtained information about school activities (see Table 5). These questions covered those related to the school newsletter, class newsletter, fliers or announcements, other parents, their children or other children, the child's teacher(s), and the radio or local newspaper. Results of the $x2$ analysis related to data about the school newsletter revealed that the number of parents/guardians who used such a newsletter to obtain information about school activities was significantly higher than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 375.22, p < .001. However, no significant difference was found among parents/guardians of students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = .41, p > .10.

In reference to obtaining information about school activities via the class newsletter, although no difference was found between parents/guardians who did and did not use this resource to obtain their information, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 2.88, p > .10, a significant difference was found between parents/guardians of children at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 182.28, p < .001. More parents/guardians of elementary school children (75.29%) used the class newsletter to obtain information about school activities than parents/guardians of middle (17.09%) and high (13.49%) school students.

With respect to obtaining information about school activities from fliers or announcements, the $x2$ value computed indicated that the number of parents/guardians who used this resource to obtain information was significantly

Table 5. Parent/Guardian Responses to Two-Way Communication Questions:
Obtaining Information About School Activities

A. School Newsletter

	Yes	No
Total	93.23%	6.77
Elementary	93.44	6.56
Middle	94.02	5.98
High School	92.06	7.94

B. Class Newsletter

	Yes	No
Total	46.22%	53.78
Elementary	75.29	24.71
Middle	17.09	82.91
High School	13.49	86.51

C. Fliers or Announcements

	Yes	No
Total	78.88%	21.12
Elementary	90.73	9.27
Middle	70.09	29.91
High School	62.70	37.30

D. Other Parents

	Yes	No
Total	49.80%	50.20
Elementary	52.71	47.29
Middle	48.72	51.28
High School	44.80	55.20

E. Own or Other Children

	Yes	No
Total	86.85%	13.15
Elementary	86.49	13.51
Middle	87.18	12.82
High School	87.30	12.70

F. Child's Teacher

	Yes	No
Total	46.41%	53.59
Elementary	66.41	33.59
Middle	29.91	70.09
High School	20.63	79.37

G. Radio or Local Newspaper

	Yes	No
Total	48.01%	51.99
Elementary	41.31	58.69
Middle	43.59	56.41
High School	65.87	34.13

higher than the expected value $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 167.52, p < .001. In addition, there was a significant difference between the number of parents/guardians of students at various school levels in their use of fliers or announcements to obtain information about school activities, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 47.09, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (90.73%) used them most frequently, followed by parents/guardians of middle (70.09%) and high school (62.70%) students.

Regarding parents'/guardians' acquisition of information about school activities from other parents, no significant differences were found for the total sample, $x2$ (1, N = 500) = .01, p > .10, as well as among parents/guardians of children at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 500) = 2.18, p > .10.

Regarding parents/guardians obtaining information about school activities via their own or other children, the $x2$ value for the total sample indicated that the number of parents who obtain information in this manner was significantly higher than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 272.70, p < .001. However, no significant difference was found among parents/guardians of children at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = .06, p > .10.

With reference to parents/guardians obtaining information about school activities through the child's teacher(s), the $x2$ value computed for the total sample was not significant, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 2.58, p > .10. However, there was a significant difference between parents/guardians of children at various school levels in their use of this avenue in obtaining information, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 88.11, p < .001. More parents/guardians of elementary school children (66.41%) obtained information from their child's teacher than parents/guardians of middle (29.91%) and high school (20.63%) students.

Finally, regarding results associated with parents'/guardians' use of the radio or local newspaper for information about school activities, the $x2$ value calculated for the total sample was not significant, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = .80, p > .10. However, there was a

significant difference between parents/guardians of children at various school levels in their use of this avenue to obtain information about school activities, $x2$ $(2, N = 502) = 21.68$, $p < .001$. Apparently, more parents/guardians of high school students (65.87%) obtained information about school from the radio and local newspaper than parents/guardians of middle (43.59%) and elementary school (41.31%) students.

The fourth set of questions in this survey related to communication focused on how informed parents/guardians were about what goes on in their child's classrooms, and how supported or encouraged they were in communicating with their child's teacher(s) (see Table 6). Application of the $x2$ to the data assessing how informed parents/guardians were about what goes on in their child's classroom(s) revealed a significant difference between parents/guardians for the total sample, $x2$ $(2, N = 496) = 143.06$, $p < .001$. More parents/guardians perceived themselves to be somewhat (51.21%) or well informed (39.92%) about their child's classroom(s) than uninformed (8.87%). In addition, there was a significant difference between how well informed parents/guardians of children at various school levels were, $x2$ $(4, N = 496) = 78.12$, $p < .001$. More parents/guardians of elementary school children felt they were well informed (57.03%) than those of middle (26.09%) and high (17.60%) school students.

With respect to how much support and encouragement parents/guardians of elementary school children feel about communicating with their child's teacher, the $x2$ value calculated indicated that the number of parents/guardians who felt supported and encouraged was significantly higher than the expected value, $x2$ $(1, N = 255) = 191.54$, $p < .001$. Since middle and high school students have more than one teacher, parents/guardians of these students were asked to rate the degree to which they felt they were supported or encouraged to communicate with their child's teachers. Results from the application of the $x2$ analysis revealed a significant difference in the ratings of parents/guardians for the total sample, $x2$ $(3, N = 224) = 18.68$, $p < .01$. A majority of the parents/guardians (62.95%) felt they were supported or encouraged to

Table 6. Parent/Guardian Responses to Two-Way Communication Questions:
Children's Classrooms, Supportive/Encouraging Teacher,
Information About Learning at Home

A. Informed about Child's Classroom

	Well Informed	Somewhat Informed	Uninformed
Total	39.92%	51.21	8.87
Elementary	57.03	39.84	3.12
Middle	26.09	63.48	10.43
High School	17.60	63.20	19.20

B. Supportive/Encouraging Teacher (Elementary only)

	Yes	No
Total	93.33%	6.67

C. Supportive/Encouraging Teacher (Middle and High School)

	All of the Teachers	Most Teachers	Some Teachers	None of the Teachers
Total	29.02%	33.93	22.32	14.73
Middle	37.84	37.84	18.92	5.41
High School	20.35	30.09	25.66	23.89

D. Help For Child's Learning At Home

	Yes	No
Total	63.49%	36.51
Elementary	79.76	20.24
Middle	59.13	40.87
High School	34.92	65.08

communicate with all or most of their child's teachers. In addition, there was significant difference between parents/guardians of middle and high school students, $x2$ (3, N = 224) = 21.02, p < .001. More parents/guardians of middle school students felt that all or most (75.68%) of their child's teachers were supportive and encouraging regarding communication with them than those of high school students (50.44%).

The final question asked related to communication had to do with whether or not parents/guardians were receiving information from school about how to help their child learn at home (see Table 6). The number of parent/guardians who received this kind of information was significantly larger than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 493) = 35.88, p < .001. The $x2$ value calculated relative to the difference between parents/guardians of children at various school levels was significant, $x2$ (2, N = 493) = 74.09, p < .001. More parents/guardians of elementary school children (79.76%) received information about how to help their child learn at home, followed by parents/guardians of middle (59.13%) and high (34.92%) school students.

Support for Learning at School

To obtain information about support for learning at school, the survey asked parents/guardians a variety of questions focused on family involvement in a wide range of school activities including fund raising, social events, parent-child nights, music or drama performances, sports events, college information/financial aid night, being a room parent, field trip driver or chaperone, dance or social event chaperone, back-to-school night/open house/curriculum night, and as a classroom volunteer (see Table 7).

The $x2$ value calculated for the total sample relative to school fundraising events, including such activities as carnivals and jog-a-thons, indicated no significant difference between the number of parents/guardians who did or did not participate in these events, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 1.56, p > .10. However, a significant difference in

Table 7. Parent/Guardian Responses to Questions Focused on
Support for Learning at School

A. Fundraising Participation

	Yes	No
Total	42.21%	52.79
Elementary	66.80	33.20
Middle	33.33	66.67
High School	19.84	80.16

B. Social Event Participation

	Yes	No
Total	50.60%	49.40
Elementary	62.16	37.84
Middle	35.90	64.10
High School	40.48	59.52

C. Parent-Child Night Participation
(Elementary and Middle School)

	Yes	No
Total	54.52%	45.48
Elementary	60.62	39.38
Middle	41.03	58.97

D. Classroom Visit

	Yes	No
Total	64.34%	35.66
Elementary	83.40	16.60
Middle	52.14	47.86
High School	36.51	63.49

E. Music/Drama Performance

	Yes	No
Total	61.35%	38.65
Elementary	66.80	33.20
Middle	62.39	37.61
High School	49.21	50.79

F. Sports Event (High School Only)

	Yes	No
Total	57.14%	42.86

G. College Info/Financial Aid Night
(High School Only)

	Yes	No
Total	15.87%	84.13

H. Room Parent Participation
(Elementary Only)

	Yes	No
Total	23.17%	76.83

I. Field Trip Driver or Chaperone

	Yes	No
Total	26.69%	73.31
Elementary	39.00	61.00
Middle	20.51	79.49
High School	7.14	92.86

J. School Dance/Social Event Chaperone
(Middle and High School)

	Yes	No
Total	8.64%	91.36
Middle	11.11	88.89
High School	6.35	93.65

Table 7 continued.

K. Open House, Back-To-School Night, or Curriculum Night

	Yes	No
Total	77.09%	22.91
Elementary	81.08	18.92
Middle	73.50	26.50
High School	72.22	27.78

O. Comfort in Level of Involvement

	Comfortable	Wish to do More
Total	47.76%	52.24
Elementary	46.06	53.94
Middle	43.36	56.64
High School	55.28	44.72

L. Evaluation of Open House, Back-To-School Night, and Curriculum Night

	Positive	Both Positive and Negative	Negative
Total	85.40%	14.60	0.00
Elementary	89.05	10.95	0.00
Middle	81.91	18.09	0.00
High School	81.00	19.00	0.00

M. Classroom Volunteer

	Yes	No
Total	24.70%	75.30
Elementary	40.15	59.85
Middle	12.82	87.18
High School	3.97	96.03

N. Rating of Classroom Volunteer Experience

	Positive	Both Positive and Negative	Negative
Total	84.17%	15.00	0.83
Elementary	87.38	11.65	0.97
Middle	45.45	54.55	0.00
High School	100.00	0.00	0.00

fundraising participation was found between parents/guardians of students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 86.77, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children most actively participated (66.80%), followed by parents of middle school (33.33%), then high school (19.84%) students.

Regarding school sponsored social events such as potlucks, picnics, barbecues or ice cream socials, the $x2$ value calculated for the total sample was not statistically significant, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = .08, p > .10. However, a significant difference in social events participation was found between parents/guardians of students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 29.14, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (62.16%) were more actively involved than parents/guardians of high school (40.48%) and middle school (35.90%) students.

With reference to parent-child nights, such as math, science, and physical education nights, no significant difference was found relative to the total sample, $x2$ = 3.08. However, there was a significant difference in parent-child night participation between parent/guardians of children at the elementary and middle school levels, $x2$ (1, N = 376) = 12.48, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (60.62%) were significantly more involved in parent-child nights than parents of middle school children (41.03%).

With respect to parents'/guardians' classroom visits, the number of parents who visited their child's classroom(s) was significantly larger than the expected value, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 41.30, p < .001. There was also a significant difference in child classroom visits among parents/guardians of children at various school levels, $x2$ (2 ,N = 502) = 91.14, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (83.40%) visited their child's classroom more often than parents/guardians of middle school children (52.14%). Parents/guardians of high school students visited their child's classrooms the least (36.51%).

Associated with parents'/guardians' attendance at school music or drama performances, the x2 value calculated indicated that the number of parents who attended was significantly larger than the expected value, x2 (1, N = 502) = 25.88, p < .001. A separate analysis also found a significant difference in attendance at school music or drama performances among parents/guardians of children at various school levels, x2 (2, N = 502) = 11.13, p < .01. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (66.80%) more often attended school music or drama performances than parents of middle school (62.39%), followed by high school (49.21%) students.

Among high school students only, their parents/guardians were asked if they had attended a school sponsored sports event. The x2 value computed for this sample was not significant, x2 (1, N = 126) = 2.58, p > .10, indicating that the number of parents/guardians attending such events was not significantly different from the expected value. However, when these same parents/guardians were asked whether or not they attended a college information/financial aid night, the x2 value computed was significant, x2 (1, N = 126) = 58.70, p < .001, indicating that the number of parents/guardians attending such a college information/financial aid night was significantly lower than the expected value.

For elementary school children only, their parents/guardians were asked if they had been a room parent during the 1992-93 school year. The x2 value computed for this sample was significant, x2 (1, N = 259) = 74.60, p , >001, indicating that the number of parents/guardians who were room parents was significantly lower than the expected value.

Regarding parents'/guardians' involvement as a field trip driver or chaperone, the x2 value computed for the total sample was significant, x2 (1, N = 502) = 109.08, p < .001, indicating that the number of parents/guardians who were field trip drivers or chaperones was significantly lower than the expected value. However, a significant difference was found in involvement as a field trip driver or chaperone among

parents/guardians of students at various school levels, x2 (2, N = 502) = 46.93, p < .001).
Parents/guardians of elementary school children (39.00%) were more involved in this
activity than parents of middle (20.51%) and high school (7.14%) students.

For middle and high school students only, their parents/guardians were asked
whether they chaperoned school dances or social events. The x2 value calculated for
this sample was significant, x2 (1, N = 243) = 166.26, p < .001, indicating that the number
of parents participating in these kinds of events was significantly lower than the
expected value. Also, no significant difference was found in participation as
chaperones at school dances and social events among parents of middle (11.11%) and
high school (6.35%) students, x2 (1, N = 243) = 1.74, p > .10.

Related to parents'/guardians' involvement in such school activities as open
house, back-to-school night, or curriculum nights, the x2 value computed for the total
sample was significant, x2 (1, N = 502) = 147.38, p < .001, indicating that the number of
parents/guardians participating in such activities was significantly higher than the
expected value for all school levels (i.e., elementary = 81.08%, middle = 73.50%, high
school = 72.22%). No significant difference was found in participation among parents
of students at different school levels, x2 (2, N = 502) = 4.88, p > .10.

In addition, to participation in such school activities as open house, back-to-
school/curriculum nights, parents/guardians were asked as to whether their
participation was positive, negative, or both. The x2 value for the total sample was
significant, x2 (2, N = 404) = 505.69, p < .001, indicating the number of parents/guardians
saying such a participation experience was positive was larger than the expected value.
Furthermore, the x2 analysis also revealed no significant difference between
parents/guardians of children at various school levels in their evaluation of such
participation experiences, x2 (2, N = 404) = 4.71, p > .10.

Regarding parents'/guardians' participation as a classroom volunteer, the x2
value calculated for the total sample was significant, x2 (1, N = 502) = 128.52, p < .001,

indicating that the number of parents/guardians who participated as classroom volunteers was lower than the expected value. However, among those parents who participated, a significant difference was found in participation at the various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 71.25, p < .001. Parents'/guardians' participation as classroom volunteers steadily decreased from the elementary (40.15%) to the middle (12.82%) and high school (3.97%) levels. In addition, application of the $x2$ to parents'/guardians' feelings of satisfaction with their classroom volunteer experiences revealed that their overall ratings were very positive (84.17%), $x2$ (2, N = 120) = 143.16, p < .001. However, a significant difference was detected between parents/guardians at various school levels, $x2$ (4, N = 120) = 15.57, p < .01. Parents/guardians of elementary (87.38%) and high school (100.00%) students were more positive in their feelings of satisfaction regarding their classroom volunteer experiences than parents/guardians of middle (45.45%) school children. Caution must be made relative to this finding, since the number of subjects at the middle and high school levels was very small.

Finally, parents/guardians were asked whether they were comfortable with their level of involvement at school or if they wished to become more involved. The $x2$ value calculated for the total sample was not significant, $x2$ (1, N = 490) = .98, p > .10. In addition, no significant difference was found between parents/guardians of children at various school levels in their level of involvement at school, $x2$ (2, N = 490) = 3.96, p > .10.

Support for Learning at Home

With respect to questions related to support for children's learning at home, the survey focused on two questions associated with homework practices (see Table 8). First, parents/guardians were asked if they or another adult helped or supported their child in homework activities. The $x2$ value associated with the total sample was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 493) = 356.10, p < .001, indicating the number of parents/guardians

Table 8. Parent/Guardian Responses to Questions About
Support for Learning at Home

A. Help Child With Homework

	Yes	No
Total	92.49%	7.51
Elementary	93.73	6.27
Middle	96.49	3.51
High School	86.29	13.71

B. Comfort in Helping Child Learn

	Comfortable	Wish to do More
Total	69.49%	30.51
Elementary	66.54	33.46
Middle	73.91	26.09
High School	71.43	28.57

who helped or supported their child with homework was higher than the expected value for all school levels (elementary = 93.73%, middle = 96.49%, high school = 86.29%). However, a significant difference was found in help and support provided by parents or another adult among children at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 493) = 10.06, p < .01. Parents/guardians of elementary (93.73%) and middle (96.49%) school children were more involved in helping and supporting their child in homework than parents/guardians of high school (86.29%) students.

Second, parents were asked if they were comfortable with their ability to help their child learn or if they wished they could do more to help. The $x2$ value for the total sample was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 495) = 75.26, p < .001, indicating the number of parents who were comfortable with their ability to help their child learn was larger than the expected value. No significant difference was found in comfort among parents of children at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 495) = 2.33, p > .10.

Appropriate Shared Decision Making

In the area of shared decision making, the survey asked parents/guardians questions about their involvement in school (site) and district based decision making (policy making) groups such as the booster organization, parent organization (i.e., PTOs or PTAs), and school district advisory or budget committees (see Table 9).

For high school students only, their parents/guardians were asked if they were involved in a booster organization (i.e., these clubs only exist at the high school level). The $x2$ value calculated for this sample was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 126) = 58.70, p < .001, indicating the number of parents involved in such an organization at the high school level was lower than the expected value.

In addition, all parents/guardians were asked whether or not they were involved in parent organizations (i.e., PTOs or PTAs). The $x2$ value calculated for the total sample was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 101.74, p < .001, indicating that the number

Table 9. Parent/Guardian Responses to Questions About Appropriate Shared
Decision-Making and School Atmosphere

A. Booster Organization
(High School Only)

	Yes	No
Total	15.87%	84.13

B. Parent Organization

	Yes	No
Total	27.49%	72.51
Elementary	35.14	64.86
Middle	20.51	79.49
High School	18.25	81.75

C. Advisory/Budget Committees

	Yes	No
Total	8.98%	91.02
Elementary	10.81	89.19
Middle	11.11	88.89
High School	3.20	96.80

D. Site/Leadership/Building Committees

	Yes	No
Total	4.98%	95.02
Elementary	6.95	93.05
Middle	3.42	96.58
High School	2.38	97.62

E. Decision Making: Comfort Level

	Comfortable	Wish to do More
Total	50.53%	49.47
Elementary	51.43	48.57
Middle	48.62	51.38
High School	50.43	49.57

F. School Atmosphere

	Welcoming	Not Welcoming
Total	92.51%	7.49
Elementary	97.27	2.73
Middle	82.46	17.54
High School	91.94	8.06

of parents/guardians involved in such organizations to be lower than the expected value. However, among parents/guardians who ere involved in such organizations, a significant difference was found between them for students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 15.84, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary school children (35.14%) were more involved in parent organizations than parents/guardians of middle (20.51%) and high school (18.25%) students.

Still also, parents/guardians were asked about their involvement in school district advisory or budget committees. The $x2$ value calculated for the total sample was significant, $x2$ (1, N = 501) = 337.16, p , .001, indicating the number of parents involved on these district committees to be lower than the expected value at all school levels (i.e., elementary = 10.81%, middle = 11.11%, high school = 3.20%). No significant difference in participation on these district committees was found among parents of students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 501) = 6.82, p > .10.

A $x2$ test applied to parents'/guardians' participation in school (site) based leadership or building committees was significant for the entire sample, $x2$ (1, N = 502) = 406.98, p < .001. The number of parents/guardians involved in the committees was lower than the expected value. There was no significant difference found between the different school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 502) = 4.53, p > .10, suggesting that there was low involvement at all school levels (i.e., elementary = 6.95%, middle = 3.42%, high school = 2.38%).

Finally, parents/guardians were asked if they were comfortable with their level of involvement in shared decision making relative to school matters or if they wished they could do more. The $x2$ value for the total sample, $x2$ (1, N = 471) = .06, p > .10, as well as for parents of students at various school levels, $x2$ (2, N = 471) = .24, p > .10, were not significant. The number of parents who were comfortable (50.53%) and who wished to do more (49.47%) at all school levels was approximately equal.

School Atmosphere

The question asked associated with this area of the survey focused on parent'/guardians' perceptions of their child's school atmosphere (see Table 9). While such a question does not coincide directly with the categories in the FIAC Family Involvement Model, its content can have a significant impact on aspects of family involvement identified by the FIAC model, including such matters as the home environment, communication between home and school, learning at school, learning at home, and involvement in shared decision making in school related activities. Application of the x2 technique to the data for the total sample revealed a significant value, x2 (1, N = 494) = 357.08, p < .001, indicating that the number of parents who felt the school atmosphere was welcoming was greater than the expected value. Furthermore, parents'/guardians' perceptions of the child's school atmosphere varied significantly by the school level of the child, x2 (2, N = 494) = 25.05, p < .001. Parents/guardians of elementary (97.27%) and high school (91.94%) students felt their child's school was more welcoming than parents/guardians of middle school children(82.46%), although a large majority of parents at all school levels perceived their child's school as welcoming.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on describing the results of a survey designed to assess family involvement at various grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, based on FIAC's Family/School Partnership Model. This model was adapted from Epstein's (1990a) conceptualizations of family involvement, including such dimensions as a healthy home environment, two-way communication, support for learning at school, support for learning at home, and appropriate shared decision making.

The 504 parents/guardians of children enrolled in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, were randomly selected such that the sample was proportionally representative of all children enrolled in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the district.

A summary of findings and discussion of the results are presented in a manner that relates both theory and research to the present findings associated with the following topics: (1) Uniqueness of the Sample, (2) Healthy Home Environment, (3) Two-Way Communication, (4) Support for Learning at School, (5) Support for Learning at Home, (6) Appropriate Shared Decision Making, (7) School Atmosphere, and (8) Usefulness of Epstein's Family Involvement Model.

Uniqueness of the Sample

As indicated previously, subjects included 504 parents/guardians of children enrolled in the Corvallis, Oregon School District schools, randomly selected in a manner that made them proportionally representative of all children in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the district. A large majority of these parents/guardians were women, indicating that data for the present study primarily involved perceptions of female parents/guardians rather than male. This finding was not surprising since women traditionally have been the primary caretakers of children, it would logically

follow that they would be in direct contact with the schools more than men. It also coincides with the finding by Epstein (1986), who noted from her survey that 90% of the parents most knowledgeable about family involvement in the schools were women.

In addition to the above characteristic, a large majority of families included in this survey were from two-parent/guardian families, with one full-time working parent/guardian, no part-time working parent/guardian, and two to three children in the home. Taken together, these findings about the sample indicated that the majority of families in this study were from traditional, two-parent, two to three-child families, with a smaller portion of the sample from other family structures. As such, the generalization of these findings are limited. Studies are available indicating varying family involvement in the schools relative to the variables of family structure (i.e., two-, single, step parents; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Epstein, 1990; Clark, 1983; Leitch & Tangri, 1990), parent/guardian work status (i.e., full- and part-time, dual worker families; Amundson, 1988), and family size (Leitch & Tangri, 1990). For example, family/school involvement activities for a single parent, employed in a full-time job, with three children, would likely be quite different from those of a family with two parents, one working full-time, with two children in the family. However, comparative analysis of data relative to the variables of family structure, parental work status, and family size did not appear reasonable due to the limits of the sample. There were a limited number of families who could be considered single parent/guardian households (15.17%), families from which at least one parent was not working full-time (8.17%), and families where there were one (17%), four (12%), and five-plus (6%) children.

Another characteristic of the present sample that is worthy of comment is the high level of education attainment of the parents/guardians in this study. A large majority of the parents/guardians of this study had attained educational experiences beyond the high school level. Past studies have indicated that the relationship between

parents' educational levels and their family involvement in the school is not clear cut. Studies are available suggesting little relationship between these variables (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Dornbusch, 1986; Epstein, 1986, 1990; Leitch & Tangri, 1990), while others indicate significant positive relationships between them (Bauch, 1987; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Perhaps it is the dimension of family involvement in the schools that is important to consider when understanding this relationship. For example, while no significant relationship has been found between parents' educational level and their participation in school functions such as an open house night (Dornbusch, 1986), a significant positive relationship has been found between parents' educational level and their communication with teachers (Bauch, 1989). However, due to the fact that only a small number of parents/guardians were high school graduates or less (i.e., for respondent parents/guardians = 9.56%; for other parents/guardians = 11.19%), the variable of parents' education could not be securely used in comparative analyses.

Finally, the sample used in this study consisted of families in which children were at varying school levels. These included those from the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Analysis of data from the sample revealed that the two-parent/guardian nature of the sample was more prominent among children at the elementary rather than middle or high school levels. In addition, smaller numbers of children in the family were found among children at the high school levels. In the past, studies of family involvement in the schools have focused their efforts at primarily studying children at one educational level, whether they be at the elementary, middle, or high school level. On the basis of these studies, it has been concluded that parents become less involved in their children's education as their children move into the higher grades (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe, 1985; Jennings, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). Since the present study involves families with children from the elementary, middle, and high school levels, such a conclusion can be investigated, taking into consideration various aspects of family involvement in the schools.

Healthy Home Environment

Overall, findings related to questions associated with the section of the survey focused on developing a healthy home environment indicated that fewer than the expected number of parents/guardians used district sponsored parent education classes, the parent library, school counselors, teacher(s), principals (other administrators), and the family/school liaison (elementary only) for parenting information. Evidently, for a majority of the parents/guardians in this sample, these avenues for obtaining information about parenting were not utilized. Examination of qualitative data consisting of comments made by parents about the reasons they were not using these resources for parenting information were most interesting. With respect to their lack of participation in parent education classes, parents cited reasons such as scheduling conflicts, time constraints, and lack of information about classes. Several parents reported that they had other avenues for obtaining such information or that they had no need for such classes. In spite of these reasons, however, past research has found a positive relationship between parents' attendance at parent education programs and their children's language skills, test performances, and school behavior (Henderson, 1987). Regarding parents'/guardians' comments about the parent library and family/school liaison, many indicated that they were not aware that such resources were available. In reference to the lack of use of counselors, teacher(s), and principals (administrators) as resources for parenting information, the reasons are conjecture at this point, although numerous reasons can be thought of, including, among many others, accessibility, expertise, and communication style. However, the fact that these individuals were not seen as important resources for parenting information is quite disheartening, when one considers the substantial amount of time these individuals spend in the socialization and caring of children.

Interestingly, the major avenue through which parents/guardians obtained information about parenting from among the resources identified in the survey was

the school newsletter. A larger than expected number of parents/guardians used the school newsletter as a resource for parenting information. Perhaps parents/guardians more readily use these newsletters for parenting information because they are sent directly to parents at home, where they can be read at their leisure.

Associated with findings focused on differences in the use of the above resources for parenting information by parents/guardians of children at various school levels, several significant differences were found. Evidently, parents of elementary and middle school children used the parent library, school newsletter, and teacher(s) for parenting information more often than parents/guardians of high school children. This finding lends support to the previous indication that parents are more involved in their children's education during the earlier than the later school years (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe, 1985; Jennings, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). A number of reasons have been identified relative to why this may occur. Some of them include attitudes of teachers about parent involvement at various school levels, school and classroom structure differences, numbers of teachers children interact with, and the growing independence of children as they grow older (Epstein, 1986, 1990a; Liontos, 1992; Rich, 1987b). In spite of this fact, however, with the exception of school newsletters, the majority of parents/guardians, even at the elementary school level did not use these and other resources identified for parenting information. Such findings lead to considerable concern, since the literature associated with the importance of home environments emphasizes that supportive and developmentally appropriate parenting practices are critical to the academic success of children (Clark, 1983, 1987; Henderson, 1987; Liontos, 1992, Mayeske, 1973; Ziegler, 1987).

Two-Way Communication

Questions in the survey associated with two-way communication between parents/guardians and the schools were organized into four sections: (1) initial contact

with the schools, (2) parent-teacher conferences, (3) how parents obtained
information about school activities, and (4) children's classrooms, teachers, and help
with learning at home.

With respect to findings associated with parents'/guardians' initial contact with
the school, a significantly larger number of parents/guardians had their initial
contact before school began or within the first month of school than parents who had
their initial contact within the first three months of school. Past research suggests
such early initial contact may be advantageous, since initial contacts are essential
elements in setting up and maintaining the channels of communication, which have
been shown to be an integral part of students' success (D'Angelo & Adler, 1991;
Henderson, 1990). However, school level differences were also found among
parents/guardians. Parents/guardians of elementary school children experienced
their initial contact earlier than those of middle or high school students, again
indicating more parent involvement during the early years (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe,
1985; Jennings, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). Perhaps parents/guardians of younger children
feel that their children still need some help in adjusting to the school system when
compared to older, more experienced students. Parents may also rely more upon older
children (i.e., middle or high school age children) to communicate with them about
school related issues and activities and so do not seek out direct contact with the schools
as early as parents of younger children.

The most frequent form of initial contact between parents/guardians and the
school was found to be the school open house, followed by parent-teacher conferences.
Numerous articles have been written about the value of the open house and parent-
teacher conferences in children's education (Henderson, 1987, Nicolau & Ramos, 1990;
Ziegler, 1987). It should be noted, however, that school level differences among
parents/guardians were also found. For parents/guardians of elementary school

children, the most frequent initial contact with the school was through a letter sent home, while for those of middle and high school students it was the open house. This finding is partially supported by past research (Bronfenbrenner, 1972; D'Angelo & Adler, 1991), indicating the open house to be the most favorable means of initial contact at the higher grade levels. Probably at the lower grade levels, a more personal approach is preferred, as when individual families receive their own letters from the school.

With reference to who initiated the first contact between parents/guardians and the school, parents/guardians or the school were each mentioned by about 1/3 of the respondents. However, differences between parents/guardians of children at various school levels were again evident. Among a majority of parents/guardians of elementary school children, parents/guardians, followed by the teacher were identified as the initiators of the first contact, while among parents/guardians of middle and high school students, the school was most frequently mentioned as the initiator. This finding seems understandable in light of past studies regarding the changing nature of parent involvement as children move through the grades (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe, 1985; Jennings, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). However, one does wonder about the content of these initial contacts, since among parents/guardians of middle and high school students they occurred later and were much more likely to be initiated by the school.

In the section of the survey which asked about parent-teacher conferences, two questions were asked. First, a large majority of parents/guardians indicated that they did attend a parent-teacher conference during the year, with this occurring more frequently among parents/guardians of elementary, followed by those of middle school children. A large majority of parents/guardians of high school students did not attend a parent-teacher conference during this year. Aside from a great concern parents and teachers have for young children, this finding may also be due to the nature of parent-

teacher conferences characteristic at various school levels in the Corvallis, Oregon School District schools. At the elementary school level, these conferences are scheduled individually with parents/guardians, and offered at regular intervals. At the middle school level, however, these conferences are less individualized, and offered in an arena format. That is, teachers make themselves available for parents/guardians on certain days in the school gym, and those who wish to have a conference wait in line for their turn to talk with their child's teacher for about 10 to 15 minutes. At the high school level parent-teacher conferences are not regularly offered. This clearly contrasts with the finding associated with the second question about parent-teacher conferences asked of parents/guardians of high school students, which indicated that a majority of them would like to attend a parent-teacher conference if such an opportunity was made available to them. Such a finding suggests that parents/guardians of high school students may often wish to participate in various activities related to their children's education, however, are not able to do so because these experiences are not available to them. In fact, past research indicates that parents do want to be involved in their children's education, even at the high school level (Epstein, 1990a). In addition, a number of studies are available supporting the positive relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement among high school students (McDill, Rigsby, & Meyers, 1969; Keith, 1991; Hester, 1989; Ziegler, 1987).

In the section of the survey which asks parents/guardians about how they obtained information about school activities, a number of significant findings were found. Overall, no differences were found between the number of parents/guardians who used or did not use the class newsletter, other parents, the child's teacher(s), and the radio or local newspaper as sources to obtain information about school activities. About an equal number of parents/guardians used or did not use these sources for information about activities at school. However, a large majority of parents/guardians

used the school newsletter, fliers or announcements, and their own or other children
for information about school activities. Furthermore, a larger majority of
parents/guardians of elementary school children used the class newsletter, fliers or
announcements, and child's teacher as sources of information about school activities
than parents/guardians of middle and high school students. Still also, a larger majority
of parents/guardians of high school students used the radio or local newspaper for
information about school activities than those of middle and elementary school
students. These findings indicate that parents/guardians utilize a variety of sources to
obtain information about school activities. Some of these sources are used more often
than others, depending on their nature and the grade level of their children. This
bolsters Epstein's idea (1987, 1990A) that family involvement needs to be looked at from
a multidimensional perspective, rather than the singular traditional perspective of
direct parent contact with the school.

Finally, in the section of the survey asking parents/guardians about their
children's classrooms, teachers, and help with learning at home, further interesting
findings were obtained. With respect to children's classrooms, a majority of
parents/guardians felt that they were informed about their children's classrooms. This
is encouraging in light of research findings indicating a relationship between the
degree to which parents are involved in their children's education and their children's
academic achievement (Clark, 1983, 1985; Henderson, 1987, Herman & Yeh, 1980;
Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). However, a school level difference was observed, with
parents/guardians of elementary school children being more informed than those of
middle and high school students, again supporting the notion of more parental
involvement in children's education at the younger grades (Cone, DeLawyer, & Wolfe,
1985; Jennings, 1990; Ziegler, 1987).

With respect to children's teachers, among parents/guardians of elementary school
children, an overwhelming majority saw their children's teachers as supporting and

encouraging of communication with them. Likewise, among parents/guardians of middle and high school students, a majority saw most or all of their children's teachers as supportive and encouraging of communication with them. This is encouraging, since communication with teachers is important in facilitating family involvement in children's education (Bronfenbrenner, 1972). However, parents/guardians of middle school children saw their children's teachers as more supportive and encouraging of communication with them than those of high school students. This difference may be due to the nature of children's development at this time (i.e., the adjustment experiences of middle childhood, Rich, 1987b).

Finally, in reference to receiving information about how to help their child learn at home, a majority of parents/guardians felt that they were receiving such information, again with more parents/guardians of elementary school children feeling this way, followed by those of middle and high school students. This finding is certainly a positive one, since several researchers have indicated that more than any other type of parent involvement, parents want to learn more about helping their children learn at home (Epstein, 1990a; Brandt, 1989).

Support for Learning at School

The section of the survey focused on support for learning at school included questions related to family involvement in a wide range of school activities. Overall, findings related to parent participation in school fundraising, social events (i.e., potlucks, barbecues, ice cream socials), parent-child nights (i.e., math, science, and physical education activities); elementary and middle school only), and sports events (high school only) revealed no difference between the number of parents/guardians participating in these activities from those who did not participate in them. Therefore, a similar number of parents/guardians participated or did not participate in these school activities. On the other hand, a majority of parents/guardians did not

participate in the college information/financial aid night (high school only), as a room parent (elementary only), a field trip driver or chaperone, and a chaperone at a school dance or social event (middle and high school only). Probably, the fewer than expected number of parents/guardians attending the college information/financial aid night may have been due to the fact that this activity focused primarily on parents/guardians of high school juniors and seniors. This group represented a small proportion of students studied in this sample. Furthermore, the fewer than expected number of parents/guardians of elementary and/or middle and high school students who acted as room parents, field trip drivers or chaperones, and classroom volunteers was not surprising, as was the fewer than expected number of parents/guardians of middle and high school students participating as chaperones at dances or social events. The former group of activities usually involve a great deal of commitment during the regular school hours, which often conflicts with parental work schedules. Furthermore, as students become older and move into the higher grades, they may not need as much adult supervision as younger children and they become more independent, and often do not want their parents involved (Rich, 1987b), especially in their social events.

A large majority of parents were very positive in their evaluations of the open house/back-to-school/curriculum night, and in their satisfaction ratings as classroom volunteers. Furthermore, there was an almost equal number of parents/guardians who were comfortable with their level of involvement in school activities as there was of parents/guardians who wished to be more involved.

Aside from these general findings regarding support for learning at school, additional school level differences were found as expected, with a larger number of parents/guardians of elementary school children participating in such school activities as fundraising, social events, parent-child nights, classroom visits, attendance at a music or drama performance, and as a field trip driver or chaperone

than those of middle and/or high school students. In addition, there was a steady decline in the number of parents/guardians who were involved as classroom volunteers from elementary to high school. All of these findings point to the nature of family involvement in children's education as they become older and gain more independence from their parents (Rich, 1987b). Finally, of those parents who participated as volunteers in their children's classroom(s), those of elementary and high school rather than middle school students were more satisfied with their experiences. In addition, qualitative data containing parents'/guardians' comments regarding how such classroom volunteer experiences might be improved indicated that having specific tasks to do, obtaining more directions in their children's classrooms and working with individual students would be beneficial.

Support for Learning at Home

Two questions were asked of parents/guardians relative to support for learning at home. First, a large majority of parents/guardians indicated that they helped or supported their children with homework at all school levels, although this was more evident among parents/guardians of middle, followed by those of elementary, then high school students. Interestingly, qualitative data including parents'/guardians' comments revealed that many of those with elementary school children said their children did not receive any homework, while those with high school students said that their children did not want their help. Absence of homework and independence of children from their parents, therefore, might explain the difference between the greater involvement of parents/guardians with their middle rather than their elementary or high school child, respectively.

Second, findings revealed that a majority of parents/guardians felt comfortable with their abilities to help their children learn, across all grade levels. This finding suggests that parents appear ready and willing to help their children learn at home.

However, such a resource has not yet been fully tapped by the schools. In fact,
researchers have suggested that parents want to help or learn how to help their
children learn at home (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). A number of studies
are also available supporting the efficacy of home learning activities for children with
parents/guardians in facilitating their children's academic achievement (Chrispeels,
1991; Epstein, 1991; Leler, 1983; Rich, 1987a).

Appropriate Shared Decision Making

Questions in the survey focused on appropriate shared decision making
centered upon how families were involved in the school's advisory and decision
making process. Overall, findings revealed that a majority of parents/guardians were
not involved in school policy/decision-making groups such as the booster organization
(high school only), parent organization, advisory or budget committees, and school
(site) leadership and building committees. In part, this low parent/guardian
participation may be due to the limited number and size of some of these groups (i.e.,
two parent positions of site councils), but other groups such as parent organizations
and booster clubs have unlimited opportunities for parent involvement. Studies have
indicated that parent involvement in school decision-making groups have been related
to student gains in achievement (Ziegler, 1987). Also, parental satisfaction with schools
has been found to be related to their involvement in such decision making activities
(Bauch, 1987; Herman & Yeh, 1980), and such parental involvement can in turn lead
their children to, like their parents, have views of schools as important, valuable, and
personally rewarding (Leler, 1983).

In addition, as previously expected, parents/guardians of children at the
elementary school level were more involved in parent organizations than those of
middle and high school students. However, no differences were found between
parents/guardians who were comfortable with their level of involvement and those

who wished to be more involved in school decision making activities. Qualitative data relative to comments made by parents about what would help them become more involved in school decision making activities revealed that parents at all levels frequently mentioned such things as having more time, a more flexible schedule for meetings, more information about such involvement opportunities, being invited by the school to become involved, providing childcare, and feeling like their input would make a difference. As indicated by Bauch (1987) and Herman and Yeh (1980), for parental involvement in decision making to occur, schools must also be willing to allow and encourage parents to become involved in decision making.

School Atmosphere

Finally, the last survey question that will be discussed in this thesis had to do with parents'/guardians' evaluations of their schools' atmospheres. Findings revealed that a large majority of parents/guardians of children at all school levels perceived their school as welcoming rather than as not welcoming. However, more parents/guardians of middle school children perceived the school as less welcoming than those of elementary or high school students. The survey findings are encouraging and offer information that sheds light on things that are important in developing a school atmosphere that would be important to children's educational success. The fact that a large majority of parents/guardians perceived the school atmosphere as welcoming is encouraging because it suggests that the initial foundation upon which one can build a more positive and deeper family involvement in the schools has been established. However, the fact that more parents/guardians of middle school children, although a small number, perceived the school atmosphere to be not welcoming than those of elementary and high school children raises concerns that need to be addressed. Qualitative data from these parents/guardians included comments such as, "the initial entrance does not give a welcoming feeling," there is a lot of chaos

with the kids," "the staff is very busy with their work," and "they don't often greet parents." As suggested by Ost (1990) and Ziegler (1987), frequent open, warm, and caring communication is necessary for bringing the separate worlds of home and school together for the benefit of children's academic and developmental success.

Having discussed the survey results we turn to examination of the usefulness of the model upon which the survey was based.

Usefulness of Epstein's Family Involvement Model

The present study of family involvement in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools was based on FIAC's Family Involvement Partnership Model, developed by parents, teachers, counselors, administrators and classified staff from the school district. This model, adapted from Epstein's (1990a) model for family involvement, was utilized in designing the survey used in this study to assess family involvement in the schools.

Unlike previous approaches to understanding family involvement, Epstein (1990a) moved beyond the traditional concept of parent involvement as one of direct participation of parents in children's learning, usually at school, to a more multidimensional and holistic one, including a variety of activities within and outside children's classrooms and schools, as well as those that take place within the home. As a result of FIAC's work and the adaptation of Epstein's ideas, the FIAC Family Involvement Partnership Model was born. The FIAC model focused on understanding family involvement in children's education from a variety of perspectives, including creating a healthy home environment, establishing two-way communication between home and school, supporting children's at school, supporting children's learning at home, and participating in appropriate shared decision making in school advisory and policy making groups.

Results of the survey focused on these dimensions of family involvement just described revealed the usefulness of Epstein's model of family involvement in providing us with a more realistic, multidimensional, and complex nature of family involvement in the schools. Findings of this research support the model's contention that family involvement in the schools involves more than the direct participation of parents in children's education at school. It can involve participation in the everyday care of the children, in attending parent education classes, reading school newsletters, helping with their children's homework, attending their children's musical performances, as well as serving on the school's budget committee, to name a few. This multidimensional perspective of family involvement is important because as data from the survey suggest, parents are involved in their children's learning in a variety of direct and indirect ways. Some parents may feel more comfortable participating in certain selected activities, while others may be different in their involvement choices. Furthermore, in addition to student school level, although not explored in this study, it seems likely that due to a variety of family circumstances, such as family structure, educational level, number of children in the family, and parental work status, among others, family involvement in the schools may be different. Epstein's model (1990a), from which FIAC developed its Family Involvement Partnership Model, therefore, was useful in this study to help describe the myriad of ways families can be involved in their children's education, all of which can contribute to their children's academic and developmental success. It not only opens to parents a range of activities they can participate in relative to their children's education, but also opens to school personnel a more holistic approach to family involvement from which to judge whether they are providing opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education in ways uniquely related to their own circumstances. In this manner both parents and schools, in partnership, can be empowered to achieve their goal of facilitating the optimal educational success and development of their children.

Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Although attempts were made to control for a number of limitations in this study, still other limitations were encountered during the research process that may have influenced the results obtained. These are described following.

Sample

A number of limitations were encountered relative to the sample used in this study. This study was undertaken in a school district located in Oregon's mid-Willamette valley, which harbored characteristics that were peculiar to this population. As expected, since this sample was located in a university town, the educational level of parents/guardians in the sample was extraordinarily high. In addition, a majority of them came from two parent/guardian families, with two to three children, in which approximately 90% had at least one parent/guardian working full-time, approximately 30% in which two parents/guardians were working full-time, and at least 25% in which parents/guardians were working part-time. Furthermore, all of the respondents in this study had to have a phone to be included in the sample. As a result of these sample characteristics, generalization of findings to other populations is difficult. Future studies might wish to conduct a similar study in other school districts, using a more varied sample in reference to the family structure, employment status, and family size variables.

Data Collection Procedures

Several limitations associated with the data collection procedures were also encountered in this study. Since the phone survey method was used to interview all respondents, there was no way in which the interviewers could control for the environment of the respondents. Many of the interviews were conducted while respondents were watching television, minding their children, or taking care of

household responsibilities. These circumstances most certainly affected the nature of the data collected from respondents.

In addition, volunteers were relied upon to conduct the phone interviews. While time was spent in training these interviewers, their sex, interviewing style, personality, and mood may have also affected the way respondents answered the questions.

Furthermore, in a few cases, interviewers were not prepared to deal with respondents who spoke little or no English. On a couple of occasions their interviews had to be rescheduled, so that a bilingual interviewer could be found.

Finally, the time of the day when the phone interviews took place varied. While most of the interviews occurred during the evening hours, both respondents and interviewers were at times tired after a full day's work, thus affecting the results obtained. Some interviews also occurred during the weekends, when both the interviewers and respondents were in a more relaxed and refreshed state of mind.

All of these limitations suggest that more standardized procedures for the interviewing of subjects take place in future studies.

Measurement Issues

Several aspects of the survey used to assess family involvement in the schools among parents/guardians indicated that a few improvements could be undertaken in this area. For example, in the section of the survey that focused on assessing two-way communication between the home and school, many of the questions asked examined the role of the school in the communication process. Questions related to the role of parents were quite limited. Therefore, more questions related to the parents' role in the communication process would be worthwhile, since those questions would provide a more complete picture of the communication process between parents and the school.

In addition, more in-depth questions in the section of the survey dealing with the topic of creating a healthy home environment, and supporting children's learning at home would appear reasonable. Regarding the area of creating a healthy home environment, more explicit questions related to parenting practices would provide a clear understanding of parents' interactions with their children. In reference to the area of supporting learning at home, questions examining ways parents provide support to their children at home, beyond helping with homework, would expand our understanding of family involvement in this area.

Variable Selection

The present study primarily focused on describing aspects of family involvement in the Corvallis, Oregon School District schools. Some comparisons were made relative to family involvement among children at various school levels. However, beyond this comparison, no other comparisons were made. Numerous other demographic variables known to be related to family involvement in the schools could be identified for future research. These, however, were not examined in this study and include such variables as family structure, number of adults responsible for the child, family size, child's sex, respondent's sex, parental work status, and parental education. These variables may also have interacted with each other and made their unique impact on the amount and type of family/school involvement that occurs in different families. In addition, cultural and ethnic differences in family/school involvement must be considered in future research.

Aside from the demographic variables mentioned above, examination of the relationships that may exist among various aspects of family/school involvement would be worthwhile. For example, investigations of the relationships that exist between the time, form, and initiator of the initial home/school contact, and the amount or type of family/school involvement may lead to the discovery of unique patterns useful in

developing programs which enhance family/school involvement. In addition, information about the relationships between amount or type of family involvement and parents' knowledge of children's classrooms would be important. Also, relationships between parents' feelings of encouragement and support from teachers to communicate and their amount or type of family/school involvement would certainly provide useful information. Finally, looking at the relationships between the school's atmosphere and the amount or type of family/school involvement might provide valuable insights.

In spite of the importance of all of the variables mentioned above that need to be considered in future research, the one variable that needs to be mentioned which probably represents the most outstanding limitation of this study is the absence of a measure of children's academic success. The review of literature for this study indicated that family involvement in children's education is related to academic success among children. This important proposition was not tested in this study, suggesting a need for future research to focus on this proposition. After all, the primary reason for studying family involvement in the schools was founded upon the notion that family involvement was important for children's academic and developmental success.

Implications of Findings

On the basis of findings obtained in this study, a number of implications emerge relative to the development of programs which can help to enhance family involvement in Corvallis, Oregon School District schools. Several of these implications will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

In the area of creating a healthy home environment, only a few parents/guardians used the school parent library as a resource for obtaining information about parenting. While many parents mentioned that they were not aware that a parent library existed, other parents may not have used such a resource because

of the time constraints they encountered, which may have limited their participation in other areas. One way to overcome this barrier might be for school to catalog materials that they have in the parent library, and send a list of these materials home to parents in the school newsletter. Since a majority of parents/guardians were found to read the school newsletter at all school levels, information about the library may reach parents more effectively this way. Schools might also wish to devise a system so that parents/guardians can easily check out and return materials they borrow from the library via children, thus making the project one which involves the family rather than just parents and the school.

The idea of directly involving children in the process of family/school involvement is not new. It has been found to be very successful in one Philadelphia inner city school (Cartwright, 1993). In describing such a program, Cartwright (1993) explained how leaving children out of the process of involving parents in the schools may lead to even less parent participation. She continues,

> "If children are brought onto the team and involved in the
> process of getting parents involved, parents will come. Enlist
> the aid of children to reach parents and pull them on the team
> with the school and the team will be unconquerable
> (Cartwright, 1993, pp. 100-101)."

It seems reasonable to assume that parents do not want to become involved with the seeking of random benefits relative to their involvement in the school, they probably would more likely want to become involved for the sake of their children.

In the area of creating a healthy home environment, another finding in this study indicated that very few parents/guardians took advantage of the parent education classes offered by the school. Reasons given for not participating included scheduling conflicts, time constraints, and lack of information about the classes. Schools can alleviate some of these concerns by video- or audio-taping these parent education classes, and placing them in the parent library. These tapes can be catalogued and made available to parents with information sent home in the school

newsletter. Parents can check out these video and audiotapes via their children for viewing and listening at their leisure in the comfort of their own homes.

With respect to the area of establishing two-way communication between the home and school, findings related to the initial contact between home and school suggest that schools might design programs which ensure that such contact will occur before the school year begins or very soon thereafter. This kind of program might be particularly desirable for families with children at the middle and high school levels, since such contact was found to occur among them a while after school began. For elementary school children, findings of this study indicated that the contact occurred early, before the school year began or within the first week or month after school commenced. It is important that such contact be maintained. However, one way to accomplish this goal is to enlist the help of parent volunteers. Nothing here indicates that the child's teacher(s) needs to be the one to talk with parents at the initial contact. Often times, families just want to be welcomed, particularly if their child is entering a new school. Furthermore, many parents may be happy to speak to other parents who have or have had a child in the same class as their child. In other words, speaking to a "veteran" parent who is familiar with the child's new teacher can be both comforting and helpful. Programs such as these would not only be helpful to families, but also help schools identify specific roles and tasks for parent volunteers; a request made by several parents/guardians in this study.

Another potential program idea that emerges from findings in this study related to establishing two-way communication between the home and school has to do with offering parents/guardians of high school students an opportunity for regular parent-teacher conferences. This kind of opportunity would not only satisfy the desire expressed by a majority of these parents/guardians, but also provide a way for parents and teachers to connect together about positive issues concerning students. Providing a way for students to be actively involved in these conferences would also seem

appropriate so that these experiences might become a family affair in which students can be empowered to undertake the responsibility for their own education. Often such conferences are not regularly scheduled between families and high school teachers and occur only when they are requested by either parents or teachers. Furthermore, the content of these conferences often focuses on problems encountered by the student. There is a need to move away from a negative use of conferences to more positive ones in which families and the school can have as their primary interest the facilitation of the students' interest in achieving their potentials.

An additional finding in this study associated with establishing two-way communication between the home and school worth mentioning is the finding that a majority of parents at all grade levels reported obtaining information about school activities from their own or other children. Cartwright's (1993) idea about bringing children into the process of establishing effective home/school relationships is again substantiated. The fact that children are already involved in establishing communication between the home and school makes it reasonable for school to focus on programs that encourage and nurture this aspect of the communication process.

Still another finding obtained in this study relative to the area of two-way communication which has implications for programs that enhance family/school involvement is the finding that, while a majority of parents/guardians of elementary school children used the class newsletter as a source of information about school activities, parents/guardians of middle and high school students did not. Perhaps such a resource might become important for families of middle and high school students if schools consider implementing a program in which students helped to write and distribute the class newsletter, containing updated classroom information, to their homes. Since a large number of parents/guardians of children at all grade levels used the school newsletter and fliers and announcements to obtain information about school activities, these approaches could be combined with the class newsletter to provide

parents/guardians with information about their children's classrooms as well. In this way, parents of middle and high school students may feel more informed about what is happening in their children's classrooms, and it may also lead them to experience more support and encouragement in communicating with the children's teachers.

In reference to the area of supporting children's learning at school, findings associated with the fact that a majority of parents/guardians of children at all grade levels attended a school open house night and were positive about such an experience, while only a few parents/guardians of high school students attended the college information/financial aid night, leads one to speculate about how one might deal with this discrepancy. If indeed parents have a desire to acquire the information offered at college information/financial aid night and have difficulty attending a special event specifically for that purpose then one possible way of enhancing parent attendance would be for high schools to combine the two events together without overriding the positive aspects of the open house night.

Another finding associated with the area of supporting children's learning at school which has the potential of enhancing family/school involvement has to do with parents'/guardians' classroom volunteer experiences. Although a majority of parents/guardians were satisfied with their classroom volunteer experiences, parents/guardians of elementary and high school students were more satisfied than those of middle school students. Parents' comments relative to improving this experience had to do with increasing directions and having more specific tasks for them to do while in their children's classrooms. Although the task of coordinating parental classroom volunteer experiences is an involved and time consuming job, time spent by schools in developing a system for smoothly accommodating parents into children's classrooms would be worthwhile. Since a majority of parents are satisfied with their classroom volunteer experiences, such a system would likely only increase volunteer participation and efficiency.

As noted previously in the limitations and suggestions for future research section of this thesis, the area of the survey focused on supporting children's learning at home was quite limited since it primarily focused on parents helping with their children's homework and their comfort in helping children learn. A number of studies described in the review of literature section of this thesis substantiated the efficacy of home learning activities for children and parents in facilitating their children's academic achievements (Chrispeels, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Leler, 1983; Rich, 1987a). Unquestionably, support from the schools in developing appropriate home learning experiences can help enhance family/school involvement. In addition, this study found that parents/guardians were actively involved in helping their children with homework, and were comfortable in their ability to help their children learn. Indeed, past research has indicated that parents want to help or want to learn how to help their children learn at home (Brandt, 1989; Epstein, 1990; Ziegler, 1987). For parents to become more involved in their children's learning at home, however, schools must be willing to allow this to happen, and to encourage and develop programs that can enhance such involvement at home. It should be noted, however, that support for learning at home involves more than helping children with their homework. This indicated that further exploratory research is necessary, focused on expanding our ideas about ways in which parents can support their children's learning at home.

With respect to the area of appropriate shared decision making, findings in this study indicated that only a few parents were involved in groups undertaking school advisory and policy/decision making tasks. Reasons parents gave for their non-participation included, among other things, time and schedule conflicts, lack of information, being invited, and feeling that their input would make a difference. In order to deal with the issues of time and schedule conflicts, as well as lack of information, one way of helping interested parents stay abreast of current activities and meetings is to find a way of sharing with parents information about what and

when these policy making groups will deal with specific issues. With reference to concerns about being invited or feeling that their input will make a difference, schools must begin to develop ways of becoming aware of and utilizing the talents of their parents, as well as recognizing how their contributions have made a difference to the school and children's learning. Finally, regarding findings associated with the school atmosphere, a large majority of parents/guardians felt that their local schools were quite welcoming. However, some parents/guardians of students at the middle and high school levels did not feel welcome upon entering the school. Some of the reasons for these feelings had to do with the school's appearance while others had to do with how busy staff members were. Parents/guardians also commented about not being greeted upon entering the school, and the high levels of chaos created by the students. Regarding the school's appearance, it seems reasonable to assume that something can be done to make schools appear more welcoming through various color, light, furniture, and picture arrangements at the entrance of the school. With respect to the busy staff and greeting parents, efforts by the school personnel can be made to attend to and welcome parents as they arrive on campus. After all, the goal of schools is to ensure academic success among its students, and family involvement is an integral part of helping them achieve this goal. Schools must continue to work toward becoming more family friendly. In reference to the chaos created by students, perhaps the most obvious solution to this concern is to directly involve students and their parents in making the school a place that welcomes families. Such an activity can have a direct effect not only on the school's appearance, but also on the relationships between staff, students, and parents, eliminating barriers that often keep the home and school separate from each other.

This study examining family involvement in the Corvallis, Oregon School District schools has provided some valuable information. Through the examination of results of a survey based on FIAC's multidimensional Family/School Partnership Model

adapted from Epstein's (1990a) ideas, findings were presented that illustrate the complexity of family involvement in Corvallis schools, the degree to which parents are or are not involved in the different areas, and the differences in family/school involvement at the different school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school). While there are still other variables worth examining the variables investigated in this study may help to provide a firm base upon which the Corvallis, Oregon School District can further develop their family/school partnerships.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.   **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**
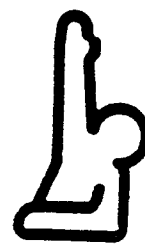
CORVALLIS
SCHOOL
DISTRICT
509J
Excellence in
Education

February 9, 1993

Dear Families:

In an effort to know more about parent and family involvement in our schools, the Corvallis School District is conducting a telephone survey of parents and family members. This involvement happens in many ways, including activities such as parent/teacher conferences, helping with homework, and volunteering in the classroom. We will use the results of this survey to develop a plan for increasing parent/family involvement in the district to help our children be more successful in school.

A computer has randomly selected your name from the entire list of students (K-12) in the district, and you **may** be called by one of our volunteers. All your answers will be anonymous and confidential, and the caller will not know your name.
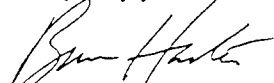
The questions on this short survey will take about twenty minutes to complete, and have to do with the ways parents/families can be involved in their children's education at home and at school. A few additional questions about the school calendar will also be included. When we call, we'd like to speak to the parent who can best describe the involvement your family has with the school. Your responses will be greatly appreciated.

If you'd rather not participate in this survey, you can let the volunteer know when he or she calls. The volunteer will thank you and end the conversation.

Thanks so much for your help. Our family involvement specialist, Jeanne Holmes, is coordinating this survey effort. Please feel free to call her at 757-5748 should you have questions, comments, or concerns. Results of the survey will be made available to you.

As always, your opinions are very important in helping us make our schools better for all of our students.

Very truly yours,

Bruce Harter
Superintendent

APPENDIX B.   TELEPHONE INTERVIEWER SCRIPT

Hi...

This is **(YOUR NAME)** from the Corvallis School District, and I am calling as part of a survey of parents and families of students in our district.

I need to speak to the parent or guardian of _____ (GIVE THE CHILD'S AGE AND SCHOOL).

Last week a letter describing this survey from our superintendent Bruce Harter was mailed to your home. Did you receive the letter?

IF NO: "I'm sorry it didn't reach you". The letter was to inform you of this call and the nature of our survey. (EXPLAIN WHAT WAS IN THE LETTER.)

IF YES: Say "I'm glad you did" AND PROCEED WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE INTRODUCTION.

You were selected at random from the list of parents who have children in our school district. Your answers are completely confidential and anonymous.

Are you the parent or guardian who can best tell about the involvement your family has with the school? (IF NO, ASK TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON.) The survey will take about twenty minutes. Is this a good time for you?

IF YES, PROCEED; IF NO, ASK FOR A BETTER TIME.

Please feel free to ask questions at any time. You don't need to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable doing so. You may have more than one child in the Corvallis schools, but I'd like you to think only about the experience of your _____(SAY THE AGE OF THE CHILD) as you answer these questions. OK?

*If the person refuses to do the survey, just thank them for their time and hang up.

APPENDIX C.   FINAL DRAFT OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

There are many ways families are involved in their child's education at school, such as volunteering, attending open houses, back to school nights, children's performances, or athletic events.

1. Have you ever participated in any of these types of activities?

YES

NO ⟶ What is one reason you have not participated?

_____

Skip to question 2

a. I am going to read you a list of several different kinds of activities your school might have planned this year. Tell me which ones you have taken part in. Please answer YES or NO to each:

SCHOOL FUND-RAISER SUCH AS A CARNIVAL, JOG-A-THON	YES	NO
SCHOOL SOCIAL EVENT SUCH AS A BARBECUE, PICNIC, POTLUCKS, OR PARENTS' COFFEE	YES	NO
PARENT-CHILD NIGHT LIKE FAMILY MATH OR PE/MUSIC NIGHT *Elementary and Middle School*	YES	NO
CLASSROOM VISIT	YES	NO

Have you attended a . . .

MUSIC OR DRAMA PERFORMANCE	YES	NO
SCHOOL SPONSORED SPORTS EVENT *High School only*	YES	NO
COLLEGE INFORMATION OR FINANCIAL AID NIGHT *High School only*	YES	NO

This year have you been a . . .

ROOM PARENT *Elementary only*	YES	NO
FIELD TRIP DRIVER OR CHAPERONE	YES	NO
DANCE OR SOCIAL EVENT CHAPERONE *Middle School and High School*	YES	NO

Have you attended a . . .

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT, OPEN HOUSE, OR CURRICULUM NIGHT

NO

YES

⟶ (If YES) Did you feel this experience was . . .

POSITIVE   BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE   NEGATIVE

Tell me one thing that would make it better for you.

_____

⟶ (If NO) Is there a particular reason you didn t attend.

_____

This year have you been a . . .

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER

NO
YES

(If YES) Would you rate your satisfaction with this experience as

POSITIVE   BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE   NEGATIVE

Tell me one thing that would make it better for you.

_____

(If NO) Is there any particular reason why you didn't volunteer.

_____

For interviewer use only:

_____ NO TIME

_____ NO INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO VOLUNTEER

_____ HAVEN'T BEEN INVITED TO VOLUNTEER

_____ OTHER _____

b.   Is there another way you've been involved?

_____

For interviewer use only:

_____ VOLUNTEER OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

_____ DONATED MATERIALS OR SNACKS FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

_____ OTHER _____

_____ OTHER _____

2.   Whether you are currently involved or not, would you say:

YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT
          or
YOU WISH YOU COULD BE MORE INVOLVED?

a.   What might help you be more involved?

_____

3.   Thinking back to the areas we've just talked about, is there one more thing you'd like to tell us?

_____

Families may also be involved by participating in decision-making or policy-making groups.

4.   I am going to name some of these different groups. Thinking about your experience with your child's (elementary, middle school, high school), tell me which ones you have taken part in.

   _____ BOOSTER ORGANIZATION - *High School only*

   _____ PARENT ORGANIZATIONS (LIKE PTO'S)

   _____ SCHOOL DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEES OR
              BUDGET COMMITTEES

   _____ SITE COMMITTEES, LEADERSHIP TEAMS, OR BUILDING
              ADVISORY COMMITTEES

5.   Whether you are currently involved or not, in the area of decision-making, would you say:

   YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT
          or
   YOU WISH YOU COULD BE MORE INVOLVED?

      a.   What might help you be more involved?

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your experience with communication between you and your school.

6.   Think about when you first had contact with your child's teacher(s) **this year**. Was it . . .

   _____ BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN

   _____ FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

   _____ FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

   _____ FIRST MONTH OF SCHOOL

   _____ FIRST THREE MONTHS OF SCHOOL

   _____ OTHER _____

a.   What form did this contact take? Was it . . .

   _____ OPEN HOUSE, BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT, CURRICULUM NIGHT

   _____ LETTER HOME FROM THE TEACHER

   _____ HOME VISIT

   _____ PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE

   _____ PHONE CALL

   _____ OTHER _____

b.   Was the contact initiated by . . .   YOU   the TEACHER   or the SCHOOL

c. Did you feel the outcome of the contact was:

POSITIVE   BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE   NEGATIVE

Tell me one thing that would make it better for you.

_____

7. **This year** have you attended a parent/teacher conference?

YES
NO → Can you tell me one reason why not?

_____

→ a. Can you think of one thing you would change about the parent/teacher conference?

_____

For High School only:

8. Would you like to have the opportunity to conference with your child's teachers on a designated day or evening?

YES   NO

9. I am going to read you a list of ways parents hear about school activities. As I read it, tell me which ones apply to you.

_____ SCHOOL-WIDE NEWSLETTER

_____ CLASS NEWSLETTER

_____ FLIERS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Do you get information from . . .

_____ OTHER PARENTS

_____ TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN

_____ TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

_____ RADIO OR GAZETTE TIMES

10. Which answer best describes how informed you are about what's going on in your child's classroom(s)?
Are you:

WELL INFORMED   SOMEWHAT INFORMED   UNINFORMED

What would you like to add to this response?

_____

For Elementary only:

11. Do you feel supported and encouraged to communicate with your child's teacher?   YES   NO

For Middle School and High School only

12. Which best describes your communication with your child's teachers. I feel supported and encouraged to communicate by

ALL OF THE TEACHERS   MOST OF THE TEACHERS   SOME OF THE TEACHERS   NONE OF THE TEACHERS

13. Do you feel the input you give your child's teacher(s) makes a difference?

YES
NO ⟶ Tell me more:

_____

14. When you hear from your child's teacher(s) are the reasons

POSITIVE   BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE   NEGATIVE

15. Thinking about communication between you and your child's school, is there one more thing you'd like to tell us?

_____

The following questions ask about ways you might be involved in your child's education at home. Some of these ways include helping with homework, reading to your child, and talking with your child about school.

16. Are you getting information from the school about how to help your child learn at home?

YES   NO

17. Is there a specific place in your home where your child is able to study?

YES   NO

18. Do you or another family member work with or support your child on their home work?

YES ⟶Go to question 19
NO

a. I am going to read a list of reasons parents often give for not working with their children on their homework. As I read it, please tell me which apply to you.

_____ CHILD DOESN'T EVER HAVE HOMEWORK

_____ CHILD DOESN'T NEED HELP

_____ CHILD DOESN'T WANT HELP

Parents say . . .

_____ THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP THEIR CHILD

_____ THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO HELP

_____ THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE SUBJECT WELL ENOUGH TO HELP

19. Thinking about your ability to support your child's learning at home would you say:

     YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH WHAT YOU ARE DOING

          or

     YOU WISH YOU COULD DO MORE TO HELP?

     Name one thing that would help you do more

_____

20. Do you and your child discuss your expectations about how he or she will do in school?

     YES   NO

21. Have you **ever** attended a family education class on parenting skills offered by the school district?

     YES

     NO ⟶ Is there any particular reason why not?

_____

22. There are other ways you can get information from the school district about parenting. Have you ever received information from any of the following resources? Please answer YES or NO to each:

PARENT LIBRARY	YES NO	(If NO) Do you know about it?	YES	NO
SCHOOL NEWSLETTER	YES NO			
FAMILY SCHOOL LIAISON *Elementary only*	YES NO	(If NO) Do you know about this person?	YES	NO

Have you sought or received parenting information from the . . .

SCHOOL COUNSELOR	YES NO	(If NO) Is there any particular reason why not?
YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER	YES NO	(If NO) Is there any particular reason why not?
PRINCIPAL OR OTHER ADMINISTRATOR	YES NO	(If NO) Is there any particular reason why not?

23. Some parents have friends or relatives outside the home that give them support by watching their kids, or by giving ideas about child rearing. Do you have this kind of support?

     YES   NO

24 When you walk into your child's school building, would you say the overall atmosphere is welcoming?

     YES   NO ⟶ (If NO) Tell me more about that.

_____

25. Would you say the office staff are . . .

     WELCOMING   or   NOT WELCOMING.⟶ Can you tell me one reason why?

_____

26. When you phone the school is the office staff responsive to your needs?

       YES   NO —→ (If NO) Can you tell me one reason why?

_____

27. Do you feel comfortable talking to your child's principal about questions or concerns?

       YES   NO —→ (If NO) Can you tell me one reason why?

_____

The next question is about the yearly school schedule.

_____

28. What is one thing you could tell us that would help us plan the school calendar for next year?

_____

29. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your involvement in your child's education?

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your household.

30. How many adults are in the home that share the responsibility of parenting the child? _____

31. How many of these adults are working outside the home full time? _____

   How many are working outside the home part time?_____

32. Can you tell me which of the following best describes your educational background:

   _____ SOME HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS

   _____ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR GED

   _____ SOME COLLEGE

   _____ COLLEGE GRADUATE

   _____ ADVANCED COLLEGE DEGREE

   a. *(If another parent lives in the household)*

   Which describes the educational background of the other parent in the household:

   _____ SOME HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS

   _____ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR GED

   _____ SOME COLLEGE

   _____ COLLEGE GRADUATE

   _____ ADVANCED COLLEGE DEGREE

33. What is your occupation?_____

    a.   What is the occupation of the other parent in the household?_____

34. Number of other children in the home_____   Their ages _____,_____,_____,_____

    For interviewer only:

    Blended family info _____

35. Would you be willing to tell me your family cultural or ethnic background? This is an optional question.

    _____

36. Language(s) spoken in the home_____

That's the end of the survey. We want you to know that this survey is a month-long process, and results will be available from the district office in May. These results will be used to make a plan to promote family involvement in our school district in the future. Thank you very much for your time.

ID information:

37. Respondent gender _____

38. Telephone number _____

39. Identification Number _____

40. Child's age _____

41. Child's gender   ——— Male   ——— Female

42. Child's school _____

43. Interviewer number _____