

Follow-up Study: High School Students' Comments Regarding Parents

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Abstract

In a previous study (see "Survey on Teachers' Attitudes Regarding Parents and Parental Involvement," published in Vol. 9, No. 2 of *The School Community Journal*), teachers' attitudes toward parents and parental involvement were examined. To follow-up and extend that study, students from the same school were asked to give their opinions about parents and parental involvement.

The current study suggests that high school students do desire their parents to be involved in their education and want their school to take measures to create a more positive dialogue between the school and home. Many of the students commented that the teachers do not communicate with their parents. Students also indicated they would like to be a part of parent-teacher conferences. The students want to take a more active role in their school, but are limited in doing so. A startling revelation was the students' feeling that there was no adult on campus they could trust to go and speak to, nor did they feel there were teachers who cared for them.

The findings indicate that students want their parents to be involved, and the parents are often involved with at-home activities. The students also want their parents to be involved in school functions and be in positions of power, including decision-making, on campus. This study may suggest to researchers and policy makers that students should be included when discussing parental involvement programs and policies.

Introduction

This study was conducted after a larger study was completed (Ramirez, 1999a), which included a quantitative portion focused on teachers' attitudes toward parents and parental involvement (Ramirez, 1999b). The previous study concluded that within the researched school there was poor school-home communication, teacher bias against low socioeconomic status (SES) parents, minimal pre- or in-service teacher training on parental involvement, and teachers desired a minimal amount of involvement from parents. Here in this second study, students' attitudes toward parents and parental involvement were examined, with the study occurring at the same location as the previous study. In the first study, statistical summaries were given on teachers' responses; therefore, for continuity, statistical summaries are included in this study as well. Preliminary examination suggests that students desire minimal parental involvement, but more involvement than the teachers suggested. Similar to the teachers, the students also reported a lack of teacher-parent communication.

Many school programs have been introduced to improve school-home relationships and foster growth in parental involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Rioux & Berla, 1993). Although parents, administrators, and teachers decide what course of action is needed to develop programs, one important variable is often missing from the equation when any new type of program is instituted—the voice of the students. Creating programs for people who don't have a voice in the development of the program may contribute to miscommunication between the school and home, and ultimately a less effective program. In allowing high school students to communicate their desires regarding parental involvement, the students themselves may feel a part of the process in policy-making and more effective policies may result.

Summary of Survey Data

Of the 370 freshman high school students that participated in this survey, 175 (47.3%) stated they were in College Prep courses. The other students stated they were in either General Education courses, Vocational/Business courses, or they didn't know. The students formed a homogeneous group (90% Euro-American, 10% Ethnic Minority), and approximately half of the students were male and half were female.

Setting

The high school in the study is situated in a small university town in the Midwest. The population of the school is approximately 2000 students. In terms of

ethnic diversity, the schools resemble the town, with a majority (95%) of the school population being Euro-American.

Before handing the surveys out to the students, this researcher spoke during a faculty meeting to explain the intentions for the study and to provide assurance that the study would provide valuable answers that would allow the school and the community to discuss the issue of parental involvement. The surveys were then copied and distributed to the faculty members who had a ninth grade homeroom. Envelopes were attached to each survey, so upon completion the student could seal their survey in the unmarked envelope. Each student was asked to complete the 8-page survey within 25 minutes (the amount of time for homeroom). After the student sealed his or her survey in the envelope, the envelope was to be placed in a box in front of the class. An on-site assistant and this researcher then picked up the boxes immediately after homeroom. The surveys were then brought to the researcher's office where coding and insertion of the data was recorded.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study is entitled *High school and family partnership surveys of teachers, parents and students*. This survey is disseminated from the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning at The John's Hopkins University. The instrument was used because it deals directly with students' attitudes toward parents and parental involvement.

Data Analysis

Completed surveys were calculated by response category frequencies (percentage responding to each of the four categories on the Likert scale) for each statement on the seven-page questionnaire. To concentrate on a more limited, focused agenda about parental participation, specific statements were chosen that were relevant to key topics. The items were chosen to give an indication of what students' perceptions were of the school environment and their attitude toward parents and parental involvement. In some cases, data from the previous study on teachers' attitudes were analyzed and compared with the students' responses. Although comparing the two studies is not the emphasis for this study, some evaluation of the two studies may present a clearer picture of the school and the issue of parental involvement.

Section 1: Students’ Attitudes About Parental Involvement

Item 1: This is a very good high school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	41	11.1
Disagree	95	25.7
Agree	207	55.9
Strongly agree	22	5.9
Missing	5	1.4
Total	370	100.0

In this first question, we see that students (61.8%) generally agreed that their school is good. However, a minority (36.8%) believed that the school is not good.

Item 2: Parents feel welcome at this school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	19	5.1
Disagree	74	20.0
Agree	278	67.0
Strongly agree	19	5.1
Missing	10	2.7
Total	370	100.0

The students (72.1%) felt that parents are welcomed in the school. However, 25.1% of the students reported that parents are not welcomed.

Item 3: Teachers care about me.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	46	13.0
Disagree	110	29.7
Agree	180	48.6
Strongly agree	19	5.1
Missing	15	4.1
Total	370	100.0

A large percentage of students (42.7%) feel that the teachers at their school do not care about them.

Item 4: I know at least one adult in the school who I could go to for help on anything.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	49	13.2
Disagree	74	20.0
Agree	137	37.0
Strongly agree	101	27.3
Missing	9	2.4
Total	370	100.0

Over half of the students at this school (54.3%) know of at least one adult in the school they can go to for help. However, 123 students (33.2%) responded that they did not know of one adult that they would be able to go to for help on anything. This may correspond with Item 3 and the number of students who feel there is not a teacher who cares about them.

Item 5: Students have a lot to say in decisions at this school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	193	52.2
Disagree	116	31.4
Agree	44	11.9
Strongly agree	11	3.0
Missing	6	1.6
Total	370	100.0

A majority of students reported (83.6%) that they did not have a lot to say in decision-making at the school.

Item 6: Parents do not need to be involved in high school students' education.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	96	25.9
Disagree	148	40.0
Agree	89	24.1
Strongly agree	27	7.3
Missing	10	1.6
Total	370	100.0

Many of the students reported (65.9%) that parents needed to be involved in a high school student's education.

Item 7: Students should be included in all parent-teacher conferences.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	30	8.1
Disagree	44	11.9
Agree	156	42.2
Strongly agree	131	35.4
Missing	9	2.4
Total	370	100.0

A majority of students reported (77.6%) that they should be included in parent-teacher conferences.

Item 8: My teachers do not want me to talk about school at home.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	118	31.9
Disagree	201	54.3
Agree	32	8.6
Strongly agree	5	1.4
Missing	14	3.8
Total	370	100.0

Most students in this survey (86.2%) commented that teachers do wish for them to talk about school at home. A small minority of students (10%) stated that teachers did not want them to talk about school at home.

Item 9: Most of my teachers know my parents.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	102	27.6
Disagree	181	48.9
Agree	57	15.4
Strongly agree	18	4.9
Missing	12	3.2
Total	370	100.0

Students reported (76.5%) that teachers do not know their parents. This parallels what teachers stated in the previous study when 76% of the teachers felt that communication between the school and home needs to be developed or improved. When asked about communication patterns between the teacher and parents, 56%

of the teachers responded that they contacted 10% or less of families by letter or memo, and 19% of the teachers contacted parents by phone (Ramirez, 1999b). This indicates that the students are aware that teachers have little to no interaction with their parents. Some students (20.3%) stated that their teachers did know their parents.

Item 10: This high school is a good place for students, teachers, and for parents.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	45	12.2
Disagree	107	28.9
Agree	192	51.9
Strongly agree	14	3.8
Missing	12	3.2
Total	370	100.0

Out of the students surveyed, 55.7% stated that the school is a good place for students, parents, and teachers. However, 152 students (40.1%) do not think that the school is a good place for the school population.

Item 11: I like homework that asks me to interview or talk with someone at home.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	87	23.5
Disagree	149	40.3
Agree	101	27.3
Strongly agree	28	7.6
Missing	5	1.4
Total	370	100.0

Students in this study generally do not desire homework that involves interviewing someone at home. However, some students (34.9%) do like to interview their parents or someone else at home.

Item 12: On most days, I do not have time to talk to my parents about school or homework.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	29	.8
Disagree	129	34.9
Agree	138	37.3
Strongly agree	67	18.1
Missing	7	1.9
Total	370	100.0

Over half of the students (55.4%) do not have time to speak to their parents about school or homework. In the previous study, 38.4% of the teachers stated that 50% or more of the parents spoke to their teen regularly about classwork. Possibly teachers would need to learn about their students and the missed opportunities that students and their parents have to discuss school related events. This may also be an indication as to why some students do not like to be given homework that includes interviewing a member of their family (Item 11). Often, there may not be a family member available to interview at home.

Item 13: My parents keep a close watch on how I am doing in school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	16	4.3
Disagree	79	21.4
Agree	183	49.5
Strongly agree	84	22.7
Missing	9	1.9
Total	370	100.0

A majority of the students (72.2%) indicate that their parents keep a close watch on how they are doing in school. In the teacher study, 68% of the teachers indicated that only 50% of the parents supervised their teen's behavior (Ramirez, 1999b). This shows that more parents are involved with monitoring their children than teachers indicated.

Item 14: I want my parent to be more involved in my education.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	72	19.5
Disagree	141	38.1
Agree	119	32.2
Strongly agree	22	5.9
Missing	6	4.3
Total	370	100.0

Over half of the students (57.6%) indicate that they do not want their parent to be more involved in their education. However, 38.1% of the students do want their parents to be more involved.

Item 15: My parents almost always know where I am, day or night.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly disagree	26	7.0
Disagree	55	14.9
Agree	184	49.7
Strongly agree	98	26.5
Missing	7	1.9
Total	370	100.0

A majority of the students (76.2%) indicated that their parents almost always knew where they were, day or night. A percentage of students (21.9%) indicated that their parents did not always know where they were. This parallels the response to Item 13 where parents are more involved than teachers reported.

Section 2: Student Reports of Family Involvement in the Transition to High School

Item 1: My family visited this high school and went to some classes when I was in 8th grade.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	106	28.6
False	207	55.9
Did not live in the area	51	13.8
Missing	6	1.6

Over half of the students shared that their family did not visit their present high school and attend classes before entering their freshman year.

Item 2: My family visited this school to learn about it when I was in 8th grade.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	78	21.1
False	238	64.3
Did not live in the area	50	13.5
Missing	4	1.1

Again, over half of the student’s families did not visit the high school before entering their freshman year. Looking at Items 1 and 2 in this section, note that many students did not live in the area of the high school that they attend. This may be a reason why they were unable to visit the high school before entering.

Item 3: My family helped me get used to high school when I entered 9th grade.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	199	53.8
False	163	44.1
Missing	8	2.2

A little more than half of the students stated that their parents assisted them in getting ready for high school. However, 44% of the students indicated that their parents did not assist them in getting ready for high school.

Item 4: I got off to a good start in 9th grade.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	246	66.5
False	114	30.8
Missing	10	2.7

A majority of students indicated that they got off to a good start in ninth grade.

Item 5: I have talked with my family about the courses I want to take next year.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	298	80.5
False	47	12.7
Missing	25	6.8

Although many parents were not involved in the transition from 8th grade to high school (visiting the school, assisting in learning about high school), a majority of the parents did speak with their children about courses to be taken the following year.

Item 6: I have talked to my family about what I want to do after high school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
True	274	74.1
False	70	18.9
Missing	26	6.8

Again, most students have spoken with their families...this time about what they wish to do after high school.

Section 3: How Parents Are Presently Involved with Their Teens

Item 1: My parents talk to my teachers on the phone.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	210	56.8
Once	70	18.9
A few times	71	19.2
Weekly	6	1.6
Daily	4	1.1
Missing	9	2.4

More than half of the students indicated that their parents have never spoken with their teachers over the phone. This also parallels the teachers' comments that there is a lack of communication between the school and the home (Ramirez, 1999b).

Item 2: My parents have a parent-teacher conference with ONE of my teachers.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	258	69.7
Once	51	13.8
A few times	50	13.5
Weekly	1	.3
Daily	3	.8
Missing	7	1.9

A significant amount of students (69.7%) reported that their parents have never had a parent-teacher conference with one of their teachers. Only 14% of the teachers surveyed stated that they met with 50% or more of their parents for a conference. However, the teachers (76%) also stated it is important to have at least one conference with each family, with 10% of the teachers indicating that it was not important to meet at least once with families (Ramirez, 1999b).

Item 3: My parents talk with all my teachers.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	254	68.6
Once	56	15.1
A few times	37	10.1
Weekly	6	1.6
Daily	4	1.1
Missing	13	3.5

Students reported that their parents have never spoken with their teachers. Again, this parallels the teachers' comments that there is a lack of teacher-family communication.

Item 4: My parents talk with my counselor about my future.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	203	54.9
Once	59	15.9
A few times	68	18.4
Weekly	13	3.5
Daily	10	2.7
Missing	17	4.6

A little more than half of the students who gave an answer (54.9%) stated their parents have never spoken with the student's counselor about the student's future. However, 33% of the students stated their parents have spoken with their counselors. In fact, more communication is present between parents and counselors than between parents and teachers (see Item 3 above).

Item 5: My parents attend school parent meetings.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	186	50.3
Once	62	16.8
A few times	101	27.3
Weekly	6	1.6
Daily	5	1.4
Missing	10	2.7

Half of the students reported their parents never attended school parent meetings.

Item 6: My parents volunteer at my school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Never	236	63.8
Once	41	11.1
A few times	67	18.1
Weekly	10	2.8
Daily	4	1.1
Missing	12	3.2

Of the students that reported, 33.2% indicated that their parents have, in some capacity, volunteered at school. However, a majority of the students stated that their parents have not volunteered at their school. Teachers (84%) indicated that parent volunteerism was important to help the school (Ramirez, 1999b).

Section 4: How Well Does the School Involve Families Now?**Item 1: This high school helps my parents understand teenagers better.**

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	142	38.4
School should start	109	29.5
School could do better	89	24.1
School does well now	13	3.5
Missing	17	4.6

The students (53.6%) indicate that their school should improve or start a program where their parents could learn more about teenagers. A small percentage of students (3.5%) indicated that the school does have a good program to teach parents about teenagers. Teachers (93%) felt all parents could learn ways to assist their teens on schoolwork at home if shown how (Ramirez, 1999b).

Item 2: This high school includes me in parent-teacher conferences.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	118	31.9
School should start	138	37.3
School could do better	68	18.4
School does well now	25	6.8
Missing	21	5.7

A significant amount of students (55.7%) would like to be involved in parent-teacher conferences.

Item 3: This high school tells my parents what I need to know to pass each course.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	88	23.8
School should start	119	32.2
School could do better	116	31.4
School does well now	30	8.1
Missing	17	4.6

Many of the students (63.6%) would like the school to assist their parents in understanding how students can pass teachers' courses. Again there is a need for better school-home communication.

Item 4: This high school tells my parents how report card grades are earned.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	106	28.6
School should start	90	24.3
School could do better	104	28.1
School does well now	52	14.1
Missing	18	4.9

Students desire (52.4%) for the school to inform parents how report card grades are earned. However, some students (14%) do believe that the school does provide this service.

Item 5: This high school tells my parents when I am having problems.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	113	30.5
School should start	68	18.4
School could do better	85	23.0
School does well now	71	19.2
Missing	33	8.9

Information is being given to parents (19%) when their child is having problems, but more students would like to see this start or improve (41.4%).

Item 6: This high school tells my parents when I am doing well or improve.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	90	24.3
School should start	123	33.2
School could do better	87	23.5
School does well now	34	9.2
Missing	36	9.7

Students (56.7%) would like to see more information go home when they (students) are doing well or are improving.

Item 7: This high school gives my parents information on homework policies.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	160	43.2
School should start	77	20.8
School could do better	69	18.6
School does well now	31	8.4
Missing	33	8.9

Many students (39.4%) would like the school to inform parents on homework policies.

Item 8: This high school informs my parents about how to help me prepare for college or work.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	95	25.7
School should start	115	31.1
School could do better	108	29.2
School does well now	21	5.7
Missing	31	8.4

More than half of the students (60.3%) would like to see the school improve or start communicating with parents about student preparation for college or career.

Item 9: This high school invites my parents to volunteer.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	190	51.4
School should start	61	16.5
School could do better	47	12.7
School does well now	37	10.0
Missing	35	9.5

Some students (10%) indicated the school does invite parents to volunteer. However, 29.2% of the students reported the school should start or improve parent volunteer opportunities. As indicated in Item 6 from the previous section (Section 3), teachers feel that parent volunteerism is important. Interesting to note is that over half of the students responding feel volunteerism is not important at this high school.

Item 10: This high school invites my parents to school programs or events.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	124	33.5
School should start	61	16.5
School could do better	75	20.3
School does well now	81	21.9
Missing	29	7.8

Many students (21.9%) feel the school does well with inviting parents to school programs or events, but many (36.8%) would want to see the school initiate or improve in inviting parents to programs or events. On the other hand, many students (33.5%) feel this is not important at their high school.

Item 11: This high school gives my parents ideas about how to help me with homework.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	129	34.9
School should start	97	26.2
School could do better	82	22.2
School does well now	26	7.0
Missing	36	9.7

Students reported (48.4%) that their school should start or improve communication about how to assist students with their homework.

Item 12: This high school assigns homework that asks me to talk to someone at home about my classwork.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	180	48.6
School should start	64	17.3
School could do better	54	14.6
School does well now	44	11.9
Missing	28	7.6

Some students (11.9%) have homework that asks them to speak to someone at home, whereas other students (31.9%) believe the school should improve or start assigning homework that has the students speak to someone at home.

Item 13: This high school includes parents on committees to make decisions about the school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	102	27.6
School should start	74	20.0
School could do better	112	30.3
School does well now	43	11.6
Missing	39	10.5

Half of the students (50.3%) reported that the school should improve or start to include parents on committees to make decisions about the school. Of the teachers that responded, 84% stated it was important for parents to join organizations (Ramirez, 1999b).

Item 14: This high school includes students on committees to make decisions about the school.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	59	15.9
School should start	126	34.1
School could do better	119	32.2
School does well now	25	6.8
Missing	41	11.1

Many students (66.3%) indicated that the school should improve or start to have students on committees to make school decisions.

Item 15: This high school asks members of the community to come and speak to my class about their work and interests.

<i>Value Label</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Not important at this HS	95	25.7
School should start	125	33.8
School could do better	89	24.1
School does well now	18	4.9
Missing	42	11.4

Few students (5%) stated that the school does invite community members to come and speak to them. More students (57.9%) would like to see the school improve or start to have community members come and speak to them about their work and interests.

Section 5: What School Practices to Involve Families Are OK with Students?

In this section, the statement and percentage of students who stated it would be “OK” with them will be cited.

Statement	Percentage
Statement: It would be ok if a teacher asked my parents to give me some ideas for a story or project.	79.5
Statement: It would be ok if a teacher asked my parents to help me study or practice for a test.	73.5
Statement: It would be ok if a teacher asked me to show my parents something I learned or did well.	81.4
Statement: It would be ok if a teacher asked me to talk to my parents about current events	71.9
Statement: It would be ok if my teacher asked me to talk to my parents about a TV show.	74.3
Statement: It would be ok if a teacher asked me to bring home notes, notices, or a newsletter from school.	71.1

Summary of Survey Findings

Students in this study want their parents to be involved in school related matters on certain occasions. They wish their parents to be informed directly by the school regarding grades, homework, and how to work with their children during their teenage years, and they wish that their parents would be contacted when they do something well. The students generally feel that parents are welcomed in the school, but feel there is a limited amount of communication that occurs between the school and home. Students also stated that parents are more involved in their lives than what teachers indicated when surveyed for the previous study (Ramirez, 1999b).

One of the first items that the students reported on was their belief that the teachers did not care about them. Almost half of the students (43%) reported that they felt that there wasn't a teacher that cared about them. Also, 33% of the students indicated that they felt there wasn't a teacher they could go to for help on anything. This is a startling percentage especially in this day and age of researchers and teacher educators promoting issues such as caring within the curriculum. One must note that the students who participated in this survey were freshman within a homogeneous school, within a homogeneous town. A question we must ask then is how do students from other populations feel about teachers from their schools? If students are feeling isolated, what is being done to correct this? If many students feel as if they do not have a teacher or another person on a high school campus that they could turn to, then what is being done for these students?

However, it is ironic that the students wish to be part of the parent-teacher conferences, but the students point out that the teachers do not know their parents (76%), do not speak to their parents over the phone (75%), nor do the teachers have individual conferences with the parents (70%). As reported by the students, parents seem to be in communication more often with the student's counselor than with the actual teachers. Students in this study desire to be proactive by being a part of the parent-teacher conference. What harm would occur if students were a part of the meeting?

The students also reported that the school involves parents in a limited capacity. The students wish that the school would invite their parents to sit on decision-making committees, speak to the parents about how to help the students with homework, and improve in inviting parents to school programs and events. However, there are indicators from the students that their parents are involved in many ways. Students reported that their parents keep a close watch on how they are doing in school, the parents know where the students are at all day, and the parents are in charge of decision making for the students that include items such as when to be home and work that is done around the home. This differs from the previous

study on teachers' attitudes as many teachers reported that parents were missing from the students' lives. This indicates that teachers may not know what is occurring in their students' homes.

An interesting highlight from the students (41%) is their feeling that the school is not a good place for students, teachers, and parents. Again, there may be room for speculation as to why the freshman students feel this way, but this may be an indicator of the school's relationship with parents, and the lack of opportunities for proactive student involvement.

Conclusion

There may be conjecture as to why students reported what they did, and whether there are additional indicators as to why they feel what they do regarding their parents and parental involvement. Personal interviews were requested to follow-up on the students' attitudes, but time factors involved in obtaining further documentation required from parents and the school board prevented such a continuation of the study. Interviewing students would have undoubtedly benefited the study, but the quantitative measures that were obtained did assist the school when they looked at the teachers' quantitative information. Although it would have been advantageous to get a wider sampling of students, it was suggested that freshman students be chosen for this study, to allow this researcher to report back the findings so parental involvement programs could be initiated before the students graduated.

This study assists researchers by providing an understanding that high school students do desire parental involvement, and that students are aware of the minimal amount of teacher-parent communication. From the study of teachers' attitudes (Ramirez, 1999b), teachers are aware of the minimal amount of school-home communication and the need for parental involvement, but there is a lack of willingness on the part of teachers to initiate any form of communication if it does not involve negative communication about a student's progress or their behavior. In defense of teachers, many feel overwhelmed with the prospect of communicating with all their students' parents. However, after working with pre-service teachers and developing strategies to allow them to contact all of their student's parents, I have found that my former students are making great progress in contacting parents. Perhaps the findings from this study and the teachers' attitudes study may show teacher educators that school-community partnership strategies are needed within teacher education programs.

As indicated in the previous section, educators need to be aware of the number of students within this study who felt there was not one adult on their campus that they would be able to speak with if they needed help. In light of the school trag-

edies taking place on our school campuses, teachers, administrators, school board members, families, and teacher educators need to make the development of a caring community a higher priority, rather than focusing solely on whether or not students are ready to take a standardized test. We should also explore whether secondary education programs are more focused on teaching content, rather than the entire student. Students of mine often feel perplexed in working with teens about personal issues. Many education students lack the skills necessary to engage in interpersonal conversations, and many have stated that they “only wish to teach” their content.

Other self-examinations for teachers and educators should be considered while looking over this study. When speaking about students and their families, are we as educators considering the family’s cultural capital while teaching? Not only should teacher educators address parental involvement strategies, but also cultural situations that may prevent students from interacting with their parents while at home. Are students emancipated youth? Do students actually have a place within their home where they could study in private without interruption? Do students come from a “traditional” family consisting of two parents? If not, can the parent or caregiver realistically make it to Back-to-School Night? If the student does come from a “traditional” family with two parents, are the parents available to assist in the education of their child? Can students share about and ask their parent or guardian for assistance with their homework? In order to find answers to these questions, this researcher has implemented home studies within his multicultural course so pre-service teachers could interview parents about their (the parents/guardians) reactions toward their children’s schooling. My students were hesitant to approach this project due to unsubstantiated worries they felt regarding parents. However, after completing their interviews and post-interviews, they found the study beneficial, for they learned what the parent’s story was regarding schools. My students returned stating that more needs to be done between the school and home to improve communication, create partnerships, and aid in working with students. The present study may assist my future teachers in working with parents to bridge any gap that may exist between the school and home.

By educating future teachers about their students’ homes, it is the hope of this researcher that the number of high school students reporting that no teacher cares about them would diminish. Then we may be better able to create stronger school-home partnerships.

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