FAMILIES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES SUPPORTING

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This research addressed the problem that children who live in low-income or poverty situations are exposed to numerous risk factors that contribute to their poor performance in school. Due to this exposure to poverty, families living with limited resources may not be aware of how to give their children access to a future with the most potential. Two surveys were given to families with children in kindergarten at four Title I schools in central Montana. The surveys collected demographic information, open ended response to questions related to parent support for early childhood learning, and ranking scales determining the frequency with which children participated in various academic and non-academic activities with their parents. Ranking scales were also used to quantify parents' understanding of the school system, their involvement with the public school, participation in Parent Teacher Association, and what areas of parent involvement they wish to learn more about. This research indicated that parents with limited resources have been, and continue to be supportive of early education through the use of preschool and interacting with their children in academic activities. They have expressed interest in learning about free community events and youth sporting events. Parents in this study prefer methods of passive communication such as newsletters and pamphlets when learning about something new. Limited resource parents indicated that they understand the learning community and are involved in their child's education, but they are less involved in the PTA and helping in the classroom than non-limited resource parents. To support learning and academic growth, parents with limited resources are reading, helping with homework, and playing educational games with their children. This research did not indicate any barriers preventing parents from being more involved in the learning community. Parents with limited resources are supportive of early education, but there are still opportunities to get them more involved in their child's education.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Problem Statement

According to recent brain development research by Hertert and Teague (2003), "A child's environment and experience in [the] five preschool years are important in laying the groundwork for future learning" (p. 10). Unfortunately, many families live in situations that can cause a strain on their ability to provide a nurturing and enriching environment. Hertert and Teague (2003) state that "[p]overty is the single best explanation research has found for why children differ in ways that affect school performance, both before they enter school and once they are enrolled" (p.3).

The problem this research will address is that children who live in low-income or poverty situations are exposed to numerous risk factors that contribute to their poor performance in school (Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009; Hertert & Teague, 2003). Due to this exposure to poverty, families living with limited resources may not be aware of how to give their children access to a future with the most potential (Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, & Eggers-Pierola, 1995; Lott, 2001; Hertert & Teague, 2003).

Families with limited resources, including those affected by financial hardship, will likely struggle with social and psychological problems. The problems often lead to environments that lack not only physical amenities, but may also involve stress upon family relationships (Helmich, 1985; Moore et al., 2009; Jensen, 2009). Commonly, these situations are complicated by single parent households, parents with limited post-

high school education, "unemployment, substandard housing, and limited financial resources" (Helmich, 1985, p. 1). Children can be deprived on a physical, social, and emotional level (Hertert & Teague, 2003). Even before birth, the mother may not have adequate health care that could be followed later with a lack of proper medical care and immunizations. The family may also struggle with malnutrition (Helmich, 1985).

The situation in which these children live makes them vulnerable for starting school at a disadvantage. Klein and Knitzer (2007) found that for children living in low-income situations, average cognitive scores before entering kindergarten will be 60% behind their peers in the highest socioeconomic status. According to Klein and Knitzer (2007), at four years of age, children of limited resources are likely to be behind what is normal for their age by about 18 months. By third grade, children from low-income families will have one-third the vocabulary of their middle class peers who have well-educated parents (Klein & Knitzer, 2007).

According to Hertert and Teague (2003), cognitive development may be compromised because children are not read or sung to, and their lack of exposure to written and oral language makes the acquisition of literacy skills difficult later in school. Helmich (1985) found that due to the limited funds of families in this situation, enrichment opportunities (i.e. trips to the museum, zoo, art exhibits, bookstore, etc) are also limited, which prohibits children from further experiences in which they can learn.

Parents have dreams and aspirations for their children's future (Bettler, Burns, & Strother, 2005; Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Lott, 2001). Those in low income situations may not be aware of how to give their children access to a future with the most

potential (Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, & Eggers-Pierola, 1995; Lott, 2001; Hertert &

Teague, 2003). According to Hertert and Teague (2003), parents may also not realize

how important the first five to six years of life are in determining academic success and

building a solid foundation for students to continue learning. It is crucial that parents

become knowledgeable of their role as their child's first teacher, and the ones who will

spend the most time with the child. When educating parents, information needs to be

shared not just on developmental stages and how to engage with the child, but on how to

access resources such as financial support, health care, support groups, and child care

(Keller & McDade, 2000; Hertert & Teague, 2003; Bettler et al., 2005).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine how families with limited

resources are supportive in the early education of their children, and what can be done to

inform and improve this parental involvement. As educators, it is important to

understand how parents with limited resources understand and provide learning

opportunities for their children. Parents are influential in the lives and education of their

children. It is important that parents are aware of not just the enormity of their role as

parents, but also how to make the most of the early learning opportunities for their young

children.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions:

- To what extent are parents interested in learning about how they can support early childhood learning?

- What is the most effective method for sharing new information with parents?

- How does the extent to which parents understand the school environment and their involvement in the learning community differ between limited resource and non-limited resource families?

- What activities are parents doing with their young children to provide a supportive early educational environment?

- What are barriers that affect parents' current participation?

Limitations

No data was collected or examined in relation to student achievement or performance. This study was limited in that it only focused on the parents from one city with children in kindergarten. For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that there are known activities that will enrich early learning. It was also assumed that both the home environment and parental knowledge have influences on well-being and child learning. The assumption was also made that parents have some understanding about what constitutes a nurturing educational environment.

Definitions

The participants of this study were limited to the parents of students enrolled in kindergarten at four different Title I schools in central Montana. Parents were asked to complete a survey with both open-ended and close-ended questions. In this study, the term *Title I* refers to schools with a high percentage of children from low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the terms parent(s), early childhood education, supportive, nurturing environment, and limited resources have been defined by the researcher. The term *parent(s)* refers to the legal guardian(s) of the child. *Early childhood education* refers to the opportunities for learning and instruction provided to the child between the ages of zero and six. The term *supportive* is somewhat subjective, but for the purposes of this study, it is defined as parents who spend time participating in activities for and/or with their child to enhance educational learning. A *nurturing environment* is a place where children can thrive because their basic needs are met; they are safe, encouraged, and supported. *Limited resources* is used to describe families dealing with two or more of the following issues: limited post-high school education, those from economically disadvantaged situations as indicated by gross income and students receiving free or reduced lunch, as well as those from single caretaker households. Data determining if a family has limited resources was collected on one of the parent surveys.

Importance of Study

This study is important because it provides information on how parents with limited resources understand early parental involvement in a child's education. It also could provide insight into areas that have not yet been addressed with parents, indicating that more instruction is needed. This study could help build awareness for parents, teachers, and students; despite living with limited resources, each child can learn and be supported in their learning throughout the duration of their schooling experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will cover the following areas as it pertains to the research questions: (a) the relationship between families with limited resources and early childhood development, (b) the relationship between families and student success, and (c) factors that affect parent participation.

Families with Limited Resources and Early Childhood Development

Even after accounting for other differences, including duration of schooling for mothers, ethnicity, and family structure, research suggests that family income shows a powerful correlation with children's cognitive development and behavior (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998; Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, & Eggers-Pierola, 1995). According to Moore, Redd, Burkhauser, Mbwana, and Collins, (2009), the effects of poverty on children typically are associated with negative academic outcomes. Moore et al. (2009) found that children may experience behavior problems including disobedience, impulsivity, adverse peer relations, and lower self-esteem. They may also face academic issues including poor performance on tests, low grades, and lower reading scores (Moore et al., 2009).

In their studies, Moore et al. (2009) and Jensen (2009) identified several factors that contribute to the effect of poverty on children. Moore et al. (2009) and Jensen (2009) found that in many cases, families with low-incomes are single parent households. This can lead to an increase in parental stress and less adult supervision. Another factor is mobility and unstable home lives. According to Moore et al. (2009), if families cannot

afford housing or cannot find housing that is available in an adequate location, children will move from place to place, often staying in less than satisfactory housing, living with relatives, or staying in shelters. In addition to unstable living conditions, children living with limited resources often experience less exposure to positive opportunities in the community, and are faced with an increase in exposure to violence, drugs, and alcohol abuse (Moore et al., 2009; Jensen, 2009).

Burchinal, Kainz, Cai, Tout, Zaslow, Martinez-Beck, & Rathgeb, (2009) emphasized that, "the quality of early care and education…is related to children's academic, cognitive, language, and social skills" (p. 3). There are many programs meant to help benefit children in their early education. One such program is Head Start. This program is specifically aimed at serving families with limited resources (Keller & McDade, 2000). Parents of Head Start students are taught how to set goals and create a nurturing environment. These goals can lead to academic success (Bettler, Burns, & Strother, 2005).

When researching low-income mothers and "appropriate practices" for preparing young children for school, Holloway et al., (1995) identified some interesting perspectives. The authors found that most mothers expected the child care providers to teach using didactic lessons aimed at teaching literacy and number sense. Holloway et al. (2009) found that the mothers did not believe that play was related to learning and felt that if their child was unsuccessful in school it was due to the lack of instruction the children received from the childcare providers. Their research also indicated that some mothers felt that since they were not educated in how to teach children, it was not their

responsibility to help teach their child, but the sole responsibility of the teachers and the school. However, the authors found that the mothers were receptive to the suggestions given by professionals in regard to home support for learning. According to the research, the best approach to giving these suggestions was found to be an explicit model, where teachers could show and explain specific strategies to use at home (Holloway et al., 2009).

<div align="center">Family Influence on Student Success</div>

Parents are a resource for their children and for the teachers that work with them. According to some research, most parents have high aspirations for their children (Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Gutman & McLoyd 2000). They want their children to follow a good path by living a moral life. They envision their children finishing school and getting a job. However, many parents "lack sufficient knowledge of the U.S. schools and academic subjects to guide their children" (Cooper et al., 2005, p. 417).   Bettler et al.(2005), also had similar findings noting that, "parents' aspirations for their children may be a crucial prerequisite for parent involvement" and that "raising parents' expectations for their children can have long term implications, leading to stronger academic strivings among Head Start children" (p. 88).

There are numerous reasons to use parents in the education of children, especially those from low-income situations. In addition to raising parent expectations for their students, parents who are involved in the learning process are more likely to create a home environment that is conducive to learning. Parents also show improvements in

communication with the school and consistency among home and school expectations (Dessoff, 2009; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Research also suggests that successful programs that promote parent involvement have seen an increase in "students' reading skills and test scores, improve[d] school attendance, and engage[d] parents of different cultures who might be unfamiliar with and intimidated by how U.S. schools function" (Dessoff, 2009, p. 1).

In 1994, Henderson and Berla (1994) completed a report focused on the influence of family on student achievement. The report reviewed and summarized 66 studies, reviews, reports, analyses, and books. The authors report addressed the range of all student age levels from early childhood through high school. The major consensus of the report was that no matter what the age of the child, student achievement is higher when the family is actively involved.   Henderson and Berla (1994) stated:

The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning

2. Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers

3. Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (p.15)

Gutman and McLoyd (2000) did a study on African-American families living in poverty. The researchers found that high achieving teenage students have committed parents who use specific strategies to help with homework. Parents engage in deliberate

educational activities at home, have discussions about goals and future plans with their child, and initiate contact with the school to assess student progress and behavior. The authors reported that these dedicated parents also manage student involvement in community activities including sports, academic programs, outdoor activities, and religious involvement (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

These discoveries support the notion that parental support is beneficial to a student's academic achievement. A need arises from these discoveries to create surveys and assessments for parents of younger students. Do parents of young students know their importance in strengthening academic achievement through being involved? What are they doing to build this positive environment at home and in the community?

Cooper et al. (2005) state, "The most successful students build links across their families, schools, peers, and communities, who in turn support students' pathways" (p. 407). For students to achieve in an academic setting, they need a strong partnership. If this partnership is not respected, students could be negatively impacted (Cooper et al., 2005; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). Likewise, students need their parents' participation and support; those who receive it show a positive impact on their academic achievement (Ford, 2009; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). Cooper et al. (2005) and Gutman & McLoyd (2000) both found that when the goals of the school and the home differ, student development is impeded. Hollowy et al. (1995) emphasized that it is important that educators strive to understand the values students are taught at home and make attempts to eliminate discontinuities by embracing cultural differences and respecting the partnership with the home.

One way to involve parents is by acknowledging the diversity and expertise of the parents. Regardless of income status, parents have skills and knowledge on a vast range of subjects that can be utilized in the classroom. This will help build respect between parents and teachers. Also, students will see a connection between their home life, school, and their parents (Cooper et al., 2005). One area of parent knowledge identified by Dickinson and DeTemple (1998) is the ability of parents to accurately describe preschool aged children's' early literacy capabilities. In their study, parents were asked about the progress they felt their young child was making in regard to literacy development and how successful parents thought their child would be in kindergarten and first grade. The authors found that these predictions of parents proved to be accurate based on later kindergarten and first grade assessments (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). Other ways to involve parents would be to invite them to participate in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and volunteering at the school (Gutman & McLoyd 2000; Lott, 2001).

Factors that Affect Parent Participation

While parent involvement is important to students' academic achievement, there are some challenges associated with getting parents involved. These can include time constraints, a parent's negative past experience in school, or feelings of inadequacy due to lack of education (Finders & Lewis, 1994 as cited by Ford, 2009; Jensen, 2009). Gutman and McLoyd (2000) and Jensen (2009) both stated that one natural barrier for those living in a low-income situation is being a single parent who works full time. Other

barriers include trying to get a job, caring for the kids, or attending school (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Jensen, 2009).

According to both Better et al. (2005) and Lott (2001), many parents are reluctant to become involved at school due to the differences in socio-economic status (SES) between educators and themselves. Lower income parents feel that there are stereotypes held by middle-class educators implying a lack of ability to parent. Keller and McDade (2000) found in their research, that limited resource parents are less likely to seek out help because they do not trust those who provide services and support. The attitude of the parents is that, "there are few, if any, sources of help and advice that are accessible, reliable and non-threatening" (p. 309). The authors stated, parents with limited resources are, "reluctant to admit they need help because culture assumes that they will" (p. 304). Lott (2001) found that parents also shared that they did not know how to help or what questions to ask.

Teachers and their schools can help overcome these barriers by reaching out to the parents. The focus needs to be on helping parents and students achieve the same goals, not on changing parenting styles (Lott, 2001; Holloway et al., 1995). Encouragement and support needs to be provided to families in a way that does not convey bias or superiority. By seeking parental input, valuable partnerships can be built. Parents are the best resource when it comes to getting to know students and understanding their abilities (Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998). By allowing parents to be a resource in informing staff members about the child, parents feel appreciated and valuable.

Gutman and McLoyd (2000) found that coping with stress brought on by living with limited resources is burdensome and can be defeating. However, other research indicated that parents need to work with their students to create goals or understand the future goals of their children as this will influence how they will participate in and support education (Henderson & Berla 1994; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Bettler et al., 2005). Children need to be involved in community activities to strengthen their social values, positive peer relations, and academic achievement. Helping children get involved in community activities is not an easy task for any parent, but becomes increasingly difficult if there is no transportation or funding allowing children to participate in these activities. Nevertheless, parents need to be resourceful and motivated to find community events and seek out resources to support student success (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

This study examined how parents with limited resources support their child's learning. The families in this study were asked to share what they did to provide support for learning with their young children, and sought to identify areas of interest in which parents could receive further education. Despite having limited resources, these families can, and in some cases do have a positive impact on their child's learning. The effects of limited resources can be overcome if parents become involved in the education process and interact with their children.

In this study, parents were asked about their feelings, attitudes and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty, and the school in general. Questions were asked to determine how involved parents are in the school through both volunteering in the classroom and participating in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). They were also asked to determine how much time they spent with their child engaging in various activities that were both academic and non-academic. Finally, parents were asked to share their opinions on help-seeking strategies in regards to parenting.

To address how parents are involved in their child's learning and what factors affected parent participation, parents were asked to determine the frequency with which their children participated in various activities that were educational, entertaining, or meant to build social skills. Parents were also asked to share short term and long term goals that they have for their child. Lastly, parents were asked to identify any barriers that might affect their participation in their child's schooling.

Method

Specifically, this descriptive study examined how parents with limited resources are involved in the early education of their young children. The research was conducted to identify areas of potential educational interest for the parents. In order to conduct this descriptive study, a quantitative approach was used and two ranking scale surveys with demographic questions were the methods through which the data was collected. The quantitative approach is more suitable for this study since responses were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This approach examined the relationship between parents with limited resources and their willingness to be involved in the early education of their children, if given support and instruction on how to be more involved.

Setting

The study was completed using parents of students in kindergarten classes from four schools in central Montana. The schools ranged in size from approximately 200 to 460 students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Class sizes for the kindergarten classes participating in the survey ranged from 16 to 24 students. These schools are identified as Title I schools because approximately 60% or more of the students receive free and/or reduced lunch as indicated by data collected and shared by the school district. These schools were selected because many of the families would be considered families of limited resources based on their yearly income and housing status.

Sample

Twelve kindergarten teachers at Title I schools were contacted by the researcher

and asked to participate in the study. Eight teachers agreed to send home surveys to 160

parents of students currently enrolled in kindergarten in central Montana. These families

were selected as part of a convenience sample. This sample represents families with

limited resources living in urban central Montana. Due to the nature of the questions in

regards to early childhood learning, parents with older students were considered to be too

far removed from the experience and therefore were not included in the sample. Due to

the time restrictions on the research and the researcher's access to the families, parents of

preschool aged children were not contacted.

Instrumentation

Parents were asked to complete two surveys. The first survey, Parent Support of

Early Learning (Appendix B), was used to determine the activities parents engage in with

their child. This survey has five open-ended response questions related to parent support

for early childhood learning and twenty-four ranking scale questions to determine the

frequency with which families are engaged in various activities. The second survey,

Parent Involvement (Appendix C), asked about parents' understanding of the school

system, their involvement with the public school, participation in Parent Teacher

Association (PTA), and what areas of parent involvement they wish to learn more about.

There are a total of forty-one questions, with seven of these questions asking about

demographics. Each survey took about 15 minutes to complete.

To increase validity, the process for administering the surveys was standardized. All teachers distributed surveys to students on the same day. Surveys went home with envelopes to increase privacy and returned surveys were collected in manila envelopes returned to the researcher at the conclusion of the survey period. Another step taken to increase validity was to administer the surveys to a pilot group of eighteen families in March 2010. After interpreting the results of the data, the researcher added additional questions to the Parent Involvement survey. In the original study, parents had a positive response to being involved in school and expressed feeling welcome at the school. However, parents also, indicated that they were not involved in PTA, and did not want information on becoming involved. The additional questions focused on participation in PTA. Also, the researcher increased the sample size to get a more representative sample. There is a potential issue with reliability and validity since the researcher created the surveys.

Data Collection Procedures

Twelve kindergarten teachers working at Title I schools were contacted by the researcher via e-mail. Teachers were asked if they were willing to participate in the study by sending surveys home with their students, collecting the returned surveys and returning them to the researcher. Eight teachers agreed to participate from four different schools. The researcher delivered surveys to each teacher with directions for distribution, follow up, and how to return the surveys. Two surveys were given to each student for a parent to complete. To guarantee confidentiality, an envelope was attached to the surveys and no identifying information was collected.

Data was collected during September 2010. Participants did not share names, addresses, phone numbers, or other contact information. The survey was strictly confidential and anonymous. Surveys were returned in plain white envelopes and then all surveys from each school were returned to the researcher in a manila envelope. Therefore, in no way can the data be connected to the individual participants. These surveys were sent home with each child in their homework envelope in the middle of the week on Wednesday. Parents could either mail their responses back to the school or send them to school with their child to be submitted into a confidential envelope marked 'Parent Surveys.' Parents were encouraged to return the survey even if they selected not to complete the questions. This was to ensure that the researcher did not send subsequent surveys to the family to complete. The survey indicated that parents needed to return both surveys by the end of the following week. If surveys had not been returned, teachers were asked to send home a second round of surveys.

Data Analysis

Surveys were used to collect data by Keller and McDade (2000) and Dickinson and DeTemple (1998). Using questions found in those two studies as well as open-ended response questions from Gutman and McLoyd's (2000) research, scale response survey questions were used to collect data. To analyze this study, descriptive statistics were conducted using PASW (SPSS, 2009). Specifically, the research looked at the frequency through which families engaged in various activities. The responses to questions relating to areas of further educational interest were ranked as were responses to how parents

wanted to receive that information. Also, the demographic data was used to compare

families with limited resources to those not identified as having limited resources.

PASW 18.0 (SPSS, 2009) was also used to conduct an independent samples t-test to

examine if any differences existed on how parents were answering the items based on

limited resources versus non-limited resources. Independent sample t-tests were used to

compare the mean scores of two independently sampled groups (Garson, 2008).

<div align="center">Validity</div>

A potential issue of validity is the fact that the survey was given to some parents

who are acquainted with the researcher. Also, all the parents were informed that they

were participating in a research study. Responses may have been altered for a variety of

reasons including, portraying their families in a more positive light, 'impressing" the

teacher to avoid judgment, or to provide answers they expect the researcher to want to

find. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) point out that "[t]he researcher can never be sure

that individuals are expressing their true attitudes, interests, values or personalities"

(p.153). To help overcome this potential problem, participants responses were

anonymous (Gay et al., 2009). Parents were assured that their responses were

confidential and the researcher did not make any judgments based on the results.

FINDINGS

Demographics

In the survey, 82 of the 160 families solicited for their participation responded. Of these 82 families, 58 were identified as limited resources because they indicated they were dealing with two or more of the following issues: limited post-high school education, those from economically disadvantaged situations as indicated by gross income and students receiving free or reduced lunch, as well as those from single caretaker households.

When asked about the highest education completed by the parents, responses indicated that seven parents had some high school, 33 parents had a high school diploma or passed the General Educational Development (GED) test, two parents had a technical or vocational license, three parents had their associate's degree, one parent had a Master's degree, and twelve parents had some college education. Approximately 57% of the families reported an annual income less than $21,000, 35% reported an annual income ranging from $21,000-$50,000, 5% reported annual incomes of $50,001-$75,000, and 3% of the respondents gave no response to the question. Of the 58 families identified as limited resources, 44 families qualified for free lunch, 11 families qualified for reduced priced lunches, and 3 families did not qualify for free or reduced lunch. There were 20 families who were single parent households, six families whose parents were divorced, 30 families whose parents were married, and two participants did not respond to the question.

Early Support for Learning and Educational Goals

Most parents (83%) indicated that their child had been enrolled in preschool, Head Start, daycare, or other programs meant to educate children before entering kindergarten. For those who had attended programs prior to attending kindergarten, the hours of attendance ranged from 2.5-9 hours with 5.5 hours being the average daily attendance. The mode number of days to attend preschool was five. The mode number of years of preschool attendance was one year.

In short response questions, parents were asked about pre-kindergarten preparation. A common theme noted in parent responses was the trend to read with the child, practice the alphabet and numbers, along with writing the child's name. Additional skills practiced included: coloring, conversing, practicing skills with workbooks and flashcards, and playing games. Only three respondents left this question blank.

Parents were asked to share their short term learning goals for their child. Responses to this question varied as some parents indicated wanting their child to learn their letters, numbers and how to write their name, while others wanted their child to graduate high school, expand interests, and become independent. Most frequent responses, 88% of all parents, were for the child to learn basic reading, writing, and math skills appropriate for their grade level.

Long term learning goals presented a large range of responses as well. Some parents responded with goals of learning to read and write, while others indicated graduating high school and attending college. Several parents stated that they wanted

their child to do well in school, become well rounded and lifelong learners, and reach their highest potential.

Areas of Parent Interest for Further Learning

As seen in Figure 1, more than 50% of respondents indicated that they would like to learn more about free community events. The second largest area of interest was youth sport teams with 45%. Other areas such as library membership, tutoring, and becoming a member of PTA had significantly less interest. Survey participants could indicate interest in more than one response. Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown together in the graph.
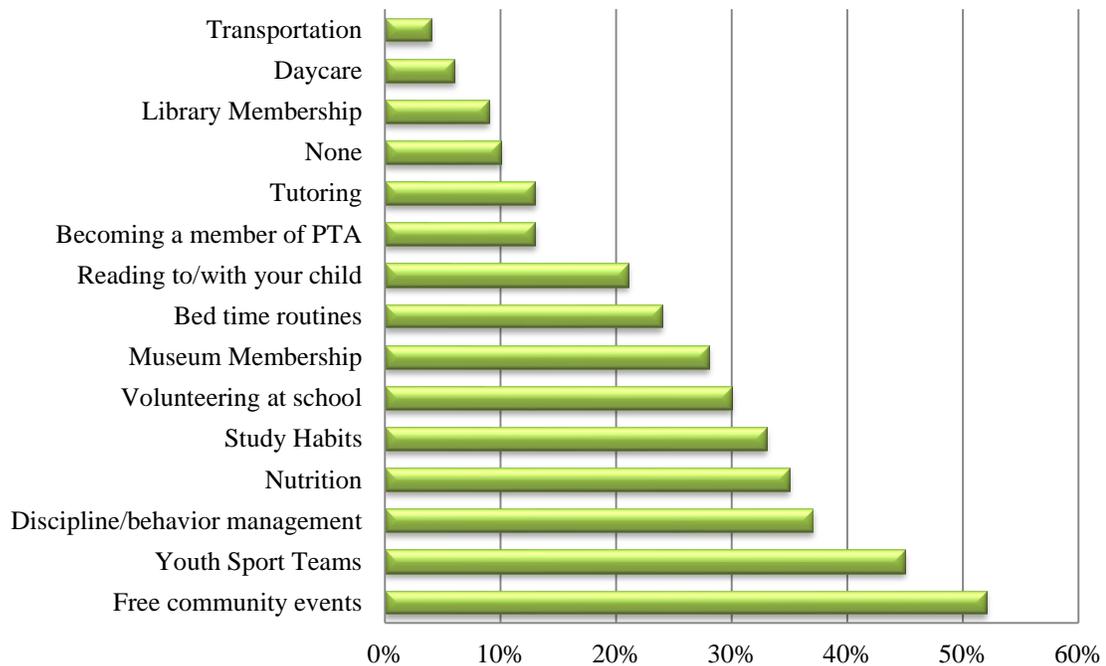
Figure 1. Areas of parent interest

Figure 2 provides a representation of the methods that parents prefer to use when learning about new topics. More than one response could be indicated. Passive forms of communication were most preferred, with newsletters receiving the highest ranking at 70%. Pamphlets came in second with slightly more than 60% of respondents indicating that this method would be preferred. Modeling techniques and small group trainings were the least preferred methods of communication. Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown together in the graph.
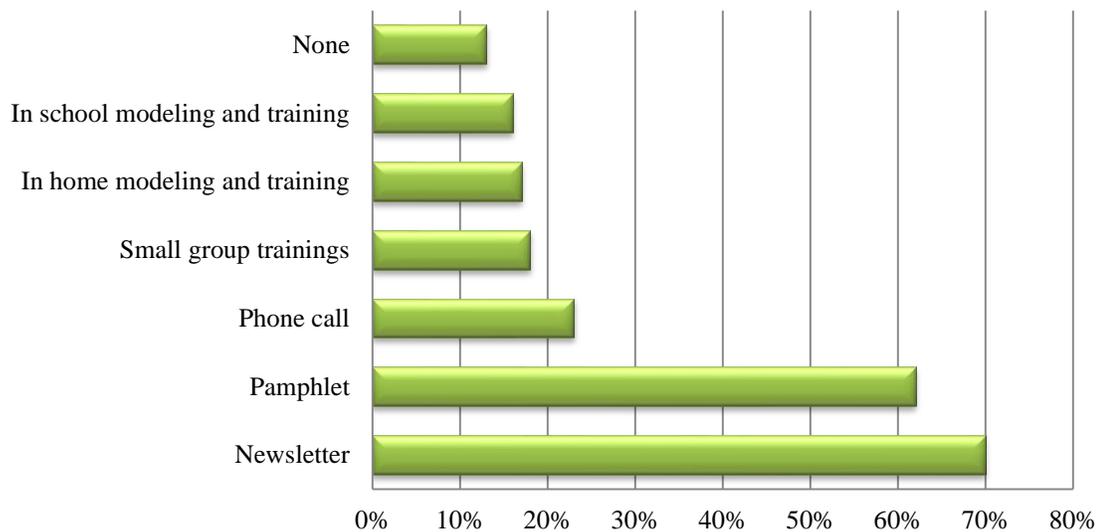
Figure 2. Most preferred method of communication when learning about topics of interest

To determine parents' opinion of help-seeking behaviors, three statements were given for parents to rank:

1. Once in a while, even good parents need help or advice with their kids.

2. Most parents need help or advice about parenting.

3. I am likely to seek help or advice about parenting.

Statements of strong agreement were coded with a score of a five and statements of strong disagreement received scores of a one. In Figure 3, parents' scores for the first statement indicated a high level of agreement with a mean score of 4.5. The subsequent statements had a lower average response, but parents still indicated they were neutral or in agreement with the statements. Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown separately on the graph.
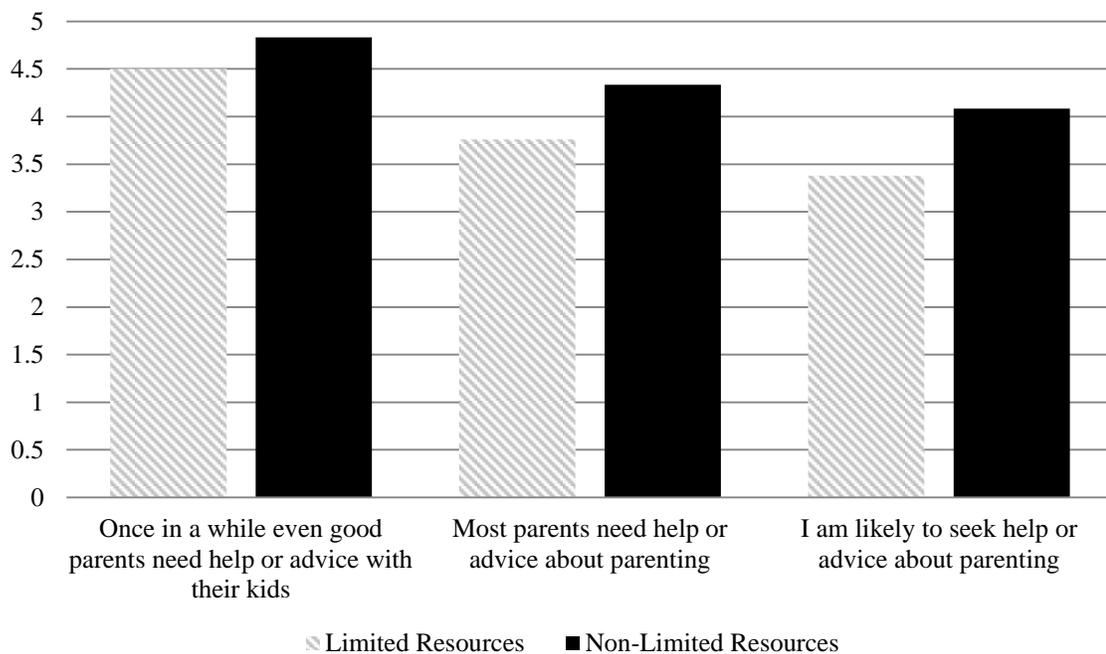
Figure 3. Mean scores of parent opinion on seeking help with parenting

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that parents with limited resources are less likely to believe parents need help or advice with parenting as well as seek help themselves compared to parents with non-limited resources. Independent sample t-tests were used to compare the mean scores of two independently sampled groups (Garson, 2008). A significant difference was found in regards to all three statements about parent opinion on seeking help with parenting. In

response to the statement, "I am likely to seek help or advice about parenting," a significance difference was found, t (62.776) = -2.690, p = .009. Parents who self-identified as having limited resources (M =3.38, SD = 1.374) on average indicated that they are less likely to seek help or advice about parenting than parents who identified as having non-limited resources (M=4.08, SD= .929). Each of these statistics is shown in Table 1 along with responses to the other two statements.

Table 1

Parent opinion on seeking help with parenting

	Mean Scores Limited Resources	Mean Scores Non-Limited Resources	*T*	*df*
Once in a while even good parents need help or advice	4.50 (.628)	4.83 (.381)	-2.941*	68.797
Most parents need help or advice about parenting	3.76 (1.031)	4.33 (.637)	-3.061*	67.773
I am likely to seek help or advice about parenting	3.38 (1.374)	4.08 (.929)	-2.690*	62.776

Note. * = p ≤ .05. Standard Deviation appears in parentheses below means.

Figure 4 indicates which sources parents would use when seeking help with their own parenting questions. More than one response could be indicated. More than 60% of the respondents indicated using family, friends, and health care providers for help. School personnel also received a high ranking with 49% of respondents indicating they would seek help from this source. Parent support groups, social services/counseling agencies, telephone helplines and child protective services were not deemed to be sources

found most helpful or sought out when parents had questions. Responses from both

limited and non-limited resource families are shown together on the graph.
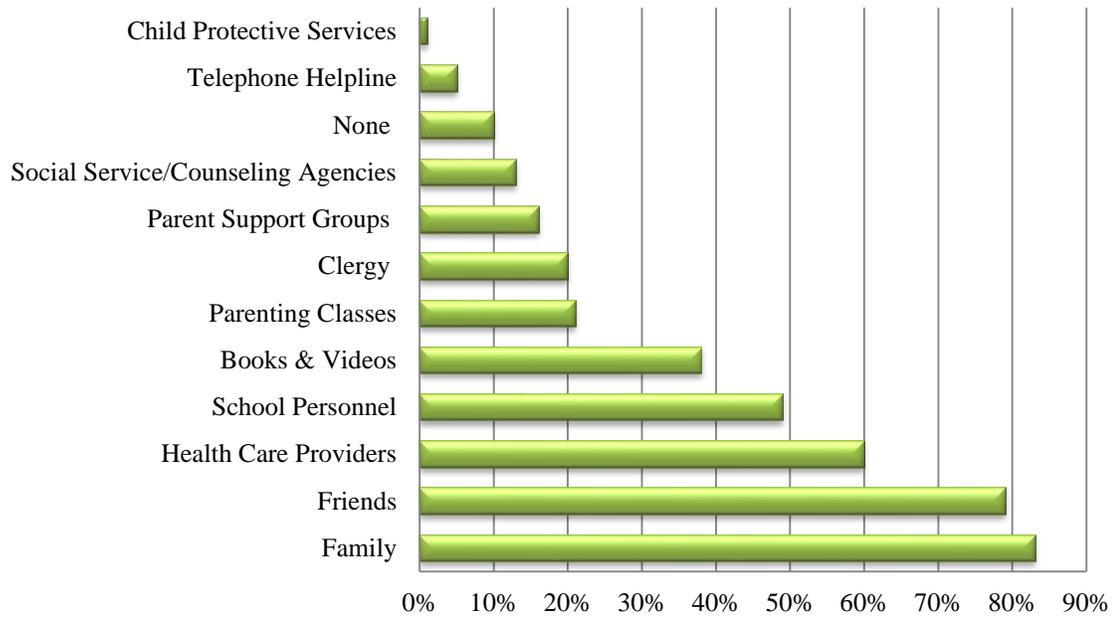
Figure 4. Sources parents would use to receive help with parenting questions

Family Influence on Student Success

Surveys indicated that parents had an overall positive attitude about school and

the role they play within the school (Figure 5). Statements of strong agreement were

coded with a score of five and statements of strong disagreement received a score of a

one. Limited resource parents responded most often with agree or strongly agree to

statements about feeling welcome in the school (M= 4.24), and being comfortable

communicating with various staff members (M= 4.42). Parents self-identified as having

limited resources also reported affirmatively that they can help at school and know how

(M= 4.42), but were slightly less positive about their contributions being appreciated (M=

3.86). Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown

separately on the graph.
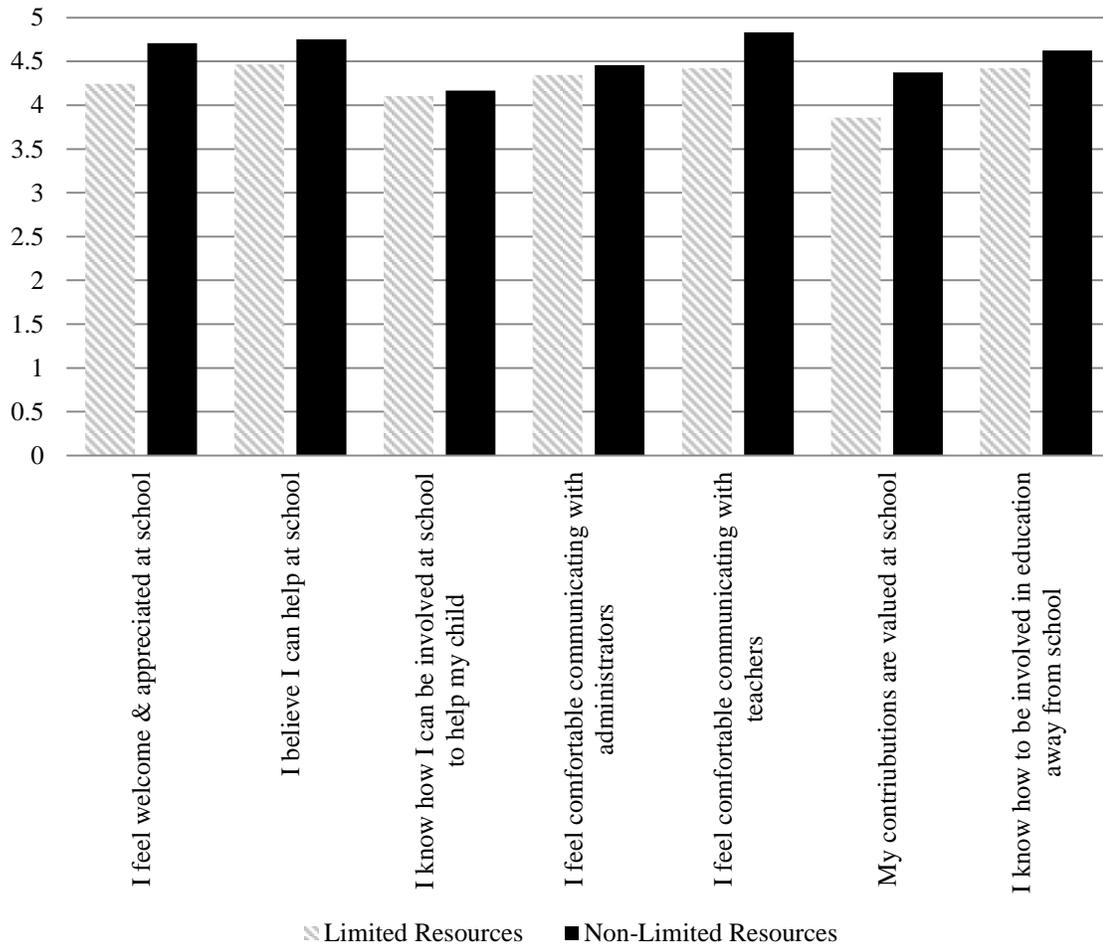
Figure 5. Mean scores of parent feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty, and the school in general

Figure 6 addresses parents' knowledge of the school district's structure and

organization. The same scoring method used for Figure 5 was used in this set of

statements. Most limited resource parents (M= 4.62) indicated that they agreed with the

statement, "I'm involved in my child's education." Also, limited resource parents mean

scores (M = 4.38) indicated that they know how to get in touch with administrators.

However, responses from the same parents about volunteering for the classroom averaged only slightly above neutral (M = 3.33). Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown separately on the graph.
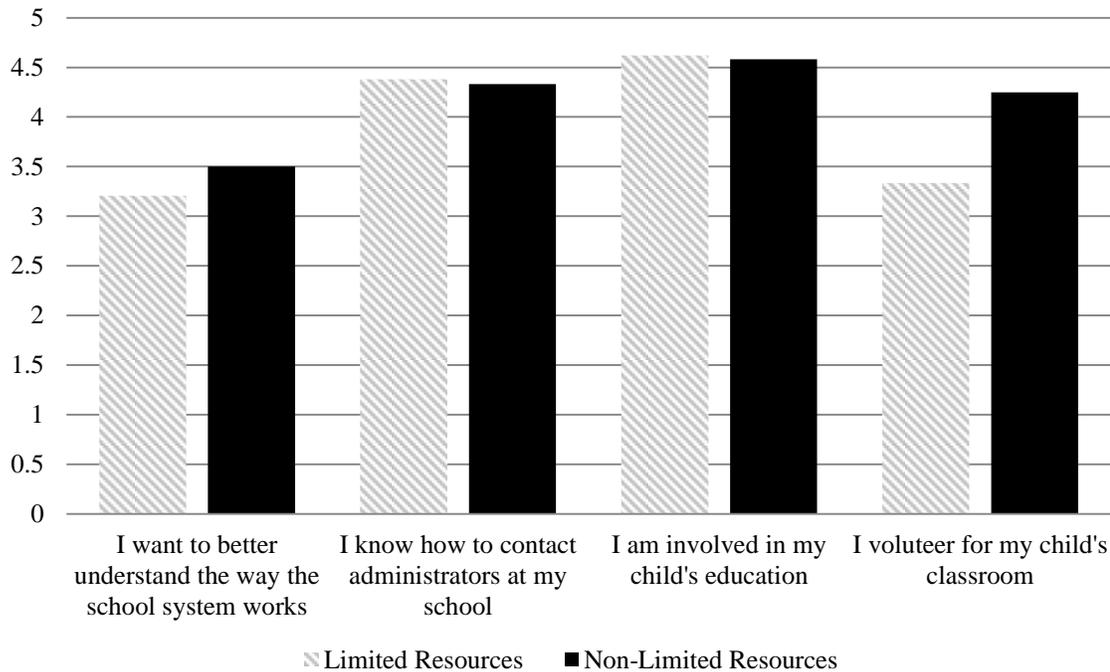
Figure 6. Mean scores of parent knowledge of the school district's structure and organization

Figure 7 addresses parent participation in PTA. Statements of strong agreement were coded with a score of a five and statements of strong disagreement received scores of a one. Responses from parents self-identified as having limited resources indicated a disagreement to statements about being invited to be a member of PTA (M= 2.33), being a member of PTA (M= 1.98), and attending PTA meetings regularly (M= 1.93). Responses to statements about participating in PTA sponsored events and feeling like contributions to PTA would be valuable had a slightly higher mean score (M= 2.88), but still show that respondents disagreed with the statements. A score slightly above neutral

(M= 3.17) was indicated for the statement, "I am aware of how to become a member of PTA." Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown separately on the graph.
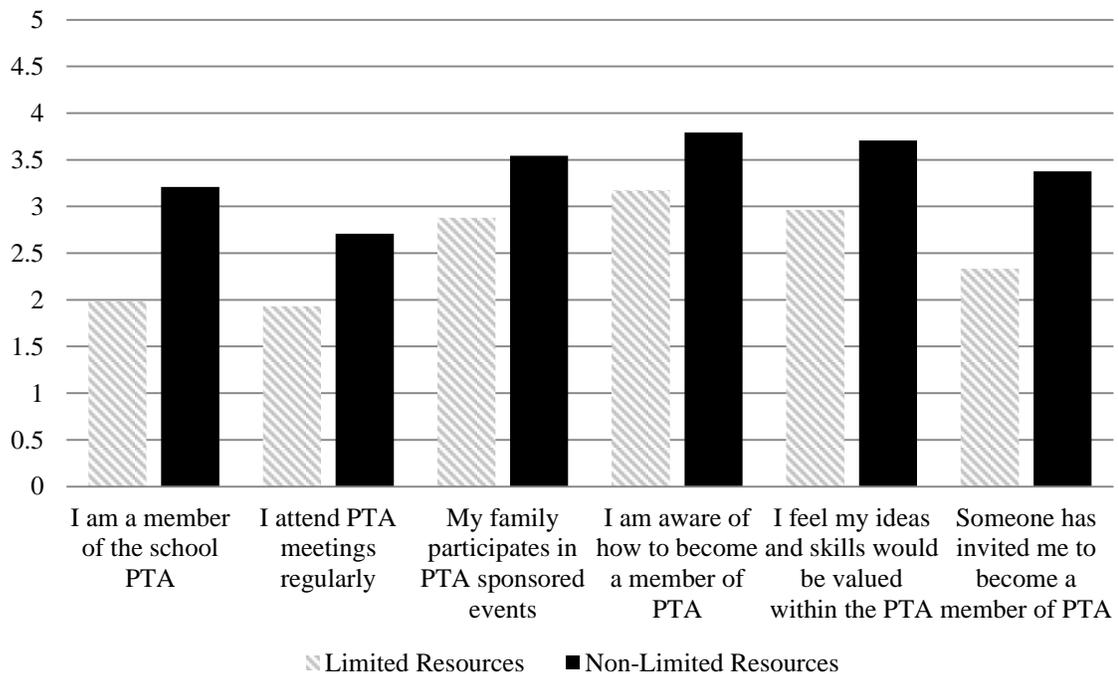
Figure 7. Mean scores of parent participation in Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Table 2 shows a t-test analysis of parent participation at school. Parents who self-identified as having limited resources (M=3.86, SD=1.025) felt that their contributions were less valued in school than parents having non-limited resources (M= 4.38, SD = .711), $t(79) = -2.242$, p =.028. A significant difference was found in regard to volunteering for the child's classroom, $t(79) = -3.717$, p =.000. Parents identified as having limited resources (M =3.33, SD = 1.091) on average volunteered less for the classroom than parents without limited resources (M=4.25, SD = .794). In regards to being a member of the PTA, a significant difference was found, $t(31.708) =$ -3.541, p =

.001. Parents with limited resources (M = 1.98, SD = 1.034) were less likely to be a

member of the PTA than parents with non-limited resources (M =3.21, SD = 1.560).

Parents who self-identified as having limited resources (M= 2.33, SD = 1.393) were less

likely to have been invited to become a member of the PTA compared to parents having

non-limited resources (M=3.38, SD = 1.498), $t(79)$ = -3.005, p = .004. Significant

differences were found in the remaining questions regarding the PTA. These statistics

can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Parent involvement in the learning community

	Mean Scores Limited Resource	Mean Scores Non-Limited Resource	*t*	*df*
My contributions are valued at school	3.86 (1.025)	4.38 (.711)	-2.242*	79
I volunteer for my child's classroom	3.33 (1.091)	4.25 (.794)	-3.717***	79
I am a member of the school PTA	1.98 (1.034)	3.21 (1.560)	-3.541***	31.708
I attend PTA meetings regularly	1.93 (.915)	2.71 (1.367)	-2.559*	31.881
My family participates in PTA sponsored events	2.88 (1.377)	3.54 (1.021)	-2.401*	57.547
I am aware of how to become a member of PTA	3.17 (1.428)	3.79 (1.141)	-2.071*	53.417
I feel my ideas and skills would be valued within the PTA	2.97 (1.228)	3.71 (.859)	-2.669*	80
Someone has invited me to become a member of PTA	2.33 (1.393)	3.38 (1.498)	-3.005*	79

Note.* = p ≤ .05.   *** = p ≤ .001. Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

In the parent support of early learning survey, parents were asked to rank the frequency with which their child participated in various activities. The scale ranged from zero, indicating the activity was never done; to an eight meaning the child did this activity daily. The activities were coded to show activities that would build academic and/or social skills, and activities that were purely for entertainment. Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, and mode for activities identified as building academic and/or social skills. Responses from both limited resource (LR) and non-limited resource (NLR) families are shown separately on the table.

Reading with an adult was indicated to have the highest frequency for both groups. Other activities students engaged in frequently were playing games and working on homework. When looking at responses for limited resource families, activities that typically involve a cost or fee had the lowest average scores. Attending any museum or participating in organized youth sports was most frequently ranked as an experience never had by students from limited resource families.

Table 3
Activities that parents engage in with their child that build academic and/or social skills

Activities	Mean		Standard Deviation		Mode	
	LR	NLR	LR	NLR	LR	NLR
Visiting an art museum	1.11	1.30	1.25	1.49	0	0
Visiting the children's museum	2.23	2.91	1.56	1.50	2	3
Visiting other museums	1.04	2.04	1.27	1.26	0	1
Using the internet	2.34	3.83	2.84	3.13	0	0

Table 3 Continued

Playing educational video games	3.93	4.26	2.55	2.49	0	7
Attending church and associated events	3.29	4.59	2.57	2.22	0	6
Playing games at home (card games, board games, etc)	5.30	5.61	2.12	1.16	7	6
Reading with an adult	6.91	7.65	1.31	0.65	7	8
Reading independently to an adult	3.64	4.74	3.15	3.28	0	8
Visiting a state or national park	1.53	2.39	1.44	1.20	0	3
Working on homework	5.77	4.70	2.82	2.98	8	7
Visiting the library	3.07	3.70	2.25	1.66	0	5
Participating in youth sporting events	1.68	2.87	2.31	2.56	0	0

Note. LR = Limited Resources. NLR = Non-limited resources

Table 4 indicates the frequency with which children participated in activities that were purely for entertainment. The same ranking scale described above was used, and mean, standard deviation, and mode are shown in the table. Responses from both limited resource (LR) and non-limited resource (NLR) families are shown separately on the table.

Both groups of parents reported that the activity most often engaged in was watching television. Trips to the park had the second highest average with the smallest standard deviation. Similar to the activities in Table 3, the activities that are engaged in the least frequently by limited resource families are those that typically have a cost. Trips to the video arcade, bowling alley, roller rink, performing arts, movies, and sporting events were ranked on average as a onetime experience or a yearly event.

Table 4
Activities that parents engage in with their child that provide entertainment

Activities	Mean		Standard Deviation		Mode	
	LR	NLR	LR	NLR	LR	NLR
Playing video games for entertainment	3.35	3.74	2.75	2.80	0	6
Trips to the park	5.59	5.39	1.12	0.78	6	6
Attending the movies	2.26	2.87	1.60	1.10	3	3
Attending live concerts, plays, or other performing arts	1.04	2.26	1.21	1.10	0	3
Trips to the roller rink	1.30	1.57	1.50	1.31	0	0
Trips to the video arcade	0.86	0.52	1.30	1.08	0	0
Trips to the bowling alley	1.67	2.26	1.50	1.32	0	3
Attending sporting events as an observer	2.23	2.96	1.96	2.01	0	3
Using the internet	2.34	3.83	2.84	3.13	0	0

Table 4 Continued

Participating in outdoor activities	4.00	4.35	2.36	2.10	3	5
Watching television	7.04	7.35	1.54	1.11	8	8

Note. LR = Limited Resources. NLR = Non-limited resources

Factors that Affect Parent Participation

To determine what factors might affect parents' participation at school, parents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with six statements. Statements of strong agreement were coded with a score of a five and statements of strong disagreement received scores of a one. As apparent in Figure 8, parents disagreed with the statements. Parents did not indicate that there was any particular area that would be a barrier for participating at school. The one area that had a slightly higher mean score (M= 2.45) was in response to the statement, "I have difficulties because of time constraints." Responses from both limited and non-limited resource families are shown separately on the graph.
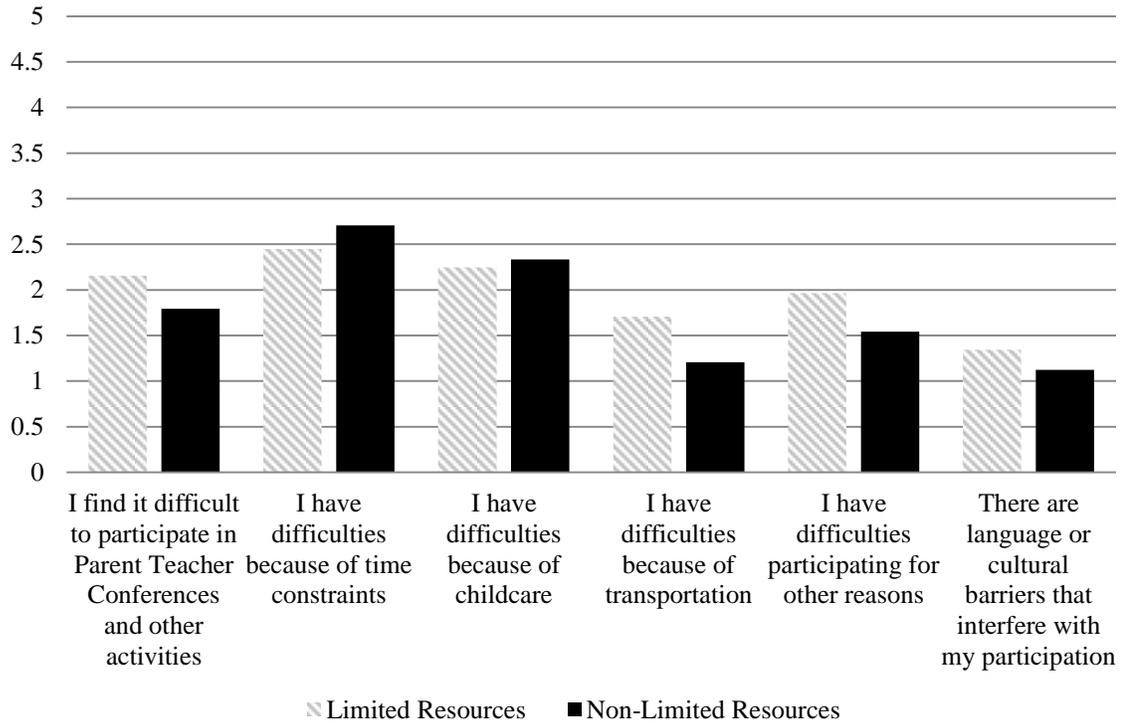
Figure 8. Mean scores of barriers that affect parent participation

DISCUSSION

Summary

Through surveys completed by parents with limited resources, a better understanding of how parents support early childhood learning has been addressed. This study addressed the following questions:

- To what extent are parents interested in learning about how they can support early childhood learning?

- What is the most effective method for sharing new information with parents?

- How does the extent to which parents understand the school environment and their involvement in the learning community differ between limited resource and non-limited resource families?

- What activities are parents doing with their young children to provide a supportive early educational environment?

- What are barriers that affect parents' current participation?

Parental Interest in Supporting Early Childhood Learning

The findings of this study indicated that most students were enrolled in preschool programs. This demonstrated parents' positive and supportive attitude towards learning. In addition to attending preschool, parents reported that they worked at home using flashcards, books, learning games, and educational interactions to prepare their child for

kindergarten. This is another indicator that parents wanted to prepare their child for

kindergarten and be supportive of early learning. These findings support research that

parents who have enrolled students in preschool, learn to create nurturing home

environments that can lead to academic success (Bettler, Burns, & Strother, 2005; Keller

& McDade, 2000; Burchinal, Kainz, Cai, Tout, Zaslow, Martinez-Beck, & Rathgeb,

2009).

When sharing short term and long term learning goals, parents indicated having

hopes of their children learning grade level appropriate skills in reading, writing, and

math as well as developing positive attitudes about learning, and eventually finishing

school and/or attending college or university. Because of these goals, it is evident that

the parents who participated in this study have placed value on their child's learning and

are working with their child to achieve these goals. Gutman and McLoyd's study (2000)

provided support for the importance of parents having educational goals for their

children.

<u>Methods for Sharing New Information with Parents</u>

The second topic addressed was parents' interests in further learning related to

community events, child rearing practices and effective methods for sharing this

information with parents. The highest area of interest was in free community events.

This seems logical given that this study addressed families with limited resources.

Families who have a limited annual income still want to participate in activities with and

for their children, but may find that it can be challenging if there are costs associated with

enriching activities. A great way to approach this would be to provide parents with weekly or monthly activity calendars that indicated free activities in the community. These could be distributed to the schools and posted in locations such as libraries, grocery stores, and health care clinics. Since the second highest area of interest was youth sports teams, it would make sense to include try-out dates and locations of team sporting events on activity calendars. A question that arises from the need to inform the community of free events however is: Who will create and distribute this calendar?

When parents were asked to identify how they wanted to learn more about topics of interest, the highest response was for passive forms of communication such as newsletters and pamphlets. These are non-invasive forms of communication that can inform parents, but will not leave the parents feeling judged or critiqued. When exploring why parents might not seek help from others, Keller and McDade (2000) reported that parents, "expressed fears of being misunderstood…being judged unfavorably, [and] appearing stupid" (p.302). Modeling methods might be considered a critique of parents' current abilities, and may make the parents feel as though their abilities are being evaluated.

In Keller and McDade's study, (2000) the researchers aimed to determine the attitudes of parents on help seeking. Figure 3 and Table 1 illustrate results that were similar to the 2000 study. While most parents in this study agreed that everyone needs help and advice sometimes, parents that self-identified as limited resources were significantly less likely to seek help than parents without limited resources. As Keller and McDade (2000) pointed out, this decision to not seek out help often comes from the

fear of being misunderstood and apprehension that they will be judged because they are seeking help.

This study also found that when help is sought out, family ranks the highest. In both studies, friends and healthcare providers ranked the next highest sources to be sought out for advice. Keller and McDade (2000) found that Head Start parents used books, videos, and telephone hotlines more than the families in this study. Child Protective Services was not sought out frequently in either study. It is assumed that this is because of fear that they (the parents) will lose their children if they are doing something wrong. This study found that school personnel were more likely to be approached for advice than in Keller and McDade's (2000) study. This may be because parents feel welcome in the school; they trust the school personnel, and they are more familiar with the elementary school than they were with the Head Start school.

<div align="center">

Extent to Which Parents Understand School
Environment and Involvement in Learning Community

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The third portion of the data analyzed family influence on student success. It addressed the question: How does the extent to which parents understand the school environment and their involvement in the learning community differ between limited resource and non-limited resource families?

Lott's study (2001) and Gutman & McLoyd's study (2000) indicated that an effective way to get parents involved in the school is to get them involved in PTA and classroom volunteering. Parents self-identified as limited resources (M= 4.62) and non-limited resources (M= 4.58) were in strong agreement with the statement "I am involved

in my child's education." However, in this survey, there was a significant difference in the involvement levels of limited resource parents and non-limited resource parents. Fewer limited resource parents agreed with the statements, "I volunteer for my child's classroom" and "I am a member of the school PTA." This is interesting, considering that both sets of parents had a positive response to being involved in their child's education. If parents are indicating that they are involved in their child's education, by being supportive of education and helping their child at home, then why are they not participate more frequently in the PTA or volunteer for the classroom? Is it because of time constraints? Perhaps, but Figure 8 shows that time constraints were identified as a minor reason for not participating. In fact, there was no single area that parents identified as a major reason for not participating.

Another explanation for the difference in involvement levels may be how welcomed and appreciated parents feel in the learning community. Parents with limited resources mean scores indicated that they do not feel as welcome and appreciated at school (M= 4.24) compared to parents with non-limited resources (M= 4.71). Limited resource parents also do not feel as strongly about the statement, "I believe I can help at school." It is important to note that while both sets of parents responded favorable to these statements, a significant difference can still be seen. It leads to the questions: Are parents treated differently because they have limited or non-limited resources? What can be done to increase feelings of being welcomed into the school? How can teaching staff encourage all parents to believe that they can help at school and that their contributions will be valued?

A positive attitude was found amongst parents' indicating that they know how to

help their child from home, they are familiar with the school, and they are invested and

interested in their child's education. The fact that the attitude is positive indicates that

parents have taken the time to learn about the school, and attend functions such as open

houses and parent teacher conferences to learn more about how to further their child's

education. This is an immense finding, because several studies (Bettler, Burns, &

Strother, 2005; Cooper, Chavira, & Mena, 2005; Dickinson & DeTemple, 1998; Gutman

& McLoyd, 2000; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Jensen, 2009; Lott 2001; Moore, Redd,

Burkhauser, Mbwana, & Collins, 2009) have indicated that students need their parents'

participation and support; those who receive it show a positive impact on their academic

achievement.

<div align="center">

What Activities are Parents Doing with Their Young
Children to Provide a Supportive Early Educational Environment

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This study found that activities limited resources students were most involved in

were reading with an adult (M=6.91), and completing homework (M= 5.77). Both of

these activities are identified as activities that will build academic skills. These activities,

as well as playing games, both educational video games and board games, and reading to

an adult had the highest frequencies. This indicates that parents are helping their child

create a commitment to educational activities at an early age. The data indicates that

activities meant to build academic and social skills that were not used frequently, were

typically associated with fees. Activities such as participating in team sports or attending

museums did not depict a high frequency of usage. This could be tied to the fact that

these families have lower annual income and do not have the money to spend on these activities. However, it is important to point out that most of these establishments offer free events throughout the year. Also, youth sports team in this city offer grants and fee waivers for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. As parents indicated in the interests surveys, they want to know about free community events. It is the researcher's belief that the families in this study do not participate in these activities because they are not aware that they can be done without a fee. To help support the families in this community, it is important that a method be created and utilized to keep parents informed of these opportunities through fliers and newsletters.

The two entertainment activities that ranked highest in frequency with both limited resource and non-limited resource families were watching television and taking trips to the park. These two activities are opportune forms of entertainment for families with limited resources. Television is probably used frequently as entertainment because it is convenient and at home. Several parks are within walking distance of many families surveyed in this study, and therefore is a convenient, free, and fun form of entertainment.

What are the Barriers that Affect Parent Participation

On average, parents agreed with the statement I am involved in my child's education (M= 4.62). However, parents had a more neutral responds to the statement, "I volunteer for my child's classroom," (M= 3.33). When asked about participation in PTA, parents indicated a disagreement with the statement, "I am a member of the PTA," (M= 1.98). Parents with limited resources offered limited responses to what affected their

participation. All identified factors that might affect participation at school had a low mean score indicating disagreement with the statements. Parents did not identify time constraints, transportation, child care, or language barriers as significant reasons for not participating.

These results suggest the following questions: What is preventing parents from becoming involved in the PTA? What can be done to increase the school involvement of parents who are already supportive of education? Of the 82 surveys returned, six participants, all self-identified as limited resources, wrote a comment about their lack of participation in PTA. They pointed out that there is a fee to become a member, and that they (the parents) were unable to pay. PTAs need to get the word out that while it does cost to become a member, parents can still attend and participate in the meetings without paying the dues. The PTA could also consider sponsoring families who want to become members of PTA if they cannot pay the dues.

Another explanation for the lack of participation comes from the findings in the studies done by Bettler, et al. (2005) and Lott (2001). The researchers found that many parents are reluctant to become involved at school due to the differences in socio-economic status (SES) between educators and themselves. Lower income parents feel that there are stereotypes held by middle-class educators implying a lack of ability to parent. Continued research needs to be done to determine what can be done to overcome these stereotypes.

Recommendations for Action

This study found that parents with limited resources have been and continue to be supportive of early education. The parents have educational goals for their children and spend time working with their child to build academic skills as seen in the studies done by Cooper, et al. (2005) and Gutman and McLoyd (2000). Despite having limited resources, the families in this study have partnered with the school to have a positive impact on their child's learning. One area that could be strengthened for parents and children in this study is an increase in involvement in the community. Gutman and McLoyd's (2000) study emphasized the importance of parents being resourceful and motivated to find community events, and seek out resources to support student success. However, since parents are not aware of the many free resources that children can become involved in, the community and the school need to work together to get information out to parents about how they can get their child more involved at little or no cost.

Also, further research needs to be done addressing how to get parents more involved in the school community beyond the basics of at home school support. In future studies, the researcher could contact a sample of families for extended interviews. By doing interviews, the researcher could ask questions and gather data that requires participants to expand on their survey responses. The researcher can ask questions relating to why or why not families participate in specific events. Completing interviews is also a way to target non-respondents. By doing interviews, either by phone or in

person, a researcher could gather more data from families whose views may have been overlooked in this data.

In future research it would be helpful to identify specific reasons for families choosing not to volunteer for the classroom or become involved in PTA. It would also be necessary to ask participants what would be incentive for them to participate. Families with limited resources have valuable opinions and voices that need to be heard by the community that teaches children with limited resources. They also have important skills that can be shared within the school for the benefit of all students. Increasing parental involvement will allow for a stronger partnership between the school and the family.

This research indicated that parents with limited resources have been, and continue to be supportive of early education through the use of preschool and interacting with their children in academic activities. They have expressed interest in learning about free community events and youth sporting events. Parents in this study prefer methods of passive communication such as newsletters and pamphlets when learning about something new. Limited resource parents indicated that they understand the learning community and are involved in their child's education, but they are less involved in the PTA and helping in the classroom than non-limited resource parents. To support learning and academic growth, parents with limited resources are reading, helping with homework, and playing educational games with their children. This research did not indicate any barriers preventing parents from being more involved in the learning community. Parents with limited resources are supportive of early education, but there are still opportunities to get them more involved in their child's education.

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APPENDICES

<u>APPENDIX A</u>

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS

Research Question	Interview Questions
1. To what extent are parents interested in learning about how they can support early childhood learning? a. Which activities are parents most interested in learning about? b. What medium of communication is most preferred by parents?	Which topics are you interested in learning more about? Check all that apply. How would you like to learn more about these topics?
2. What is the most effective method for sharing new information with parents? a. What is the opinion of parents on seeking help with parenting? b. Who do parents seek parenting advice from?	Use the ranking scale strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree to respond to the following statements: • Once in a while event good parents need help or advice. • Most parents need help or advice about parenting. • I am likely to seek help or advice about parenting. Which sources do you use to receive help with parenting questions?
3. To what extent do parents understand the school environment? a. What are the attitudes of parents towards the school and staff? b. How involved are they in the learning community?	Use the ranking scale strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree to respond to the following statements: • I feel welcomed and appreciated when I come to school. • I believe there are things I can do to help my child at school. • I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my child. • I am comfortable in communicating with the school administrators. • I am comfortable talking with my child's teacher. • I feel that what I contribute to the school is valued.

Research Questions Continued	Interview Questions Continued
	• I know how to be involved with my child's education away from the school campus. • I would like to better understand the way the school system works. • I know how to contact the administrators at my school. • I am involved in my child's education. • I volunteer for my child's classroom. • I am a member of PTA. • I attend PTA meetings regularly. • My family participates in PTA sponsored events. • I am aware of how to become a member of PTA. • I feel my ideas and skills would be valued within the PTA. • Someone has invited me to become a member of the PTA
4. What activities are parents doing with their young children to provide a supportive early educational environment? a. Were students enrolled in some form of preschool or daycare program that provided early childhood education? b. What educational goals do parents have for their children? c. How often do students participate in activities that build academic and social skills? d. How often do students participate in entertainment activities?	Did your child participate in any educations programs prior to attending kindergarten? If yes, how long did they attend? What other activities did you do at home to prepare your child for kindergarten? What are your short term learning goals for your child? What are your long term learning goals? How often does your child participate in the following activities? 24 options of activities were given

Research Questions Continued	Interview Questions Continued
	(See Appendix B for a complete list). 13 options are considered to build academic and social skills and 11 options are entertainment activities.
5. What are barriers that affect parents' current participation?	Use the ranking scale strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree to respond to the following statements: • It is difficult to participate in parent teacher conferences and/or other school activities. • I have difficulties because of time constraints. • I have difficulties participating because of childcare. • I have difficulties participating in school activities because of transportation. • I have difficulties participating in school because of other matters. • There are language/cultural barriers that interfere with my participation.

<u>APPENDIX B</u>

PARENT SUPPORT OF EARLY LEARNING SURVEY

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating parents' support of early childhood learning. Your feedback is critical to understanding how parental support influences the early learning of our students. Therefore, we invite you to participate by completing a parent support of early learning survey. **If you agree to participate, please answer the questions below.** The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. **All information is voluntary, anonymous, and fully protected. You are free to skip questions or stop the survey at any time.** Please record your responses to the numbered survey questions in the appropriate space. For any questions or concerns about this survey please contact Carrie Ruffatto at carrie_ruffatto@gfps.k12.mt.us. **Return the survey in the envelope provided no later than Friday September 17.**

-

_____

_____

1. Did your child participate in any educations programs prior to attending kindergarten? (Head Start, preschool, daycare, Montessori, etc)

    _____ No   _____ Yes   Educational Program: _____

2. If yes, how long did he/she attend?

    _____hours/day   _____days/week   _____# of years

3. What additional activities did you do at home to prepare your child for kindergarten?

4. What are your short term learning goals for your child?

5. What are your long term learning goals for your child?

Turn over and complete questions on the back. →

Parent Support of Early Learning Survey continued

Use the following scale to rate: **How often does your kindergarten child participate in the following activities?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8							

Never   Yearly   once a month   weekly
daily

One time   2-6 times   more than   several
times Experience   a year   once a month   a
week

Place an X in the box for the appropriate frequency.

How often does your kindergarten child participate in the following activities?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Visiting an art museum									
2. Visiting the Children's Museum									
3. Visiting other museums									
4. Trips to the park									
5. Playing video games for educational learning									
6. Playing video games for pleasure									
7. Attending the movies									
8. Reading with an adult									
9. Reading independently or to an adult									
10. Visiting a State and/or National Park									
11. Attending live concerts, plays, or other performing arts									
12. Visiting the library									
13. Trips to the roller rink									
14. Trips to the video arcade									
15. Trips to the bowling alley									
16. Attending sporting events as an observer									
17. Using the internet									

Parent Support of Early Learning Survey continued

18. Participating in youth sporting events									
19. Participating in outdoor activities (fishing, hiking, etc)									
20. Watching television									
21. Attending church and associated events									
22. Playing games at home (card games, board games, etc)									
23. Working on homework									
24. Other _____									

<u>APPENDIX C</u>

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating parents' involvement in their child's learning. Your feedback is critical to understanding how parents are currently involved and in what ways the school can improve in informing the parents of how to become involved.   Therefore, we invite you to participate by completing a parent involvement survey. **If you agree to participate, please answer the questions below.** The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.   **All information is voluntary, anonymous, and fully protected. You are free to skip questions or stop the survey at any time.** Please record your responses to the numbered survey questions in the appropriate space. For any questions or concerns about this survey please contact Carrie Ruffatto at carrie_ruffatto@gfps.k12.mt.us. **Return the survey in the envelope provided to your student's teacher no later than Friday September 17th.**

_____

PARENT INFORMATION (To answer the questions, place an "X" next to the response.)

1. **Age**
☐ Less than 20   ☐ 21-35   ☐ 36-50   ☐ 51 and older

2. **Race**
☐ American Indian/American Eskimo   ☐ White, Non-Hispanic

☐ Asian; Pacific Islander   ☐ Multi-Racial

☐ Black; Non-Hispanic   ☐ Other
_____

☐ Hispanic

3. **Gender**
☐ Female   ☐ Male

4. **Marital Status**
☐ Single   ☐ Married   ☐ Divorced

5. **Combined Income**
☐ Less than $21, 000   ☐ $50,001-$75,000

☐ $21,000-$50,000   ☐ $75,001 and more

6. My child qualifies for ☐ free school lunch ☐ reduced school lunch ☐ neither

7. Highest Education Completed by Parent

☐ Some High School   ☐ Bachelor's Degree

☐ High School Diploma/GED   ☐ Master's Degree

☐ Technical/Vocational License   ☐ Doctorate Degree

☐ Associates Degree   ☐ Some College

Place an "X: in the box that indicates your response: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree

Question 8-15: *Parents feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves, administrators, faculty, and the school in general.*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. I feel welcomed and appreciated when I come to the school					
9. I believe there are things I can do to help my child at school.					
10. I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my child.					
11. I am comfortable in communicating with the school administrators (principal).					
12. I am comfortable talking with my child's teacher.					
13. I feel that what I contribute to the school is valued.					
14. I know how to be involved with my child's education away from the school campus.					
15. Any additional comments:					

Place an "X: in the box that indicates your response: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree

Questions 16-22: *Barriers that affect a parent's participation at school.*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. It is difficult for me to participate in parent-teacher conferences and/or other school activities.					
17. I have difficulties because of time constraints (job/other responsibilities).					
18. I have difficulties participating in school activities because of childcare (other small children).					
19. I have difficulties participating in school activities because of transportation.					
20. I have difficulties participating in school activities because of other matters.					
21. There are language/cultural barriers that interfere with my participation at my child's school.					
22. Any additional comments:					

Questions 23-27: *Parent's knowledge of the school district's structure and organization*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. I would like to better understand the way the school system works.					
24. I know how to contact the administrators at my school.					
25. I am involved in my child's education.					
26. I volunteer for my child's classroom.					

27. Any additional comments:

Place an "X: in the box that indicates your response: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree

Questions 28-33: *Parent participation in Parent Teacher Association (PTA)*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28. I am a member of the school PTA.					
29. I attend PTA meetings regularly.					
30. My family participates in PTA sponsored events (ie carnivals, movie nights, game night, etc)					
31. I am aware of how to become an active member of the PTA.					
32. I feel my ideas and skills would be valued within the PTA					
33. Someone has invited me to become a member of the PTA					
34. Any additional comments:					

Questions 34-37: *Parent opinion on seeking help with parenting*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
35. Once in a while even good parents need help or advice with their kids.					
36. Most parents need help or advice about parenting.					
37. I am likely to seek help or advice about parenting.					
38. Any additional comments:					

The above survey was modified from the Blue Ribbon Parent Involvement Survey created by the Orange County Public Schools, https://volunteer.ocps.net/forms/BlueRibbon-ParentSurvey-050222.pdf.

39. Which sources, if any, would you use to receive help with parenting questions? Check all that apply.

☐ Family   ☐ Friends   ☐ Health Care Providers   ☐ Social Service/Counseling

Agencies   ☐ Clergy   ☐ School Personnel ☐ Parent Support Groups   ☐ Child

Protective Services ☐ Parenting Classes ☐ Telephone Helpline ☐ Books & Videos ☐
None of these sources

40. Check all areas that you are interested in learning more about:

☐ Museum Membership   ☐ Library Membership   ☐ Youth Sport
Teams

☐ Nutrition   ☐ Bed time routines   ☐ Study Habits

☐ Reading to/with your child   ☐ Volunteering at school   ☐ Tutoring

☐ Becoming a member of PTA ☐ Transportation   ☐ Free community
events

☐ Daycare   ☐ Discipline/behavior management   ☐
Other_____

41. How would you like to learn more about these topics? Check all that apply

☐ Phone call   ☐ Newsletter   ☐ Pamphlet   ☐ In home modeling and
training

☐ In school modeling and training   ☐ Small group trainings ☐ Other