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FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEIVED
AND DESIRED LEVEL OF PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

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FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' PERCEIVED AND DESIRED LEVEL
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR EDUCATION

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The primary purpose of this study was to describe the correspondence between fifth grade students' perceived and desired level of parental involvement in their education, with identification of the specific school-related activities in which students want their parents involved. An experimenter-designed survey of ten questions was administered to 96 fifth grade students, 43 males and 55 females. The schools that participated in the study were Sherman Elementary and Manz Elementary in the Eau Claire Area School District in the fall of 1999. Parental involvement was defined as the parent or parents' participation in on-going classroom and school activities, and involvement in learning activities at home (Watkins,

1997). This study showed that there was a major correspondence between the fifth graders' perceived and desired level of parental involvement in their education. Also, a high correspondence was found between the activities the participants do with their parents and the activities they would like to do with their parents. This study will help parents, teachers, and counselors understand the ideas and feelings of fifth grade students about integrating their growing sense of personal responsibility with their parents' guidance and support.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In ancient cultures, parents not only nurtured their children, but educated them as well (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Since then, family life and the responsibilities that accompany it have dramatically changed.

Today, more women are working, more children are in day care than ever before, and many children come home after school to an empty house where they must care for themselves (Henderson, 1981). In spite of these changes, the family must continue to provide for the needs of their children.

Parents and legal guardians raise children according to a basic fundamental right to do what they believe is in their child's best interest. The United States Supreme Court has upheld the right to conceive and raise children, but the laws to protect our children have generally supported the ideals in which parents and guardians believe. Studies of parental involvement in their children's education across contexts have shown that parental involvement has a strong, positive impact on

children's school success. However, the children's own perspectives about their needs and wants of their parents

have not been closely examined.

Most would agree that children begin to learn at birth and that the learning process continues throughout their entire lives. Learning takes place in different contexts and differs significantly for each child. Parents need to listen to their children and become involved only as much as it benefits their child.

Karen Bogenschneider (1997) found evidence that the academic success of adolescents depends in part on parental involvement, or more precisely, on students' impressions of their parents' involvement. However, as children advance through the grade levels, increasing independence is considered desirable by both teachers and parents. Examination of children's attitudes toward their parents' involvement in their education will help determine the degree of parental involvement children need to reach their greatest potentials in school.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to describe the correspondence between the child's perceived level and the

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child's desired level of parental involvement in their education as measured by an experimenter-designed survey. Parental involvement was defined as the parent or parents' participation in on-going classroom and school activities,

and involvement in learning activities at home (Watkins, 1997).

1. What is the current level of involvement fifth graders' perceive of their parents' involvement in their education?
2. What is the desired level of involvement fifth graders' have for their parents in their education?
3. What are the three most common school-related activities fifth graders' do with their parents?
4. What are the three most common school-related activities fifth graders' would like to do with their parents?

Hypotheses and Rationale

It was hypothesized that there will be a significant positive correspondence between perceived and desired level of parental involvement in fifth graders' education.

It was also hypothesized that there will be significant similarities between what school-related activities fifth graders do with their parents and what activities they would like to do with their parents.

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From birth and on, children are constantly learning new things. The parent is the initial teacher in their child's life until they enter school. From that point on, children may expect a level of involvement in their daily lives to remain constant. When the parents are involved in the school, and take an active part in their child's education, the child will receive a consistent

message that school, and remaining a part of their daily life, is important.

Children today have more going on daily than ever before. There is a level of expectancy from children that their parents are supposed to be involved in these activities. When children see other children's parents involved in their educational lives, then they expect it from their own. Most of the things children do with their parents is often what they prefer to do with them. If parents and children work together in communicating each other's needs and desires, then there will be a greater sense of belongingness and sense of security in themselves and their education.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

In past years, researchers have investigated the influences of families on their children's learning and adjustment. Studies on parent-child relationships reflect the increasing need to understand the processes within which the family functions across contexts of home and school. The important roles parents play in building their child's life skills have been clearly documented, but studies investigating children's perceptions of their parents' involvement in their education are much more limited in number.

Children grow up dependent on their parents for love and support, but there comes a time when their needs for independence overtake dependencies they have on their parents. Bloom (1964) tested for home influences on children's intellectual performance and concluded that most of a child's basic intellectual development is established before they begin school.

Parent Modeling

Before schooling starts and beyond, parents hold for themselves and for their children specific goals

and aspirations. This is a term Henderson (1981) refers to as "achievement press" (p.12). Parents usually want for their children what they want for themselves.

A study by Watkins (1997) showed that parental beliefs affect the child's perceptions of their education and their parents' involvement in it. When parents hold education in high regard and communicate these beliefs to their children, it influences how they view their own reasons for learning and the purpose education has for them. This shows how powerful parent modeling is to the child in terms of how to think and act.

Bennett (1986) showed that when children develop similar attitudes to those of the parents, they have a greater educational experience and fewer problems than children who do not internalize these ideals.

A study by Rebecca Shahmoon Shanok (1992) involved asking children who are the most influential people in their lives when evaluating themselves. The children reported that parents and adults have a great impact on their self-esteem and aspirations. Children are sensitive to their parents' view of them and when there is a greater sense of intimacy between parent and child, the higher the self-esteem and the greater the success in school.

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Self-esteem is a basic need for every human being, and most parents want their children to develop healthy views of themselves so they can become successful, happy, and well-

adjusted in their social and educational lives. Family characteristics, including the relationships that exist within it, influence children's level of self-esteem and educational success.

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. When parents teach their children values and responsibility, as well as the importance of school, then their children will most likely develop the same attitudes and beliefs as their parents.

Bevevino (1988) reports that eighty-seven percent of a child's waking hours, from birth to age 18, are under the influences of their parents and their home environment. The homes that children live in are an important factor in the adaptation and connection of skills and attitudes learned from their parents to the experience they encounter at school.

Studies have shown that parents have the greatest influence on their children, even more so than teachers and peers. A study conducted by Comer and Haynes (1991) found parent participation in a child's education to be essential

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for effective learning. Although teachers were found to show an impact, parents and children who work together and communicate their needs to one another build the strongest relationships, resulting in higher educational achievement.

Parents' Active Involvement in the Schools

The role of the parent can be seen in many different ways. Children may see their parents as nurturers,

protectors, disciplinarians, friends, and educators.

Research has shown that children whose parents are actively involved in their education do better in school. Parents need to become active in their child's education even before they enter the school system. When the child sees their parent or parents taking education seriously and exemplifying its importance, then it will encourage and motivate the child to take their education seriously.

Field, Lang, Yando, and Bendell (1995) conducted a study to examine students' perceived level of intimacy with parents and significant others. Results showed that students with higher self-esteem feel close to and get along with their parents, and are better adjusted at school. The more a child can feel secure in him or herself, the more competent they may feel in their academic skills.

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Parents can choose to become directly involved in their child's school life, or become involved on a greater level where their child is helped indirectly. Parents need to be visibly involved so their child can see them helping out and taking an active part in the school. Parental involvement also helps students develop a respect for the school, individual rights, and property rights.

Parental involvement in education includes attending parent-teacher conferences, open houses, classroom activities, keeping in touch with the teachers, guest

speaking in classes, or volunteering for a field trip. These activities concern parental involvement within the school walls, but parental involvement goes beyond the class. It also takes place in the home.

Involvement at home can be helping their child with homework, checking their homework or take-home folders, reading to their child, or just becoming involved in their daily routines or social activities outside of school.

Parent-Child Interaction

The role of parental involvement has evolved over the years from parents helping the whole school program to parents helping their own child. The more a parent becomes involved, the more likely the child will succeed both

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academically and socially. Research has shown that the sooner a parent becomes involved with the school the more likely the child will have a fulfilling educational experience (Unger, 1991).

According to Unger(1991), author of "What Did You Learn in School Today?", parents are encouraged to become more involved in their children's education at an early age. The author suggests such things as watching what your children eat, monitoring what time they get to bed, how much television they watch, checking their homework, and watching who they socialize with and the activities they do together.

Parents need to encourage their child to work hard when they are not doing their best at school, and to not blame

the school for their child's poor performance. Regardless of the quality of the children's schools and teachers, children's performance will ultimately reflect their intellectual life at home (Unger, 1991).

Parental involvement seems to be more prevalent in the elementary years than in middle school or high school. Elementary school students' parents attend more open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and also pay more attention to their child's schoolwork. However, as children

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progress into fifth grade and then into middle school, studies have shown a decrease in parental involvement.

Emerging Independence of Children

These are the years that children begin to emerge from depending on their parents. Family support is still important, but children begin to want and need more freedom in making their own decisions.

Children begin to take what they have learned from their parents and independently attempt to make their own decisions, yet still have the support and guidance from their parents. This study seeks to determine the perceptions children have of the amount of involvement their parents have in their education and the desired level that children want their parents to be involved. It is expected that the most effective parental involvement is when the parent supports the child in making their own decisions, but being involved at the level that the child desires.

Communication between parent and child becomes key to parents' knowledge of the child's boundaries regarding how much involvement the child desires from the parent. One of the best ways for parents to find out what is happening in their child's school life is to simply listen and talk with

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their child daily. It also requires them to appreciate the child's feelings and points of view.

When the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs accepted by the parents and child are similar, children are able to bond with parents, allowing them further development of social skills. As a child develops these skills, a sense of empowerment evolves and then the child believes that they can and may want to develop these skills on their own (Foster-Harrison & Peel, 1995).

It is clear from the literature on parental involvement in their child's education, that children experience greater success in their educational experiences when the parents are involved. One area that has not been researched in depth is the children's perceived and desired level of their parents' involvement in their education.

Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) researched parental involvement in 11-14 year olds. Results showed that the more active parents were in their child's school performance, the more they positively contributed to the child's academic success. The study's results are consistent with those of other studies, but the authors

described how other variables, such as the child's perceptions of the parents' involvement, and sex of the

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parent, can impact the results, especially for this age group.

Parental Sex-role Differences

Traditionally, there are many differences between mothers' and fathers' involvement in the child rearing of their children. Mothers have been viewed as the nurturer, and the father as the provider. Times have evolved and expectations of parental roles are shifting.

One of the reasons society is changing its expectations of parental roles is due to more women entering the work force. The women's movement has empowered women to become more independent and self-providing by creating a career for themselves. Many women want to keep that independence they have established for themselves, but also have the ability to create a family. This increase of mothers in the work force has placed more responsibility and expectations of the father to play a more involved parental role.

A greater amount of interest in the present literature is focusing on fathers and their involvement as parents because of the dramatic increase of mothers entering the work force (US Bureau of the Census, 1995). The definition of father involvement in the literature is inconsistent and

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lacks clarity (Marsiglio, 1995). This may be due to the changing societal expectations placed on the views of fatherhood. Yet, due to society's reinforced view of the modern father, fatherhood in the 1990s has reached a level that sees mothers and fathers as equal parental figures (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

Society today sees mothers and fathers as having the same responsibilities; however, there appears to be a dynamic relationship between the involvement of the mother and father as parental figures. Palkovitz (1984) found that the perceptions the mother held of the father's role as a parent was the best predictor of father involvement. This suggests that fathers have a tendency to conform to the parental values the mother holds of parental roles.

Another study, by McBride and Rane (1997), showed that parents with more favorable attitudes toward their parental role were significantly more involved in child rearing activities than those with less favorable attitudes. This was found especially true for fathers.

The beliefs that women hold of the father and of themselves as parental figures seem to influence their attitudes toward their own parental role, as well. These concepts indicate the importance of assessing the beliefs

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that both the mother and father have of themselves and each other to maximize the quality of care given to their children.

Palkovitz (1984) found that the views men hold of their role as fathers were significantly related to the levels of parent-child interaction in which they participated. The amount of interest and dedication a man or woman feels about their role as a parent is going to reflect how involved they will be toward their child. Children have that intrinsic ability to sense how their parent feels about being a parent. This directly influences the relationship and bond that is created between the parent and child in all aspects of their daily lives.

Parental involvement of both mothers and fathers will continue to be a major factor in guiding our children down the right paths. Parents often believe they know and understand what their children need, so they may involve themselves when they are not wanted or needed by their children.

As children grow and desire more independence, open communication between the parents and children will create a strong, more effective connection between them,

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enabling a continued sense of competence and success for children in their lives.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe the level of parental involvement in school-related activities fifth graders desire from their parents, and if it corresponds with the perceived level of current parental involvement. The fifth grade participants were enrolled in one of two elementary schools in the Eau Claire Area School District. The participants, materials, procedure, design, and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

Human Subjects Protection

To ensure the protection of the rights of the participants, this researcher adhered to the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 1994). Participants were informed of the general purpose of the study, rights to confidentiality, and the researcher's availability to answer questions before, during, or after their participation. Names of the participants were not used, and the participants' parents agreed to let their child take part in the study. The results of the study were made available to the schools involved. The participants had the right to withdraw at any time.

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 98 male and female fifth graders from Sherman Elementary and Manz

Elementary in the Eau Claire Area School District during the fall semester of 1999. Of the total, 43 (43.9%) were male and 55 (56.1%) were female. The mean age for the participants was 10.29 years. No other demographic variables were gathered, however, the majority of the participants were White, with a small percentage of Hmong, African-American and Asian children.

Materials

The instrument used in this study was an experimenter-designed survey of ten questions. The questions were developed based on suggestions from professionals in the counseling field. Three of the questions addressed the child's perceptions of the extent of one or both of their parents' involvement in their education, and three other questions addressed how much they would like their parent or parents to be involved in different aspects of their education. These six questions were answered based on a Likert scale; 1 - never involvement, 2 - rarely involvement, 3 - sometimes involvement, 4 - a lot of involvement, and 5 - almost always involvement.

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Two additional questions were open-ended, asking what school-related activities the children do with their parent or parents and then what activities they would like to do that are school-related. Another question concerned overall parental involvement desired by the students, and the last

question concerned who they thought of the most as they were answering the questions on the survey.

Procedure

Principals from both elementary schools approved the study and granted permission to use their schools as the research site. The researcher distributed parental consent forms (see Appendix A, p.66) a week before the surveys were given. On November 9, 1999, and November 11, 1999, the survey (see Appendix B, p.69) concerning perceived and desired levels of parental involvement was distributed to fifth grade students at Sherman and Manz Elementary schools, respectively, after consent forms were collected.

Data Analysis

Analysis was done by cross-tabulating responses to questions to determine if there was a correspondence between perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in their child's education. Frequency counts were also conducted on the open-ended questions to

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determine the three most common responses to what the participants do and would like to do with their parent that is school-related.

Limitations

There were limitations to this research study. Most importantly was the limited size and age of the sample. The participants consisted of only fifth graders, located at only two elementary schools. Another limitation was that the

elementary schools were similar in geographic region, which does not norm the group to a vast population.

Results

Of the 98 fifth grade students that completed the survey, 68 (69%) thought of both their parents as they answered the survey. Twenty-one(21%) of the students thought of just their mothers, 8(8%) thought of just their fathers, and 1(1%) based their responses on another parental figure in their life.

Overall, the subjects strongly agreed that they want their parent or parents involved in their educational lives. Thirty-three(33.7%) students wanted their parents involved "almost always" in their education. Fortysix(46.9%) students wanted their parents involved "a lot", 17(17.3%) expect them to be involved "sometimes", and 2(2%) of students responded with wanting their parents "rarely" involved. There were no responses of "never" toward overall parental involvement.

The data collected from the six Likert scale questions on perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in their fifth grade child's education, showed that parental involvement is an important aspect in the lives of their children.

The reader will recall that participants responded to six questions based on a Likert scale from 1 -

5, with 1 meaning "never involvement" and 5 meaning "almost always involvement".

Parent-teacher Conference

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in parent-teacher conferences was 4.42, with a standard deviation of 1.06. The mean response to desired level of parents' involvement was 4.54, with a standard deviation of .78. Seventy-one(74%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Seventeen(18%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 9(9%) desired less involvement in the future.

Table 1 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in parent-teacher conferences.

Table 1

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Parent
Teacher Conferences

	<u>Desired Responses</u>					Total
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
<u>Perceived Responses</u>						
Never						
Frequency		2	1	1	1	5
Percent of Total		2.1%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	5.2%
Rarely						
Frequency			2			2
Percent of Total			2.1%			2.1%
Sometimes						
Frequency			4	2		6
Percent of Total			4.2%	2.1%		6.3%
A Lot						
Frequency			3	7	18	
Percent of Total			3.1%	7.3%		18.8%
Almost Always						
Frequency			1	5	59	65
Percent of Total			1.0%	5.2%	61.5%	67.7%
Total						
Frequency		2	11	16	67	96
Percent of Total		2.1%	11.5%	16.7%	69.8%	100%

Volunteering at School

The mean response to perceived level of the participants' parents' involvement in volunteering in school was 3.01, with a standard deviation of 1.00. The mean response to desired level of parents in volunteering was 3.93, with a standard deviation of .97. Twenty-eight (30%) remained with the same answer for both questions. Fifty-eight (63%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 6 (6%) would desire less involvement in the future.

Table 2 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in volunteering at school.

Table 2

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of
Volunteering

<u>Perceived Response</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					Total
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
Never						
Frequency	1		4	2		7
Percent of total	1.1%		4.3%	2.2%		7.6%
Rarely						
Frequency		1	4	8	5	18
Percent of Total		1.1%	4.3%	8.7%	5.4%	19.6%
Sometimes						
Frequency	1	1	14	15	9	40
Percent of Total	1.1%	1.1%	15.2%	16.3%	9.8%	43.5%
A Lot						
Frequency			4	6	11	21
Percent of Total			4.3%	6.5%	12%	22.8%
Almost Always						
Frequency					6	6
Percent of Total					6.5%	6.5%
Total						
Frequency	2	2	26	31	31	92
Percent of Total	2.2%	2.2%	28.3%	33.7%	33.7%	100%

Attends After-school Activities

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in attending after-school activities was 3.00, with a standard deviation of 1.40. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 3.88, with a standard deviation of 1.08. Thirty-nine(41%) of the participants stayed with the same answer for both questions. Fifty-two(55%) would like more involvement, and 2(2%) would desire less involvement in the future.

Table 3 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in attending after-school activities.

Table 3

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of After School Activities

	<u>Desired Responses</u>					Total
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
Perceived Responses						
Never						
Frequency	2	2	6	5	2	17
Percent of Total	2.1%	2.1%	6.4%	5.3%	2.1%	18.1%
Rarely						
Frequency	1	4	11	4	2	22
Percent of Total	1.1%	4.3%	11.7%	4.3%	2.1%	23.4%
Sometimes						
Frequency			7	7	3	17
Percent of Total			7.4%	7.4%	3.2%	18.1%
A Lot						
Frequency			1	9	10	20
Percent of Total			1.1%	9.6%	10.6%	21.3%
Almost Always						
Frequency				1	17	18
Percent of Total				1.1%	18.1%	19.1%
Total						
Frequency	3	6	25	26	34	94
Percent of Total	3.2%	6.4%	26.6%	27.7%	36.2%	100%

Likes and Values Your School

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in liking and valuing their school was 4.42, with a standard deviation of .83. The mean response for desired level of parents' involvement was 4.45, with a standard deviation of .82. Seventy-six (80%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Twelve (13%) would like more involvement, and 7 (7%) would desire less involvement from their parents in the future.

Table 4 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in valuing and liking their school

Table 4

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Liking
and Valuing Their School

		<u>Desired Responses</u>					
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	Total
<u>Perceived</u>							
<u>Responses</u>							
	Never						
	Frequency						
	Percent of Total						
	Rarely						
	Frequency		1	2			3
	Percent of Total		1.1%	2.1%			3.2%
	Sometimes						
	Frequency			6	5	1	12
	Percent of Total			6.3%	5.3%	1.1%	12.6%
	A Lot						
	Frequency		1	3	14	4	22
	Percent of Total		1.1%	3.2%	14.7%	4.2%	23.2%
	Almost Always						
	Frequency		1		2	55	58
	Percent of Total		1.1%		2.1%	57.9%	61.1%
	Total						
	Frequency		3	11	21	60	95
	Percent of Total		3.2%	11.6%	22.1%	63.2%	100%

Expectations of Grades

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in setting expectations for grades was 4.63, with a standard deviation of .62. The mean response for desired level of parents' involvement was 4.5, with a standard deviation of .77. Sixty-nine (72%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Eight (8%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 19 (20%) would desire less involvement in the future.

Table 5 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in setting expectations for grades.

Table 5

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Grade Expectations

		<u>Desired Responses</u>					
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	Total
<u>Perceived Responses</u>							
	Never						
	Frequency						
	Percent of Total						
	Rarely						
	Frequency						
	Percent of Total						
	Sometimes						
	Frequency		2	3	1	1	7
	Percent of Total		2.1%	3.1%	1.0%	1.0%	7.3%
	A Lot						
	Frequency		1	3	12	6	22
	Percent of Total		1.0%	3.1%	12.5%	6.3%	22.9%
	Almost Always						
	Frequency			1	12	54	67
	Percent of Total			1.0%	12.5%	56.3%	69.8%
	Total						
	Frequency		3	7	25	61	96
	Percent of Total		3.1%	7.3%	26.0%	63.5%	100%

Expectations of Behavior

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in setting expectations for behavior at school was 4.66, with a standard deviation of .68. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 4.48, with a standard deviation of .90. Seventy-five (79%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Four(4%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 14(15%) would like less involvement in the future.

Table 6 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in expectations set for behavior.

Table 6

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Behavior Expectations

		<u>Desired Responses</u>					
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	Total
<u>Perceived Responses</u>							
	Never						
	Frequency						
	Percent of Total						
	Rarely						
	Frequency	1		1			2
	Percent of Total	1.1%		1.1%			2.2%
	Sometimes						
	Frequency		1	3	1		5
	Percent of Total		1.1%	3.2%	1.1%		5.4%
	A Lot						
	Frequency	1		1	12	2	16
	Percent of Total	1.1%		1.1%	12.9%	2.2%	17.2%
	Almost Always						
	Frequency		1	3	6	60	70
	Percent of Total		1.1%	3.2%	6.5%	64.5%	75.3%
	Total						
	Frequency	2	2	8	19	62	93
	Percent of Total	2.2%	2.2%	8.6%	20.4%	66.7%	100%

Expectations with Social Activities

The mean response to perceived level of the participants' parents' involvement in setting expectations in social activities was 3.95, with a standard deviation of 1.01. The mean response to desired level of parental involvement was 4.06, with a standard deviation of 1.00. Sixty-four(68%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Nineteen(20%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 11(18%) would desire less involvement in the future with setting expectations with social activities.

Table 7 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in setting expectations with social activities.

Table 7

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Social Activity Expectations

Desired Responses

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	Total
<u>Perceived Responses</u>						
Never						
Frequency	2				1	3
Percent of Total	2.1%				1.1%	3.2%
Rarely						
Frequency		1	3			4
Percent of Total		1.1%	3.2%			4.3%
Sometimes						
Frequency		3	11	4	2	20
Percent of Total		3.2%	11.7%	4.3%	2.1%	21.3%
A Lot						
Frequency		1	1	24	9	35
Percent of Total		1.1%	1.1%	25.5%	9.6%	37.2%
Almost Always						
Frequency			2	4	26	32
Percent of Total			2.1%	4.3%	27.7%	34.0%
Total						
Frequency	2	5	17	32	38	94
Percent of Total	2.1%	5.3%	18.1%	34.0%	40.4%	100%

Homework

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in checking homework was 4.13, with a standard deviation of 1.00. The mean response to desired level of parental involvement was 4.32, with a standard deviation of .94. Sixty-four(67%) of the participants responded with the same answer for both questions. Twenty(21%) would like more involvement in the future, and 11(16%) would desire less involvement from parents with homework.

Table 8 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in homework.

Table 8

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels with
Homework

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Almost Always</u>	
Never						
Frequency						
Percent of Total						
Rarely						
Frequency		1	1	2	2	6
Percent of Total		1.1%	1.1%	2.1%	2.1%	6.3%
Sometimes						
Frequency	1	1	13	3	6	24
Percent of Total	1.1%	1.1%	13.7%	3.2%	6.3%	25.3%
A Lot						
Frequency			3	8	6	17
Percent of Total			3.2%	8.4%	6.3%	17.9%
Almost Always						
Frequency			2	4	42	48
Percent of Total			2.1%	4.2%	44.2%	50.5%
Total						
Frequency	1	2	19	17	56	95
Percent of Total	1.1%	2.1%	20.0%	17.9%	58.9%	100%

Eating Habits

The mean response to perceived level of parents' involvement in watching what the participants eat was 3.57, with a standard deviation score of 1.26. The mean response for desired level of parents' involvement was 3.27, with a standard deviation of 1.40. Forty-eight(52%) responded with the same answer for both questions. Twelve(13%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 32(35%) would like less involvement with their parents being involved with what they eat.

Table 9 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in their child's eating habits.

Table 9

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Eating Habits

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					Total
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
Never						
Frequency	7		1			8
Percent of Total	7.6%		1.1%			8.7%
Rarely						
Frequency	3	4			3	10
Percent of Total	3.3%	4.3%			3.3%	10.9%
Sometimes						
Frequency	2	8	10	3	1	24
Percent of Total	2.2%	8.7%	10.9%	3.3%	1.1%	26.1%
A Lot						
Frequency	1	2	4	12	4	23
Percent of Total	1.1%	2.2%	4.3%	13.0%	4.3%	25.0%
Almost Always						
Frequency	1	1	3	7	15	27
Percent of Total	1.1%	1.1%	3.3%	7.6%	16.3%	29.3%
Total						
Frequency	14	15	18	22	23	92
Percent of Total	15.2%	16.3%	19.6%	23.9%	25.0%	100%

Time You Get To Bed

The mean response to perceived level of parental involvement in watching what time their child gets to bed was 4.16, with a standard deviation score of .99. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 3.12, with a standard deviation of 1.29. Thirty-two(34%) of the participants responded to both questions with the same answer. Four(4%) would like more involvement, and 58(62%) would desire less involvement than what their parents currently are involved.

Table 10 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in monitoring bed times.

Table 10

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels for
Monitoring Bed Times

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Almost Always</u>	
Never						
Frequency	1					1
Percent of Total	1.1%					1.1%
Rarely						
Frequency	1	3	1	1		6
Percent of Total	1.1%	3.2%	1.1%	1.1%		6.4%
Sometimes						
Frequency	4	6	5			15
Percent of Total	4.3%	6.4%	5.3%			16.0%
A Lot						
Frequency	3	6	7	9	2	27
Percent of Total	3.2%	6.4%	7.4%	9.6%	2.1%	28.7%
Almost Always						
Frequency	4	3	11	13	14	45
Percent of Total	4.3%	3.2%	11.7%	13.8%	14.9%	47.9%
Total						
Frequency	13	18	24	23	16	94
Percent of Total	13.8%	19.1%	25.5%	24.5%	17.0%	100%

Choice of Clothing

The mean response to perceived level of parental involvement in choosing clothing was 2.94, with a standard deviation of 1.28. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 2.50, with a standard deviation of 1.32. Fifty(54%) responded with the same answer for both questions. Nine(10%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 33(36%) would desire less involvement in choosing their clothing.

Table 11 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in choosing clothing.

Table 11

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of
Choosing Clothing

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					<u>Total</u>
	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Almost Always</u>	
Never						
Frequency	11	1				12
Percent of Total	12.0%	1.1%				13.0%
Rarely						
Frequency	7	18	2		1	28
Percent of Total	7.6%	19.6%	2.2%		1.1%	30.4%
Sometimes						
Frequency	4	8	8	1	1	22
Percent of Total	4.3%	8.7%	8.7%	1.1%	1.1%	23.9%
A Lot						
Frequency	2	2	2	6	3	15
Percent of Total	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	6.5%	3.3%	16.3%
Almost Always						
Frequency		1	6	1	7	15
Percent of Total		1.1%	6.5%	1.1%	7.6%	16.3%
Total						
Frequency	24	30	18	8	12	92
Percent of Total	26.1%	32.6%	19.6%	8.7%	13.0%	100%

Television and Video Games

The mean response to perceived level of the parents' involvement in watching how much television and video games their children play was 3.53, with a standard deviation of 1.29. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 3.06, with a standard deviation of 1.26. Forty-nine(52%) of the participants responded to both questions with the same answer. Thirteen(14%) would like more involvement, and 32(34%) would like less involvement from their parents when monitoring how much television is watched and video games played.

Table 12 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in monitoring television and video games.

Table 12

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of
Television and Video Games

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					<u>Total</u>
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
Never						
Frequency	9					9
Percent of Total	9.6%					9.6%
Rarely						
Frequency		6	4	1		11
Percent of Total		6.4%	4.3%	1.1%		11.7%
Sometimes						
Frequency		3	13	4	3	23
Percent of Total		3.2%	13.8%	4.3%	3.2%	24.5%
A Lot						
Frequency	2	6	5	9	1	23
Percent of Total	2.1%	6.4%	5.3%	9.6%	1.1%	24.5%
Almost Always						
Frequency	1	4	8	3	12	28
Percent of Total	1.1%	4.3%	8.5%	3.2%	12.8%	29.8%
Total						
Frequency	12	19	30	17	16	94
Percent of Total	12.8%	20.2%	31.9%	18.1%	17.0%	100%

Choice of Friends

The mean response to perceived level of parental involvement in their child's choice of friends was 2.41, with a standard deviation of 1.34. The mean response for desired level of parental involvement was 2.35, with a standard deviation of 1.44. Sixty(64%) responded with the same answer to both questions. Fourteen(15%) would like more involvement from their parents, and 20(21%) would like less involvement when choosing their friends.

Table 13 shows the total frequencies and percentages of perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in choosing their friends.

Table 13

Comparisons Between Perceived and Desired Levels of Choice
Of Friends

<u>Perceived Responses</u>	<u>Desired Responses</u>					<u>Total</u>
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always	
Never						
Frequency	24	1	1	2		28
Percent of Total	25.5%	1.1%	1.1%	2.1%		29.8%
Rarely						
Frequency	11	15	5			31
Percent of Total	11.7%	16.0%	5.3%			33.0%
Sometimes						
Frequency	2	2	7	2	2	15
Percent of Total	2.1%	2.1%	7.4%	2.1%	2.1%	16.0%
A Lot						
Frequency	1	2		4	1	8
Percent of Total	1.1%	2.1%		4.3%	1.1%	8.5%
Almost Always						
Frequency			1	1	10	12
Percent of Total			1.1%	1.1%	10.6%	12.8%
Total						
Frequency	38	20	14	9	13	94
Percent of Total	40.4%	21.3%	14.9%	9.6%	13.8%	100%

Open-ended Questions

The responses to the open-ended questions of what activities the fifth grade students do with their parent or parents, and what they would like to do with them, varied in answers, but there were three activities that were identified the most.

Most Frequent Response

The most frequent response given by the participants to what school-related activity they do with their parent or parents was homework, with 52(53%) participants responding in this way. The most popular response given for what activity they would like to do with their parents was also homework, with 30(36%) participants responding in this way.

Second Most Frequent Response

The next most frequent response for what the participants do with their parents is school activities. School activities included plays, school parties, violin lessons, school club meetings, family fun night, and meetings through their CHAMPS(Champs Have And Model Positive Peer Skills) programs. Twenty-nine(28%) responded with this answer.

The second most frequent response for what the participants would like to do with their parents was also school activities, with 26(26%) responding in this way.

Third Most Frequent Response

Thirteen(13%) participants responded with parent-teacher conferences as the third most frequent activity they do with their parents. The third most frequent responses for what they would like to do with their parents was attending and watching their sporting events, such as practice and games. Seventeen(17%) responded with this activity.

Discussion

The present study examined whether there was a correspondence between perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in fifth graders' education. The results of this study showed a high correspondence between perceived and desired levels of involvement in different aspects of the participants' education. A small majority of the participants showed they desire less involvement from their parents in the personal and social aspects of their educational lives.

Six of the 13 questions, regarding academics, revealed that the participants desire the same level of involvement to continue in the various aspects of their education. Six questions about personal and social aspects of their lives showed that although the participants perceive a high level of parental involvement, they desired less involvement in the future. The last Likert scale question, about bed times, revealed that overall involvement was not present or desired in the future.

Aspects that Desire More Involvement

The question pertaining to parent-teacher conferences, after-school activities, liking and valuing their school,

and homework, were rated very high in terms of liking their parents' present level of involvement.

A possible reason for desiring a high amount of involvement in these areas of their education is that the involvement is active and visible for the students. Just as parents have been involved in their child's development before entering school, they should remain active once their child starts attending school every day.

Dye(1989) found that parents who were actively involved in school programs were effective in enhancing their children's academic lives. Dye also found that parental involvement was more active at the elementary level. Parents of elementary school students attend more open houses, school programs, parent-teacher conferences, and PTA meetings. The author also reports that when there is more communication between the parents and their child's classroom teacher, they are more likely to review their child's homework and question them about school activities at this age level.

Desire Less Involvement

The responses regarding eating habits, choice of clothing, choice of friends, how much television and video

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games watched, and expectations set for grades and behavior show that although a slight majority of the participants perceive a high level of involvement from their parents, most would like less parental involvement in the future.

A possible reason for this finding is a growing need of independence in their personal lives. At this age, children are beginning to discover who they are, where they fit in, and what their interests are. There is a need to explore these individual aspects about themselves with less influence and direction from their parents.

Many parents have an instinctual need to want to protect their children from harm that may come their child's way. Realistically, parents cannot protect their children from everything, but when parents instill confidence and strong values in their children, then they have influenced their children to make the right decisions in tough situations.

Research does not support the idea of less parental involvement in their children's education or personal and social lives. Although children may desire less involvement in the latter two areas, they need their parents' support in teaching them how to make positive and independent choices that will benefit them in their personal lives.

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A study by Vernberg, Beery, Ewell, and Absender (1993) found that the more parents were involved in the formation of their children's friendships, the greater the companionship and intimacy the children had with their new friends. Active parent engagement in the child's social world also seemed particularly helpful in forming positive and safe relationships.

One study, by Keith (1992), supports the idea that the results of parental monitoring have little effect on children's school performance. The author researched the effects of television on children's production at home. Interestingly, the extent of parental monitoring of children's television intake showed no effect on their children's homework scores and grades. Yet, the author found that parental aspirations towards their children's overall educational lives had a positive effect on overall achievement in school, both academically and behaviorally.

Although less involvement is desired in the future, parental involvement remains an important aspect in the social and personal lives of children. If the parent is involved and aware, the child usually will behave and make good choices. Keith (1992) also found that the students' perceptions of parental involvement were more important

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than the parents' reports of participation. This shows how much children are aware of and value the amount of involvement their parents have in their lives, especially in their personal lives.

Overall No Involvement Item

The participants perceived a low level of involvement from their parents in monitoring the time they get to bed, and desire the level of involvement to remain at a low level.

Many reasons may exist for this aspect of children's lives to have little involvement from parents. One reason may be because children are getting to bed later than their parents. Another possibility is that children desire less sleep than they realize their bodies actually need.

Carskadon(1990) conducted a study on adolescents' sleep and wake patterns. While laboratory test have shown that adolescents do not have a reduced need for sleep, many adolescents decrease their sleep as a result of diminishing parental involvement at bedtime, with setting late curfews, and school schedules. Such things as daytime sleepiness and inability to concentrate during class are some results of little parental involvement in monitoring their child's bedtime.

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Although children may have a need to start setting their own schedules, start making their own decisions, and managing their own time usage, parents hold a strong sense of balance and direction in the lives of their children, at school and in their social worlds.

Most Popular Activity

Homework was the most popular response given to the open-ended questions of what school-related activity they mostly do and would like to do with one or both of their parents.

At this age level, students are beginning to receive more homework to take home and complete. There are often

questions related to their homework; therefore, having a support system at home can provide security for doing homework correctly. There also may come a feeling of success for finishing it on their own, with moderate help from a parent.

A study by Balli (1998) showed that a significant number of sixth graders believe they do better in school when their parents help them with homework. A child's success in school can be due to their competitiveness or learning capabilities, even if their parents are not involved. If the child is struggling with their homework and in overall

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academics, parental support and willingness to help with school work can be the key to getting the child back on track.

Second Most Popular Activity

School-related activities was the next most popular response to what school-related activities the participants do and would like to do with their parents. Parents that are involved in activities through school, other than those related directly to school work, communicate their interests and support in the school as a whole.

Parents should know what goes on in their child's school, which makes parent participation and volunteering so valuable. Volunteering in school activities with their child shows an active interest in what their child likes and is proud of. Active involvement can contribute to children's

sense of who they are and increase their overall sense of pride in their school.

Third Most Popular Activity

Parent-teacher conferences was the third most popular activity the participants said they do with their parents. Parent-teacher conferences are the main way for teachers to communicate with the students' parents about their status in the school. This is also another visible and active way

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for the child to see their parents' interests and concerns about their education.

When parents do not attend these conferences, it relays a message to their child that their grades and overall performance in school are not an important part of their life. Children need to know that their parents perceive school as being important enough for them to become involved.

The participants responded with having their parents attend their sporting events and practices as the third most popular activity they would like to do with their parents. Researchers have explored parental involvement in the sports clubs of their children and the children's degree of satisfaction with the way in which the parents are involved.

A study by Deknop, Buisman, DeHaan, Van Iersel, Horvers, and Vloet (1998) found the majority of children were not pleased with the amount of parental involvement in the sporting club. This suggests that parental support and

involvement in their child's sporting activities can increase not only the enjoyment of the sport for the child, but the enjoyment of spending quality time with their parents.

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The results of this study showed that fifth graders hold a strong desire for their parents' involvement in their education. When parents and their children work together, it creates a relationship for the child to achieve success in their academic lives.

The results from this study also showed that although the participants perceived a high level of involvement in their social and personal lives, they would desire less involvement in the future.

For some children, an over-dependent relationship with their parents may be detrimental to their development of individuality and independence. If their parent or parents are overly involved in their child's personal life, the child may not develop the ability to experience things by themselves. Being able to create one's own destiny by making choices based on instilled parental values, produces a proud and strong-willed child. In this sample, the majority of the participants reported high consistency between the actual level of parental involvement and their desired level of involvement from their parents on this important issue.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a high correspondence between perceived and desired levels of parental involvement in their children's education. The participants were 98 fifth graders from Sherman and Manz Elementary Schools in the Eau Claire Area School District in the fall term of 1999. Each participant completed a 10-item survey, in which the mean scores, frequencies, and percentages were calculated, scored, and compared to each other.

Overall, the mean scores showed a high correspondence between perceived and desired levels of parental involvement. This shows that the participants would like their parents' involvement in their education to remain the same as it currently is. They would like less involvement from their parents in the future in certain areas in the participants' social world.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study show that parental involvement is an essential ingredient for an optimal educational experience. It also showed that at this age level, the children are beginning to desire less

involvement in their personal lives, and desire more independence in making personal choices.

Even though this sample was small, the results can be beneficial for parents and children to communicate each others' needs and to understand each others' perspectives. Represented in this study was just a small section of the entire school-age population; many others may hold views that are similar or different from those found in this study.

Recommendations

Although the needs and desires of children are important, comparing the parents' views to their child's on parental involvement would be beneficial to understanding both sides and views of the relationship. Another recommendation for future research is to focus on the differences between males and females, and also their levels of self-esteem in relation to their views of parental involvement in their education. A third recommendation is further explorations of comparisons between the students' educational lives and their personal and social lives. Finally, a longitudinal study could focus on whether their perceptions and desires of parental

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involvement change over time from middle school through high school.

Parents are their children's most important teachers and children's ideas about education begin with them. Parents bear the responsibility to participate actively in

their children's education. Parents and children need to maintain a supportive and positive partnership that helps influence each other to create a successful and fulfilling life for one another.

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APPENDIX A: Parental Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Angela Cerni. I am a practicum student in the Guidance and Counseling Master's program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, working with Rich Boardman, the school counselor at Sherman Elementary. Your fifth grade child has an opportunity to take part in a study I am conducting for my thesis about parental involvement in their education. Questions will concern the perceptions your child has of their parent(s) involvement, and the level of involvement they would like from their parent(s) in different areas of their education. This information will

help counselors, teachers. And parents to understand children's ideas about integrating their growing sense of personal responsibility with their parents' guidance and support. Your child's participation is strictly voluntary and any information collected from your child is anonymous and cannot be traced back to your child in any way. Your child also has the right to discontinue participation at any time during the survey without question.

A 10-item survey will be handed out after a brief explanation to the class about the study's purpose and discussing any questions they might have about it. I will

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be available to further discuss this topic with you or your child if either of you have questions they might have about it. I will be available to further discuss this topic with you or your child if either of you have questions about the study. You can reach me at Sherman Elementary School at 839-2847, or my advisor, Helen Swanson at (715) 232-2784. The principal has read the survey and has fully approved this project.

Please check yes at the bottom of this letter if you will allow your child to participate in this study, or check no if you do not want them to participate. Once you have checked yes or no, please sign at the bottom of this letter and return it to school with your child and hand in to their teacher by:

Friday, November 5, 1999

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!

Sincerely,

Angela Cerni (Researcher)

Helen Swanson (Department of Psychology, UW-Stout)

Jackie Belka and Sue Fitzsimons (Principal)

YES_____ I will allow my child to participate in the study

NO_____ I will not allow my child to participate in the
study

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Child's Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX B:

Fifth Grade Survey

The following survey will ask you questions about parental involvement in your education. Students who did not return a signed form from their parents saying that they were allowed to complete the survey, will sit quietly at their desk and read or do school work until the survey is over.

Please rate each of the 10 questions based on either the involvement of your mother, your father, both of your parents, or an other parental figure that is involved in your school life. The last question on the survey asks who you thought of most while you were answering the questions.

There are two questions paired together that list the same items, but ask to different things. The first question asks how much you think your parent(s) or other is involved in your education, while the second question asks how much you would like them involved. Please read the questions carefully as you complete the survey.

You will rate your answer on a 1 - 5 scale, where 1 means there is no involvement, 2 - there is rarely involvement, 3 - sometimes, 4 - a lot, and 5 - which means almost always involvement.

Before you begin, please check below whether you are male or female, and then write in how old you are.

When you have completed the survey, please turn it over and sit quietly at your seat until all the surveys have been collected. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Female_____

Male_____

Age_____

1-Never 2-Rarely 3-Sometimes 4-A Lot 5-Almost Always

1. How much are one or both of your parent(s) involved in:

Parent-teacher Conferences? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Volunteering? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

(field trips, school parties)

Attends after school activities? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

(sports, plays)

Likes and values your school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

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2. How much would you like one or both of your parent(s) involved in:

Parent-teacher conferences? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Volunteering? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

(field trips, school parties)

Attends after school activities? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
(sports, plays)

Likes and values your school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

3. To what extent do one or both of your parent(s) set expectations for you with:

Grades? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Behavior in school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Social activities through school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
(clubs, sports)

4. To what extent would you like one or both of your parent(s) to set expectations for you with:

Grades? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Behavior in school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Social activities through school? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

5. How much do one or both of your parent(s) get involved with:

Your homework? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Your eating habits? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

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The time you get to bed? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Your choice of clothing? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Amount of TV/video games watched? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Your choice of friends? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

6. How much would you like one or both of your parent(s) involved with:

Your homework? Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

Your eating habits?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
The time you get to bed?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
Your choice of clothing?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
Amount of TV/video games watched?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always
Your choice of friends?	Never	1	2	3	4	5	Always

7. What school-related things do you do together with one or both of your parent(s)?

8. What school-related things would you like to do with one or both of your parent(s)?

9. Overall, how much would you like one or both of your parent(s) to be involved with your school life?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	A Lot	Almost Always

10. As you answered the earlier 9 questions, were you thinking mostly of: **Circle One**

Your mother?

Your father?

Both parents?

Other?

