

IN-SERVICE TRAINING TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE TEACHERS'  
INVITATIONS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to design, offer, and evaluate an in-service professional development program intended to support and enhance teachers' invitations to parental involvement in an urban public elementary school. The study was grounded in a review of literature on parental involvement in their children's school learning, models of parental involvement (highlighting teachers' invitations as a particularly strong predictor of parents' involvement behaviors and beliefs), and teachers' preservice and in-service education for parental involvement.

In this chapter, I offer brief reviews in these areas, summarize components of successful professional development experiences associated with positive changes in teachers' beliefs, knowledge, skills, and practices, and identify the studies' research questions and hypotheses. Subsequent chapters are focused on study methods, research results, and discussion of findings.

#### Benefits of Parental Involvement

Over three decades of research have validated the positive relationship between parental involvement in children's education and children's academic, behavioral, social, and emotional outcomes (for reviews see Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). Across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, when parents are involved in their children's academic development, at home or at school, children reap

the benefits of greater academic achievement (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Sy & Schulenberg, 2005). Studies focused on children who are at-risk of school failure, an outcome often associated with lower socioeconomic family status, have found that parental involvement is positively correlated with increased student school attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004) and achievement as measured by state mandated and standardized achievement tests (Epstein, 1991; Sheldon, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Westat, 2001). Further, longitudinal studies of at-risk populations from birth through age 20 have demonstrated positive direct and indirect effects of parental involvement on behavioral indicators of school success, such as lower grade retention rates, lower rates of placement in special education services, lower dropout rates, and higher on-time high school completion rates (Barnard, 2004; Reynolds & Ou, 2004).

Parental involvement has also been found to mediate the relationship between varied indicators of family and student at-risk status and academic achievement. The predictive power of family income, participation in free and reduced meal programs, parental education levels, and other measures of relative economic disadvantage in explaining variation in student performance is diminished when parental involvement beliefs and behaviors are taken into consideration. For example, parents' home-based involvement practices have been found to mediate the relationship between lower socioeconomic status and children's emergent literacy and social functioning (Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005). Similarly, parental educational aspirations, a measure of involvement that has gained increasing attention from researchers, have been identified as mediating the relationship between measures of

persistent poverty and students' educational success (DeCivita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004). A longitudinal study of low-income children found that parental involvement was more strongly related to literacy outcomes in children whose mothers were less educated than it was among children whose mothers were more educated (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004); these findings suggest that when mothers are involved, the gap in literacy performance between children of less and more educated mothers is reduced. Thus, parental involvement can be an especially important protective factor for children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who are at risk for school failure.

#### Teachers' Invitations as a Predictor of Parental Involvement

Given the numerous benefits of family involvement, it is important to understand why parents are or are not involved and how educators and communities can encourage and support parents' productive involvement in their children's education. Several researchers have proposed parental involvement models focused on various facets of the construct. Darling and Steinberg (1993) offered a model that identifies *characteristics of parenting style as a context* that moderates the effectiveness of parents' specific involvement practices. Eccles and Harold (1993) developed a theoretical model conceptualizing parental involvement as a *dynamic process* of give and take among the broader environment, schools, families, teachers, and children. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) described a model that explores the influence of parents' *modes of involvement* (categorized into behavioral, personal, and cognitive/intellectual involvement) on children's school performance. Epstein's (1995) model describes six categories of family

involvement providing a *typology of parental involvement behaviors* assumed to promote children's school achievement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 2005) model explored, among other constructs, parents' *motivations for involvement*. Empirical tests of this theoretical model validated three overarching constructs that influence parents' involvement decisions: parents' psychological motivators, parents' perceptions of invitations to involvement from others, and parents' life context variables. Among these motivational constructs, teachers' invitations to involvement were found to be the strongest predictor of parents' school-based involvement and were second only to invitations from the child in predicting parents' home-based involvement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, in press; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Other studies corroborate findings that teachers' invitations to involvement play a critical role in parents' involvement decisions, especially among parents who face barriers to involvement. Several investigators, for example, have found that teacher-initiated and school-wide parental outreach programs and informational practices predict parents' school-based (e.g., conference attendance, attending school programs, and volunteering at the school) and home-based (e.g., homework supervision, reading with the child, and skills-based practice) involvement practices (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom, 2005; Rimm-Kauffman & Zhang, 2005; Sheldon, 2005; Smith et al., 1997; Watkins, 1997). Similarly, teachers' home-school communication practices and development of positive, mutually supportive parent-teacher relationships have been strongly associated with parents' involvement in their children's education (Adams & Christenson, 1998; Barge & Loges, 2003; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004; Smith et al.,

1997; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002; Watkins, 1997). Additionally, when teachers and schools reach out to *all* parents and address challenges that impede parental involvement, parents from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds participate more frequently in their children's education and rate their participation as more important to their children's educational success (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000; Sheldon, 2005).

Many teachers and parents believe it is the school's responsibility to initiate contact and begin a discourse between school and home. For example, surveys of preservice teachers have found that the great majority think that parental involvement is under the control of the school and that it is up to the teacher to reach out to and involve parents in educational activities (Graue & Brown, 2003; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Tichenor, 1997). In parallel fashion, an ethnographic study of low-income, urban, African-American parents revealed parental beliefs that poor teacher-parent communication originates within the school (Lawson, 2003).

Research has also suggested that parents often want specific suggestions from teachers about how to foster their children's learning at home (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). Several investigators have reported that parents from low socioeconomic and ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to approach the teacher than are parents from higher socioeconomic and ethnic majority backgrounds (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005); however, the same investigators reported that all parents were very responsive to teacher requests and suggestions for involvement. Further, in a study of high- and low-achieving African

American families living in poverty, researchers reported that parents of high achieving students had dynamic relationships with the school and with the child's teacher (e.g., frequently checked with teacher on child's progress, maintained positive relationships with school officials), while parents of low achieving students rarely involved themselves in their child's school, except when prompted by their child's teacher (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000). In sum, teachers' specific invitations to involvement are a salient motivator and predictor of parents' involvement behaviors, especially for those parents who seem less likely to initiate a relationship with their children's school and/or teacher.

#### Teachers' Preservice and In-Service Preparation for Parental Involvement

Drawing on and responding to these two lines of research—that families have a strong influence on their children's academic achievement and teachers' outreach to parents predicts parental engagement in their children's learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)—recent legislation requires public schools to involve parents in their children's education in meaningful ways (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Under the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), teachers are required to communicate with parents about ways parents can support their children's learning ("such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating...in decisions related to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time") and "address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis..." (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, section 1118). In short, teachers are expected to communicate and work with parents more frequently and more effectively than ever before.

Given these requirements, it is unfortunate that many teachers are not well prepared to work with parents in building collaborative home-school partnerships (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Garcia, 2004; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Morris & Taylor, 1998). One survey of over 400 elementary and secondary school teachers revealed that over two-thirds believed that their preservice training to work with parents was inadequate (Purnell & Gotts, 1991). Qualitative interviews of teachers who worked in schools serving low-income, minority students revealed similar findings: 10 of 12 teachers reported that they had no formal preparation for working with parents (Shumow & Harris, 2000). Epstein and Sanders (2006) surveyed leaders of a representative sample of 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States. They reported that although 70% believed that it was important for teachers to know how to conduct programs and practices of involvement, only 7.2% strongly agreed that teachers who graduated from their programs were in fact prepared to work with families.

Teacher beliefs about the (in)adequacy of their preservice training for working effectively with parents may lead to lower personal beliefs about one's self-efficacy for working with parents. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment" (p. 3). Self-efficacy beliefs influence teachers' effort in the pursuit of goals, level of aspirations, persistence in the face of obstacles, and commitment to teaching (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs have also been positively related to reports of parental involvement in children's homework, educational activities, volunteering, and conference participation (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). More specifically, teachers' perceived self-efficacy for involving parents

has been positively related to frequency of communications with at-risk families (Ames, de Stefano, Watkins, & Sheldon, 1995) and to family involvement practices such as promoting parent volunteering through phone calls and assisting parents in home learning activities (Garcia, 2004). If self-efficacy beliefs are related to teachers' parental involvement behaviors, it is important to ensure that teachers believe that they have the knowledge, skills, and capabilities necessary to work effectively with parents.

In part because preservice teacher preparation for family involvement is often inadequate, schools, districts, and scholars have developed and offered in-service professional development workshops and programs. These programs have typically addressed: a) teacher beliefs about parents, schools, and the relationship between the two and b) the knowledge and skills necessary to build effective home-school partnerships (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Shumow & Harris, 2000). However, there is evidence suggesting that traditional in-service experiences, partly because of program design and delivery issues, are frequently ineffective in changing teacher practices and are often perceived by teachers as personally unsatisfying. For example, in a survey of 199 secondary school teachers over 70% rated school or district in-service sessions as their worst professional development experience (Sandholtz, 2002). Among 22 such activities (including experiences such as attending conferences, serving as a cooperative teachers, making presentations to colleagues, and participating in school visitation), respondents ranked school and district in-services as the least professionally valuable.

In an effort to design more constructive and successful in-service professional development opportunities, researchers have investigated features of professional

development that are positively related to change in teachers' beliefs, knowledge, skills, and practices. Across these studies, researchers have found several core components that teachers frequently associate with meaningful learning experiences. They include: the opportunity for collaborative peer interaction and professional communication; active, hands-on learning experiences; time for reflection and feedback; subject matter that is both content focused and aligned with policy and goals; and specific strategies that can be readily implemented in daily practice (Erickson, Brandes, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2005; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Guskey, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Sandholtz, 2002; Smylie, 1995; van den Berg, 2002). Despite theoretical and empirical support for these factors, few researchers have integrated these findings in the context of well designed and evaluated in-service experiences for teachers aimed at increasing the incidence and effectiveness of parental involvement. This study identified features of successful professional development experiences in order to design, offer, and evaluate an in-service training program on parental involvement.

### Summary, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

Parental involvement in children's education is associated with improved school performance and also serves as a protective factor for children who are academically at-risk (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Teachers' invitations are a powerful predictor of parents' beliefs and behaviors regarding participation in their children's learning, especially among groups of parents who have traditionally faced barriers to involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Green et al., 2006; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,

2005; Overstreet et al., 2005; Rimm-Kauffman & Zhang, 2005; Sheldon, 2005; Smith et al., 1997; Watkins, 1997). Although public schools, especially those serving students who are at-risk for poor educational outcomes, are required to involve parents in meaningful ways (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), teachers often lack critical knowledge and skills necessary to building effective partnerships with parents (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Garcia, 2004; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Morris & Taylor, 1998; Purnell & Gotts, 1991). In-service training has sometimes been offered as a solution to this problem; however traditional professional development experiences have often been found unsuccessful in changing teachers' practices (Sandholtz, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to a) design a theoretically and empirically grounded in-service professional development program to support and enhance teachers' ability to work effectively with parents, b) offer the program to a small group of teachers in a public, urban elementary school, and c) evaluate the effects of the program. Three specific research questions guided the evaluation of the program: 1) Is the structure of the program (one that incorporates theoretically-supported components of successful professional development opportunities into the program's design) professionally satisfying to participants and effective in influencing their interactions with parents? 2) Is the content of the program (i.e., the information provided in program sessions) professionally satisfying to participants and effective in influencing their interactions with parents? 3) Does the program have an effect on four targeted outcomes, including participants' self-efficacy for involving parents, the frequency and variety of participants' invitations to parental involvement, and the number of families in participants' classrooms who are involved in their children's education? With reference to the third

research question, it was hypothesized that over the course of the program, participants would report increased standing on each of the four targeted outcomes (i.e., increased self-efficacy for involving parents, increased frequency and variety of invitations to parental involvement, and increased numbers of parents involved in their children's education).

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### Participants

I identified a school that was interested in improving parental involvement through contacts with a member of the state legislature who had a close relationship with a public elementary school in her home district. Johnson Academy (pseudonym), named in her honor, served pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade families and students in a mid-sized urban area in a mid-southern state. The students were primarily African American (88%) and from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (81% received free and reduced meals). Rep. Johnson's work with the school had recently centered on an initiative to increase parental involvement through research-based interventions (grounded specifically in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler [1995, 2005] model of the parental involvement process). The in-service training program designed, implemented, and evaluated in this study was developed, in part, in response to Rep. Johnson's initiative.

After permission from the school district and Johnson Academy's principal were attained, participating teachers were recruited through a memo written and distributed by the principal. Given the purpose of the project (i.e., to design an in-service program to increase teachers' invitations to parental involvement and to evaluate the structure, content and effects of the program), we expected a small number of the schools' 23 teachers to participate (e.g., four or five). However, eleven teachers volunteered to participate, and nine completed the program (one did not begin the program, and the

other elected not to participate after the first session). Consistent with guidelines from the U.S. Institute of Education Sciences (2006) regarding Goal 2 Development Projects, the use of a relatively small sample of participants allowed the development of the intervention keyed to school needs and initial research regarding evaluation of the program and delivery model.

Among the nine participants, five were classroom teachers and four were specialty area or support teachers (i.e., librarian, Spanish teacher, literacy facilitator, curriculum facilitator). Three participants had degrees beyond a bachelor’s or master’s; these included a specialist degree in leadership/curriculum development with an endorsement in ESOL, an Ed.S., and a master’s degree plus 24 hours. General characteristics of the group are summarized in Table 1.

Table1: Participant demographic characteristics

<i>Grade taught</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Degree level</i>	<i>n</i>
Pre-Kindergarten	1	BA/BS	4
First grade	0	MA/MS	2
Second grade	0	Other	3
Third grade	2		
Fourth grade	1		
Fifth grade	1		
Other	4		
<i>Years teaching experience</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>n</i>
Less than 1 year	1	Asian/Asian-American	0
1-3 years	1	Black/African-American	4
4-6 years	2	Hispanic/Hispanic-American	0
7-9 years	0	White/Caucasian	5
10-15 years	2	Other	0
16 years or more	3		
<i>Sex</i>	<i>n</i>		
Female	8		
Male	1		

## Procedures

### *Pilot study*

To inform the structure and content of the training program, called the Parental Alliance with School (PALS) program, I conducted pilot interviews at Johnson Academy some months before the program began. The sample of interviewees included 14 volunteers (nine classroom teachers, two related arts teachers, one principal, one vice principal, and one family partnership specialist), none of whom participated in the training program. The interviews were designed to: 1) assess beliefs about the families served by Johnson Academy as well as current school and teacher practices to involve parents, 2) explore interviewees' beliefs about effective professional development methods and suggested training topics, and 3) allow the investigator to establish a mutually respectful professional relationship with administrators and teachers at Johnson Academy.

Major themes derived from content analyses (Strauss, 1987) of interviews revealed commonly used involvement strategies (e.g., talking with parents during car duty, sending home weekly/monthly newsletters, holding conferences), desired training topics (e.g., activities to promote parental support of student academic development at home, best ways to communicate with parents), and beliefs about parents and students (e.g., some parents might not know how to help their children academically, students who receive extra practice at home make greater gains than those who don't; see Appendix A for a report on findings from the interviews developed for Johnson Academy). These findings were combined with information in the literature on adult training and

professional development programs to design the structure and content of the PALS program.

### *Training program structure*

The structure of the training program was informed by a review of the extant literature on components of successful in-service experiences and themes identified in the pilot interviews. Consistent with information from both sources, the program was designed to be delivered in seven training sessions of one hour each offered on a bi-weekly basis at the school. The program was thus offered in seven relatively short sessions over a longer period of time (14 weeks) based on findings regarding “best practices” in professional development (Garet et al., 2001). The structure of each training session included: 1) time for participating teachers to share, discuss, and reflect on their behaviors regarding parental involvement, 2) introduction of a new or particularly interesting parental involvement strategy, and 3) time to develop a plan for implementing the strategy during the week following the session. This method of training delivery combined the theoretically supported components of collegial interaction and professional communication (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Guskey, 2003; Sandholtz, 2002), the opportunity for reflection and feedback (Sandholtz, 2002; Smylie, 1995), and a mechanism to promote the transfer of learning from the training session to actual practice (Erickson et al., 2005; van den Berg, 2002). Between sessions, participants implemented the parental involvement strategy targeted in the previous session and recorded their own and parents’ responses to parental involvement activities on two logs (Teacher Invitations Log, Appendix B; Parental Involvement Log, Appendix C) and a report (Teacher Report

of Targeted Involvement Experiences, Appendix D; these measures are described below). Participants' experiences in implementing the targeted strategy served as the focus of discussion and reflection in the following session. In other words, participants met, discussed their experiences, learned about a particular parental involvement strategy, planned for the coming week, implemented the strategy, recorded responses on varied measures, and met again. This cycle continued across seven sessions offered over a 14 week period. Because the structure of the training program required a significant amount of time and effort from participants (seven hours of in-session time and at least three additional hours implementing strategies and completing measures during the between-session weeks), each participant was offered a \$175 honorarium. This amount was suggested by the school district as consistent with union guidelines for teachers' out-of-school pay.

### *Training program content*

The content of the training program was designed based on responses from pilot interviews and a review of parental involvement literature (basic information about the sessions is summarized in Table 2; outlines of each session are provided in Appendix E; session handouts are in Appendix F). For example, the idea of a parent-teacher discussion (Session 5) came from a teacher's suggestion during pilot interviews. Consistent with suggestions from "best practices" research, all sessions focused on offering practical strategies and techniques teachers could readily apply to their work with parents (Erickson et al., 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Sandholtz, 2002). Effort was also made to incorporate as much sharing of knowledge, collegial interaction, and active, hands-on

learning experiences as possible in each session. In this way, direct instruction was minimized and the trainer generally acted more as a facilitator of focused discussion among colleagues than as an outside expert delivering information.

Table 2: Training session information

<i>Session</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Topic References</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Methods</i>
1	Why should I involve parents? What difference does it make?	Garet et al., 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005	Introduce program; summarize research regarding effects of parental involvement on children's outcomes; discuss alignment of parental involvement with school goals	Reflective practice: participants think specifically about what they expect to happen as a result of reaching out to parents and discuss responses as a group
2	Multiple, practical strategies for involving parents	Erickson et al., 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Sandholtz, 2002	Share and discuss "tried-and-true" ways to involve families; promote practice of varying involvement strategies to meet individual family needs	Suggestion circle: participants share their best involvement practices and brainstorm solutions for minimizing obstacles to family involvement
3	Tips to conduct partnership-focused conferences	Adams & Christenson, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992;	Present steps to conducting collaborative conferences; provide planning worksheets; review communication techniques	Role playing: pairs of participants practice both the parent and teacher role in context of a partnership-focused conference
4	Specific ways to equip parents: encouragement, reinforcement, modeling, and instruction	Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005	Offer information about specific parental involvement mechanisms and ways to discuss mechanisms with families	Skill practice exercise: participants break into small groups, discuss, and practice ways to equip parents
5	Parent and teacher roundtable discussion	Pilot interview	Provide a time for parents and teachers to talk together about their perspectives, questions, and suggestions	Face-to-face group discussion: participants and parents exchange ideas on family involvement issues
6	Involving parents with interactive homework and projects	Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995	Present research regarding the importance of children's invitations to involvement; practice designing and implementing an interactive project for families to complete at home	Demonstration: participants choose and design an interactive project and demonstrate how they would involve families through student initiated invitations
7	Celebration		Wrap-up and celebrate each participant's accomplishments	Award ceremony: trainer commends each participant's efforts and accomplishments

## Measures

To answer the three research questions guiding evaluation of the in-service training program (participants' satisfaction with and effectiveness of program structure and content, as well as effect on targeted outcomes), I adapted a Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale (Appendix G; Garica, 2004), and designed a Teacher Invitations Log (Appendix B), a Parental Involvement Log (Appendix C), a Teacher Report of Targeted Involvement Experiences (Appendix D), and a Program Evaluation form (Appendix H). Below I describe each measure in more depth and then describe the frequency and timing for administering each measure.

### *Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale*

The purpose of the Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale (Garcia, 2004) was to assess teacher's self-efficacy for involving parents. The scale (Appendix G) consists of 35 items rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Possible scores range from 35 to 210; higher scores indicate higher teacher efficacy for parental involvement. The items focus on Epstein's (2001) family involvement typology. The scale has been used in studies that included elementary school teachers enrolled in a graduate program at a large public university; the scale achieved a reported Cronbach alpha interitem correlation coefficients of .84 and .85 with that sample (Garcia, 2004). Teachers completed the Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale before and after the training program as a pre- and post-program measure of perceived self-efficacy for involving parents.

### *Teacher Invitations Log*

The purpose of the Teacher Invitations Log (Appendix B) was to assess the frequency and variety of teachers' invitations to parental involvement. I developed the log based loosely on Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang's (2005) family-school communications logs. The log is a self-report measure and uses a checklist format to facilitate ease of completion. Items include frequently used involvement practices, as identified in Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang (2005) and in pilot interviews with teachers at Johnson Academy, as well as the involvement strategies that were specifically targeted in training sessions. To score the log, I summed both the number of invitations reported and the number of different types of invitations each teacher reported issuing.

### *Parental Involvement Log*

The purpose of the Parental Involvement Log (Appendix C) was for teachers to report the number of families in their classroom who were involved in ways directly observable to the teacher. Because research (Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Piotrkowski, & Lamb-Parker, 1999; Reynolds, 1992) has suggested that not all involvement practices are observed by teachers (e.g., parents' home involvement practices, expectations for the child's schooling), this measure includes only parental involvement activities that teachers are able to reliably report (e.g. parent returned a phone call or written message, parent contacted the teacher about the child). The log includes a list of all of the students in the teacher's classroom and employs a checklist format for teachers to report on each student's families' involvement practices. To score the log, I summed the number of

times teachers reported that parents of students in their class were involved in any of the activities noted in the log.

#### *Teacher Report of Targeted Involvement Experiences*

The purpose of the Teacher Report of Targeted Involvement Experiences (Appendix D; hereafter Teacher Report) was to promote implementation of the parental involvement strategies targeted in the training sessions and assess qualitatively the content and quality of teachers' interactions with two targeted parents. Each Report asked teachers to reflect on and describe their experiences in implementing the specific involvement strategy targeted in the previous week's training session with each of two families. Each of the six Reports was based on the targeted strategy discussed in the previous session. Participants' responses were content analyzed (Strauss, 1987).

#### *Program Evaluation Form*

The purpose of the Program Evaluation Form (Appendix H) was to assess participants' satisfaction with the program structure and content and perceptions of program effectiveness. The form asked participants to rate the usefulness of each session, as well as the utility of the two Logs and Teacher Report associated with each session. It also asked participants to provide short answers to open-ended questions such as "Tell me two or three specific things that you learned from this program," and "What did you like most about this program?" Responses were compiled and content analyzed.

### *Demographic data*

Participants were also asked to provide specific demographic information on their ethnicity, sex, years worked as a full-time teacher, grade level taught, and highest degree earned.

### *Frequency and timing of data collection*

Participants completed the Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale before the program began and again after it ended. Over the course of the program, participants completed and returned one Teacher Invitations Log, one Parental Involvement Log, and one Teacher Report for each of Sessions 2 through 7; this yielded six completed Teacher Invitations Logs, six Parental Involvement Logs, and six Teacher Reports for each participant. Participants also completed a Program Evaluation form at the end of the program. The assessment schedule is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Assessment schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
1	Session 1	Complete Teacher Efficacy Scale prior to beginning of program and return
2	Implement strategy discussed in Session 1	Complete Teacher Invitations Log, Parental Involvement Log, and Teacher Report
3	Session 2	
4	Implement strategy discussed in Session 2	Complete 2 Logs & Report
5	Session 3	
6	Implement strategy discussed in Session 3	Complete 2 Logs & Report
7	Session 4	
8	Implement strategy discussed in Session 4	Complete 2 Logs & Report
9	Session 5	
10	Implement strategy discussed in Session 5	Complete 2 Logs & Report
11	Session 6	
12	Implement strategy discussed in Session 6	Complete 2 Logs & Report
13	Session 7	Complete Teacher Efficacy Scale and Program Evaluation

*Analysis*

The evaluation of the program focused on three main elements: the program’s structure, the program’s content, and the program’s effect on targeted outcomes. Because I incorporated theoretically-supported components of successful professional development experiences into the structure and content of the program, I wanted to know if, in reality, participants found these elements professionally satisfying and effective in influencing their work with parents. I used the Program Evaluation Form, Teacher

Reports, and field notes to provide rich, qualitative information about these questions. Further, because the purpose of the program was to support and enhance teachers' ability to work effectively with parents, I also wanted to know if the program had an effect on participants' perceived self-efficacy for involving families, the frequency and variety of participants' invitations to involvement, and the number of families in each participant's class who were involved. I used the Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale, Teacher Invitations Logs, and Parental Involvement Logs to provide quantitative information about these questions. In summary, both qualitative and quantitative assessments were used to evaluate the program structure, content, and effects on targeted outcomes. Research questions and associated measures are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Research questions and measures

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Measure</i>
Is the <i>structure</i> of the program: Professionally satisfying? Effective at influencing interactions?	Program Evaluation Form; field notes Teacher Reports; field notes
Is the <i>content</i> of the program: Professionally satisfying? Effective at influencing interactions?	Program Evaluation Form; field notes Teacher Reports; field notes
Does the program have an effect on <i>four</i> targeted outcomes: 1. Self-efficacy for involving parents 2. Frequency of invitations 3. Variety of invitations 4. Number of families who are involved	Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale Teacher Invitations Log Teacher Invitations Log Parental Involvement Log

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Program Structure

In this section I present results related to four theoretically-supported components of successful professional development experiences that were specifically incorporated into the structure of the program: 1) shorter sessions offered over a longer period of time, 2) time during each session for well-supported collegial interaction and sharing of knowledge, 3) opportunities in each session for reflection and feedback, and 4) mechanisms to promote transfer of learning from each session to actual practice. The data suggested that, overall, participants had positive reactions to each component. Further, participants' responses indicated that each component enhanced their work with parents.

#### *Shorter session offered over a longer period of time*

Participants indicated that delivery of the program in multiple sessions of one hour in length over a 14 week period did not drain personal resources such as time, energy, and attention span as might have occurred with a more traditional, time intensive schedule (such as, for example, two five-hour workshops). In order to communicate a sense of respect for participants' time as professionals, the facilitator was very careful to begin and end all sessions punctually (this was one of the ground rules set in Session 1 [see Ground Rules handout Appendix F]). Light snacks and drinks were provided to give participants a break and a pick-me-up after a full day of work at school. Discussions of

parental involvement experiences and issues occurred at the beginning of each session as participants gathered around and enjoyed the snacks. These techniques (respecting participants' time, providing refreshments, creating a relaxed atmosphere) fostered and maintained participants' interest in and enjoyment of a sustained focus on increasing parental involvement in their classrooms and school. During the course of the program, participants often remarked on how much they appreciated the time for casual conversations and the snacks while maintaining a focus on the issue at hand (e.g., one participant noted that her favorite part of the program were "the refreshments, fun, and fellowship").

Similarly, offering the program in multiple sessions also guarded against the possibility that participants might feel overwhelmed by too much information or too many tasks required in a short period of time. Over the course of four months, participants learned about and implemented a variety of involvement strategies, many more than could have been covered even in a day and a half (e.g., 10 hours) of workshops. For example, one participant created and sent home a list of Spanish names for common household objects and suggested that parents label these objects in their homes to aid student learning. Another participant, responding to parents' concerns with math homework, developed and sent home a math reference sheet to support parents' understanding of the math curriculum. A more complete list of example activities participants implemented to engage families in their children's education is offered in Table 5. Overall, these individual involvement activities came to create a significant contribution to school-wide parental involvement efforts. The design feature of breaking the content into multiple, bi-weekly sessions enabled participant to involve parents in

multiple and varied ways without becoming overwhelmed by too much information offered or too many tasks required at one time.

Table 5: Examples of participants' involvement activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Showing a parent how to “chunk” words to help her daughter learn to read</li> <li>● Role playing strategies with a parent to increase students’ visual memory of sight words as an aid to reading</li> <li>● Creating a reading log that included suggestions of questions that parents could ask their students about the text</li> <li>● Creating an outline to inform parents about conference and meeting topics</li> <li>● Sending notes home explaining what modeling is and examples of how to model</li> <li>● Including interactive projects in class newsletters</li> <li>● Communicating with parents about positive and negative behavior through assignment notebooks</li> <li>● Creating and updating a website with information on topics being covered in class and related assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sharing strategies with a parent to help the student write the numbers 0-100</li> <li>● Encouraging first grade teachers to include parental involvement activities when planning their unit</li> <li>● Calling parents to ask what they wanted to know more about in conferences</li> <li>● Sending a parent a get-well card signed by students in the class</li> <li>● Working with a parent on strategies for helping a student learn during Fall Break</li> <li>● Writing thank you notes to parents who attended a program at the school</li> <li>● Submitting notes to the school newsletter</li> <li>● Creating an interactive project for parents and students to complete together at home</li> <li>● Meeting with student teachers to discuss the importance of involving parents</li> <li>● Performing in a book-to-life skit at a PTA meeting</li> </ul>
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Offering the program in multiple sessions also enabled the facilitator to modify individual sessions to meet participants’ needs. For example, Session 3: Tips to Conduct Partnership-Focused Conferences, was specifically scheduled for the week prior to the district’s conference week. Many participants used the Parent, Student, and Teacher Conference Planning worksheets, provided in the PALS session, to facilitate these meetings with parents. These worksheets were very positively regarded. For example, one participant noted, “I felt good/pleased with what I had shared with the parent. I was

well prepared and tried to put the parent at ease.” Another remarked on her plans to use the worksheets again: “I would send home the Parent Conference Planning worksheet beforehand (as well as) the Thinking About School worksheet....”. The sixth session, Involving Parents with Interactive Homework and Projects, was shortened by 15 minutes because participants were exhausted. The school was applying for International Baccalaureate status, and teachers’ full curriculum plans had been due that morning. Had the program not been offered in multiple sessions, the schedule might not have allowed for adaptive responses to other unusually demanding events.

One foundational principle of professional development is to provide ongoing support for continual learning. Designing the program to be offered in multiple sessions over an extended period of time enabled the accomplishment of this goal. Scheduling training sessions on a bi-weekly basis gave participants time to develop ideas and then “try out” and practice what they were learning in the week between sessions. In addition, time was reserved during sessions to talk about participants’ experiences implementing the targeted strategy (one participant stated that the component she liked best about the program was that “we [participants] were able to discuss and implement strategies.”). Participants enjoyed the ongoing training so much that they requested continued support for strategy development after the conclusion of the program. One participant recommended “continue(ing) with suggestions, maybe once a month, via e-mail, that we could do to involve parents.” Another suggestion was that facilitators “follow up in two months and again before the end of the year, or even just send out an e-mail to encourage participants, or set up a time for future staff meetings even if (the) PALS representative can’t show up.”

### *Time for collegial interaction and sharing of knowledge*

Consistent with previous research (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Sandholtz, 2002; Smylie, 1995), participants responded very positively to the opportunity to share and learn from each other during program sessions. When asked what they liked most about the program, six of nine respondents independently volunteered comments such as “the opportunity to collaborate with peers;” “sharing of information;” “brainstorming with peers;” and “conversations.” One participant, who worked with other teachers in the school, reported plans to incorporate more collegial interaction into her practices. Responding to the question “Will you make any changes...because of PALS?”, this staff support participant stated that she would encourage other “teachers to share success stories or strategies to get parents involved in classroom procedures and homework....” These very positive responses underscored participants’ respect for others’ knowledge and their appreciation for the chance to share and learn from others’ experiences involving parents.

There was also evidence that these shared observations and ideas influenced teachers’ contacts and interactions with parents. For example, during Session 2 one participant mentioned that in the past the school provided pre-stamped post cards, called Noble Notes, which teachers had used to send home positive messages about students. The participant asked the principal if there were any Noble Notes left. The principal found them, made them available, and many teachers (participants *and* non-participants) began using them (again) on a regular basis. Participants noted that students and parents both reported that they enjoyed receiving these surprise, hand-written positive messages

at home (e.g., one teacher wrote that she “had positive results on all post cards sent home—from students and parents.”). Also, because many students’ homes did not have telephones, these notes provided another method of home-school communication.

Another benefit of offering time for collegial interaction during each session was the sharing of information among teachers from different grade levels (e.g., Pre-K, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>) and positions (e.g., Literacy Facilitator, Librarian, Spanish teacher). For example, during one group discussion, it was discovered that related arts teachers would like classroom teachers to send AgendaMates (a planning notebook provided to all students) with students to their related arts classes so that *all* teachers could use them for school-home communication. This suggestion was communicated throughout the school by the Curriculum Facilitator (a program participant), and all teachers began sending AgendaMates with students to their related arts classes (e.g, the Spanish teacher noted that this strategy “worked for the Spanish class. Teachers are participating.”). Another example of the benefits of providing time for the sharing of information across grade levels occurred in Session 5, the Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion. One participant, an upper-grade level teacher, offered the observation that “the session with the parents helped me to understand how and what parents were thinking because it involved all grade levels.” Through this discussion, involving parents of students in multiple grades, the participant was able to understand that some of the issues she faces in upper-grade levels originated in earlier grades and thus constituted issues for the school as a whole to address and resolve.

### *Opportunity for reflection and feedback*

During pilot interviews it was discovered that teachers often employed a set of about four involvement activities repetitively (e.g., phone calls, notes home, classroom newsletter, talking with parents at school) without giving much thought to the effectiveness of each strategy. One goal of the PALS program was to support and enhance teachers' use of a *variety* of involvement practices. Participants were encouraged to evaluate, modify, and replace specific involvement strategies based on the effectiveness of each. The Teacher Invitations Logs and Parental Involvement Logs were incorporated into the design of the program as tools to focus participants' attention on their specific parental involvement activities and to encourage them to reflect on parents' reactions to their invitations. Participants were given graphic feedback at each session on the frequency of their involvement behaviors, the variety of invitations they offered, and parents' responses to their invitations (see sample of individual teacher graph, Appendix I). When asked to comment about the Logs and Reports, participants offered several positive reactions, for example: "Both items were a great visual that helped me realize the way I involve (and) interact with parents and the way parents respond;" "It forced me to think about the number...and the type(s) of conversations I was having with parents;" "It was a nice accountability piece for me as well as a helpful reflection tool;" "I liked the feedback." These responses also underscore the functionality of these tools, namely they encouraged teachers to focus and reflect on the frequency, variety, and effectiveness of their parental involvement practices.

Over the course of the program, participants were given many opportunities to think deeply about parental involvement goals, issues, obstacles, and accomplishments.

These reflections sometimes affected participants' perceptions of parents. For example, one participant noted, "I have a different perspective of the parents of struggling children and parents who aren't as involved as I'd like (them to be). There is a reason for things." Another participant offered, "I knew everyone deals with stress, but I didn't realize how stressed out parents are when it comes to school. This gave me insight because I know the pressure I'm under as a teacher." Still another noted that she "learned to ask parents what they think. (Now) it seems so common-sense to ask a parent about their child's education." Thus the opportunity for reflection and feedback was positively received by participants and also appeared to influence their beliefs about and perceptions of parents, as well as their work with families.

#### *Mechanisms to promote transfer of learning*

Several mechanisms were incorporated into the design of the program to facilitate transfer of learning from individual sessions to practice. One mechanism was the Plan for Implementation (see Appendix J for a sample), which participants completed at the end of each session to encourage them to think about how they would implement the targeted involvement strategy with two families during the week in between sessions. Participants were able to choose the two families with whom they would implement the targeted strategy, thus increasing the chances that they would have a positive response from the parents and thus a "mastery experience" in their own learning. For example, one teacher noted that a parent whom she had targeted one week "is now checking out my website daily/weekly. I'm excited!" Another wrote that a parent "volunteered to make food for presentation day: positive feedback!" All participants rated the Plan for Implementation

as either “very useful” (57%) or “useful” (43%), and one participant specifically noted that she “only had to use the ideas with two parents, so it did not become overwhelming. Then (I) could use the idea with other parents if I like(d) it and it benefited parents.” Thus, participants experienced the assignments (target two parents with whom to try this strategy) and accompanying Plan for Implementation as useful tools that encouraged them to apply and implement learned strategies.

Another mechanism used to promote transfer of learning was the Teacher Report, which asked participants to note precisely what they did to involve the two targeted families as well as specific information about the ways parents responded. During the beginning of each session, participants discussed their experiences implementing the targeted parental involvement strategy by referring to their notes on the Teacher Report. For example, one participant shared how she talked with a parent of a student new to the school about volunteer opportunities and how the parent became actively involved and plugged into the operations of the school’s behavioral incentive program. The majority (88%) of participants rated the Teacher Report, as “very useful” or “useful.” Responses on the Teacher Report also offered evidence of the ways participants used the information delivered through the sessions in their work with parents. For example, in response to Session 1, one participant reported, “I called a parent to suggest that the student get tutoring to help with math concepts and passing English.” Another, reporting use of strategies gleaned through the Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion, wrote that he “created an incomplete work notice to send home to parents at the end of each week to (continually) keep them informed.” Reporting their involvement activities and outcomes on the Teacher Report created an accountability mechanism that also communicated to

participants the importance of transferring what they learned in the sessions to their actual work with parents.

Providing a week between sessions to implement targeted involvement strategies also encouraged participants to integrate what they learned into their daily work. Because personal experience generally precedes changes in attitudes, conceptions, and behaviors (Erickson, 2005), such active, hands-on learning is more likely than lecture or presentation alone to change participants' future ways of working with parents after conclusion of the program. Evidence of accomplishing this goal was found in participants' responses on the Program Evaluation Form to the question: "Will you make any changes in the way that you work with parents because of PALS?" All participants responded positively and mentioned several specific changes they planned to make. For example, one noted that she would "definitely utilize the Conference Planning worksheets" in the future. Others discussed similarly useful plans, for example: "I will talk more with parents about encouraging their students and to make more positive comments to them." "(I will) share strategies with parents to better (help them) assist their child(ren)." "I will have a roundtable discussion with my parents next year, (and) I will provide an interactive project in each newsletter." "(I will) be more responsive and try to understand that (parents) may feel worried or scared about meeting with school teachers." These statements reflect changes in participants' perceptions of parents and plans for interactions with them that appeared to be the result of transferring what they learned in a given session to their subsequent work with families.

## Program Content

Two overarching principles guided the selection of program content for each of the six instructional sessions: 1) Provide practical, specific, and relatively easy-to-implement parental involvement strategies, techniques, and/or applications and 2) Ensure that program content is relevant to teachers' parental involvement goals and activities. Overall results related to program content and results specific to the two principles that guided content selection are discussed below.

Overall, participants perceived the program content to be professionally satisfying and effective in influencing their work with parents. For example, all respondents rated each instructional session as either “useful” or “very useful;” no session was rated as “not useful” or “little bit useful” by any participant. Further, in response to the question “Next time we conduct this program, should we keep all six content-focused sessions?” all participants answered, “Yes.” Consistent with this finding, one participant noted, “I felt all the information was useful...There was not anything that I did not like.”

### *Provide practical, relatively easy-to-implement parental involvement strategies*

Each session provided participants specific techniques to use in their work with parents. For example, the highest rated content was presented in Session 3: Tips to Conduct Partnership-Focused Conferences. During this training, participants were given worksheets they could use and give to parents and students to facilitate more collaborative parent teacher conferences. Research-based tips for communicating effectively and other techniques related to conferences were also shared and discussed (Appendix F). Although many teachers reported using these worksheets in their Teacher

Reports, even more notable was the frequency with which participants made positive remarks about using the worksheets when they responded to the Program Evaluation Form. Nine comments focused on how much participants enjoyed using these tools and their plans to use them in the future (e.g., “(I learned) a very helpful procedure for parent conferences;” “I enjoyed the parent conference information suggestions;” “I will have a better focus for parent conferences;” “I will use the conference form for parents to share with me during conferences.”). Responses like these underscored participants’ appreciation of ready-to-use materials that could be easily implemented and very useful in their work with parents.

The content of the program also included summaries of research regarding the effects of parental involvement on children’s development, information on theoretically-supported parental involvement mechanisms, and information on varied parental involvement practices synthesized from research and educational journals. Although this information was often theoretical or somewhat abstract in nature, the facilitator was careful to translate it into concrete, practical, and specific strategies participants could use to build strong family-school relationships. Participants reacted quite positively to this component of the program content. One commented, “I really liked the information received on research-based practices (and) the perspective from...an outside source.” Another noted that she liked “learning...what the research says about parental involvement.” These research perspectives also informed participants’ work with parents. For example, one staff support participant often made copies of session handouts to share with other non-participating teachers in the school (e.g., she showed the Session 1 handout to an inclusion teacher who planned to use the information when she meets with

parents for IEP meetings; she also shared the Session 4 handout about the mechanisms through which parents' involvement influences students' outcomes with a teacher who then talked with a parent about encouraging her child). Another participant reported using research results summarized in Session 1 to talk with a parent about the importance of his involvement for the child's learning: "...I just wanted to encourage you to stay involved throughout (your student's) educational experience. There is a longitudinal study—that means over a long period of time—that has shown parental involvement is associated with lower grade retention, lower drop-out rates, and higher on-time school completion. With your help, (your child) will be on his way to achieving all this." Yet another participant noted talking with a parent about the theoretically-based concept of modeling: "I explained that (the parent, Mr. K) could think out loud (to) show his son how he got the answer. Mr. K. said he hadn't thought of it that way before, and he's willing to try modeling problem solving."

All in all, by providing ready-to-use worksheets and practical, down to earth, easy to implement involvement techniques, the training program enabled participants to focus their time and energy on their *interactions with parents* rather than on trying to develop activities or apply relatively abstract information. As one participant put it, "I like that the program gave me ideas to use," and another noted, "This program made me aware of small things I can do to encourage or involve parents."

#### *Ensure program content is relevant to parental involvement goals and activities*

Garet and colleagues (2001) suggested that one core feature of professional development opportunities that teachers identify as effective in changing their classroom

practices is “coherence,” or a sense of connection to goals, activities, and experiences and alignment with district and state standards. This sense of coherence was fostered in the content of the PALS program through interviews with teachers prior to the development of the program to assess what teachers in *this* school wanted to know about parental involvement. Thus, the content of the program was shaped and informed by teachers in the school working with this schools’ population rather than district administrators or other “outsiders” who might be less in touch with teachers’ needs and requests. In fact, the second most highly rated session (Session 5: Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion) was an idea generated by a classroom teacher during pilot interviews. Participants’ responses to this session included these: “When parents and teachers come together at a roundtable, we can work together as partners in education;” “I learned the components and benefits of a roundtable discussion;” “I learned to ask parents what they think.” Two participants noted that the roundtable discussion was the component of the program that they liked best. All of these comments underscored participants’ enjoyment of a session that was generated by another teacher in the school and perceived as connecting with their own parental involvement experiences and interests.

The content of the sessions also fostered a sense of “coherence” by aligning parental involvement with school policy and goals. At the outset of the program (in Session 1) the facilitator summarized the No Child Left Behind and Title I mandates regarding parental involvement and encouraged teachers to see the links between parental involvement efforts and varied state, district, and school standards. This session was ranked second most valuable by participants, underscoring their satisfaction with the content. Participants also applied knowledge from this session to their work with parents.

For example, a classroom teacher approached the Literacy Facilitator (both were program participants) for advice on ways to communicate components of state literacy assessments to parents in a “user-friendly” fashion (therefore complying with Title I parental involvement guidance). The classroom teacher used the Literacy Facilitator’s advice to explain student data during a meeting with a parent. The Literacy Facilitator reported that the “parent was pleased with having the opportunity to view her child’s assessment and (with having) the teacher walk her through the analysis of the data.”

Another example of a participant finding “coherence” in program content occurred when she applied knowledge about asking follow-up questions to ensure clear understanding in a meeting with a parent. The participant remarked that afterward she “felt that the parent was more confident now in what (she) had to teach the students that related to our state standards of curriculum.” Thus, participants were enabled to make connections among program content, parental involvement experiences and goals, and federal mandates and to apply that knowledge to their work with parents.

Another way program content ensured relevance and a sense of coherence was through the provision of choices. For example, in Session 2: Multiple, Practical Strategies for Involving Parents, participants generated a list of “tried-and-true” involvement strategies and were also given a handout highlighting additional techniques. From these two lists (one generated by participants, one provided by the facilitator), participants chose which activities they wanted to implement during the following week. Again, in Session 6: Involving Parents with Interactive Homework and Projects, participants were given worksheets on varied parental involvement projects but were also given the choice to creatively design a new project. Participants could select the project and strategies that

were most relevant to the grade level they taught, to their own classroom curriculum and activities, and to the individual families served in the classroom. Overall, the provision of choices and options fostered participants' sense of professional autonomy and enabled participants to make connections among program content, personal goals, and their interactions with parents.

### Targeted Outcomes

It was hypothesized that over the course of the program participants would report increases in perceived self-efficacy for involving parents, the frequency and variety of invitations that they offered to parental involvement, and the number of families in each participant's classroom who responded to their invitations by becoming involved. Participants recorded a small but statistically significant increase in perceived self-efficacy for involving parents ( $t [8]=2.1079$ , one-tailed,  $p<.05$ ). This indicated that over the course of the program, participants' beliefs about their ability to involve parents in a variety of meaningful ways in their children's education were strengthened. Because self-efficacy beliefs influence teachers' effort in the pursuit of goals, level of aspirations, persistence in the face of obstacles (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and frequency of communications with at-risk families as well as family involvement practices (Ames, de Stefano, Watkins, & Sheldon, 1995; Garcia, 2004), this increase in perceived self-efficacy constitutes a practically significant outcome for participants. However, although there were increases in other targeted outcomes (frequency and variety of invitations and number of families involved), none of these increases were significant.

While it is quite possible that one seven-session training program was not sufficient to produce anticipated changes, it is also possible that program content was not adequately targeted to these specific outcomes. Another possibility is that measurement issues may have affected outcomes. For example, the Teacher Invitations Log (which assessed frequency and variety of invitations) and the Parental Involvement Log (which assessed number of families reported as involved) were researcher-designed for the program and had not been pilot tested. Line graphs of each participant's reports on the three targeted outcomes revealed relative inconsistency (i.e., there did not seem to be clear patterns within or across participants over time). Field observations pertinent to this point suggested that many participants completed the logs from the previous week just as the next session was about to begin. When this happened, participants had to remember their activities and parents' responses from up to eight days prior to submitting the logs. Although the facilitator sent numerous e-mail reminders and stressed the importance of completing each log *during* the week between sessions, several participants' apparent last-minute completion of the logs rendered the data somewhat suspect. Nonetheless, participants reported that they found the logs useful, especially for record keeping purposes (e.g., "Excellent resource to log information from parent contacts;" "These are great tracking tools to show that the teacher made efforts to reach out to the parents;" "Good for records. Easy to fill out."). All participants (100%) suggested that the Teacher Invitations Log be used again; the majority (88%) suggested that the Parental Involvement Log be used again.

It is highly possible that participants did not complete the logs as suggested because of other demands on their time and energy. Ironically, while participants reported

they found the logs useful for record keeping and accountability purposes, they also commented that the component of the program they liked least was filling them out every other week (e.g., responses to a question about what participants “liked least about the program” included these: “Having to complete a lot of forms before we met again;” “The paperwork.”). One respondent’s suggestion was to format the Teacher Invitations Log like “a calling log” and recommended the information categories of “who, date, time, contact information, (and) reason (for contact).” Perhaps such a change would catalyze participants’ timely and more accurate reporting of parental involvement activities by aligning more closely with teachers’ personal goals and experiences of multiple demands on their limited time and energy.

### Results Summary

Overall, the results suggest that multiple components of the program’s structure and content were perceived by participants as enjoyable, fulfilling, and useful and that these components were also effective in fostering and enhancing their work with parents. Breaking the training into multiple sessions of a relatively short duration over a 14 week period enabled participants to learn about and implement a variety of specific, practical parental involvement strategies without feeling overwhelmed or burdened. Participants also gained knowledge of research related to parental involvement and its specific effects on children’s learning and development. Collaborating, sharing, and reflecting on salient parental involvement experiences appeared to enhanced participants’ attitudes, beliefs, and skills related to involving parents and building positive family-school relationships. Mechanisms built into the program to promote transfer of learning from training to

practice increased the application and use of program materials and content. Lastly, although three of four targeted outcomes (frequency and variety of invitations and number of parents involved) did not reflect anticipated change across the program, participants did report increased feelings of self-efficacy for fostering and supporting parents' positive engagement in their children's learning.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to design, offer, and evaluate an in-service professional development training program—grounded in theory and research—to equip and encourage teachers to work effectively with parents. While I did not find support for hypothesized increases in frequency and variety of teacher invitations or in teacher reports of number of families involved, the program did yield significant increases in participants' efficacy for involving families. In addition, evaluation of the program itself provided rich information regarding participants' satisfaction with the structure and content of the program and preliminary evidence regarding program influence on increasing and enhancing participants' interactions with parents. Potential reasons for these findings, suggestions for research, and implications for the design of future in-service professional development programs are discussed below.

One of the goals of the study was to investigate issues related to the *design* of in-service professional development programs specifically aimed at supporting teachers' engagement of families in their children's education. Extensive searches of PsycInfo and ERIC using the terms *professional development*, *in-service teacher education*, *involvement*, *parent school relationship*, *parental involvement*, and *parents* yielded very few sources (Ames et al., 1995; Floyd, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Shumow & Harris, 2000). Because teachers' invitations are a powerful predictor of parents' involvement in their children's learning (Green et al., 2006; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,

2005) and because studies suggest that many teachers do not feel adequately equipped to effectively engage parents (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Purnell & Gotts, 1991), it is vitally important to offer in-service training opportunities that are successful in equipping teachers with the critical knowledge and skills required in this arena. This study contributed to what we know about the *design* of professional development programs by 1) responding to “best practices” research and using theoretically and empirically supported components in the program (i.e., experiences teachers identify as effective at changing their practices) and 2) offering the program in the field and assessing participants’ behavioral and affective reactions. In this sense, the program represented an effort to “take research to practice.” Results indicated that elements of program design (e.g., multiple sessions offered over an extended time period, opportunity for collegial interaction and sharing of knowledge, provision of specific, practical strategies, ensuring content “coherence”) were perceived by participants as professionally satisfying. There was also some evidence suggesting that elements of program design influenced teachers’ practices with parents. For example, over the course of four, months participants were able to implement numerous and varied parental involvement strategies (see Table 5), many more than might have occurred had the program been offered in a traditional one-(full-) day workshop format.

Previously published in-service programs focused primarily on discussing obstacles to parental involvement and brainstorming solutions (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002) or planning for family engagement (Shumow & Harris, 2000). The program offered in this study moved beyond previous findings by specifically focusing participants’ time and energy on *implementing* and *practicing* learning, while providing

support and feedback. In this way, not only were participants' beliefs, goals, and plans addressed, their actual behavior with parents was targeted in training sessions. This is a particularly important objective given that teachers' outreach to parents and home-school communication practices are significantly related to parents' beliefs about the importance of their involvement and their participation in their children's education, especially among parents who are less likely to initiate a relationship with their children's school and/or teacher (Adams & Christenson, 1998; Barge & Loges, 2003; Dauber & Eptein, 1993; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004; Smith et al., 1997; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000; Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002; Sheldon, 2005; Watkins, 1997).

Regarding evaluation of the program, the increase in participants' self-efficacy for involving parents is important theoretically and pragmatically. Theoretically, an increased sense of perceived self-efficacy should influence participants' goals for parental involvement, efforts to engage families, and persistence in the face of obstacles in building collaborative home-school relationships (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). It should also positively influence the frequency with which teachers communicate with and issue invitations to involvement to at-risk families (Ames et al., 1995; Garcia, 2004). Higher levels of perceived self-efficacy is therefore a significant outcome for teachers who, like those participating in this program, serve families less likely to involve themselves and/or are difficult to reach. Pragmatically, increased parental involvement by work just such as this—equipping teachers more fully for building relationships with parents and their students—is educationally significant.

The finding that the program did not have significant effects on frequency and variety of invitations to involvement or number of families reported by teachers to be involved was disappointing. The program may not have influenced these targeted outcomes for several reasons. The program, as designed and scheduled, may not have been long enough or may not have provided sufficient contact hours. Similarly, program goals and performance feedback may not have been clear enough, the content may not have been appropriately targeted to participants' needs, and the training methods used may not have enhanced participants' knowledge and skills as anticipated. At the same time, more pragmatic issues may have interfered. For example, the measures may not have been used by participants according to directions and day-to-day demands on teachers may have made daily completion of measures and accurate recording difficult. It is important to note, however, that although the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log were not as useful as intended for data gathering purposes, they were perceived by participants as useful for accountability and record keeping purposes. This was an unanticipated finding, and it is recommended that future instrument development focus on aligning researchers' goals with teachers' objectives to create instruments optimally suited to both parties.

Certain limitations, of course, constrain ability to generalize results beyond this participant group. The study was conducted in one school with a small number of participants. It is possible that the program would not be as successful with larger numbers of participants or in another setting. It is also possible that other parental involvement initiatives in the school (e.g., behavioral reward program that involved parents, AgendaMates) were driving changes in participants' interactions with parents.

Also, the school was focused on parental involvement as an explicit goal. Certainly replications are necessary to test these hypotheses. Future studies and/or replications should also include a control condition and consider addressing other methodological issues related to making causal claims. Reliance on self-report measures is another limitation. In future work, several sources of information should be assessed, especially parents' reports of teachers' invitations to involvement. Lastly, the overall objective of involving parents in their children's education is to encourage and support greater academic, social, and emotional outcomes in children. The real test of the program's effectiveness is the realization of this goal through increased student achievement.

From a practice and policy standpoint, the implications of what we learned about the design and evaluation of professional development experiences targeting teachers' interactions with parents are clear. Under No Child Left Behind (2001) legislation, local education agencies and schools are required to "educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff in the value and utility of the contributions of parents..." (Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A non-regulatory guidance, 2004, p. 27). Although educators and researchers have begun to respond to this call by providing in-service learning opportunities (Ames et al., 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Shumow & Harris, 2000), more attention needs to be paid to the development of theoretically grounded and rigorously evaluated professional development models and methods focused on equipping teachers with the critical knowledge and skills required to work effectively with parents. This study offers one example of such a program in development. The next step should involve replication, use of multiple school sites, and

improved measures targeted to teachers, parents, and other significant “players” in the family-school interaction process.



At Peabody College of Education, Vanderbilt University

# Teachers' Thoughts, Beliefs, and Behaviors Regarding Parental Involvement

A Report on Pilot Data  
Prepared for Johnson Academy



May, 2006

This school specific report summarizes results from informational interviews with administrators, teachers, and school staff. We gratefully acknowledge Peabody College for funding and thank Johnson Academy for their participation. Contact information: Katie Shepard, Department of Psychology and Human Development, Box 512, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37203 or [katie.shepard@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:katie.shepard@vanderbilt.edu).

# What do Teachers Think, Believe, and Do Regarding Involving Parents in their Children's Education?

## Brief report on findings for **Johnson Academy**

This report presents the major themes that teachers discussed during interviews designed to elicit thought, beliefs, and behaviors regarding working with parents at Johnson Academy. The following topics were discussed during interviews:

- Examples of ways that parents are involved in their child's education
- Examples of ways that parents are not involved in their child's education
- Beliefs about why parents are not involved
- Beliefs about parents at Johnson Academy
- Beliefs about students at Johnson Academy
- Beliefs about themselves as teachers
- Parental involvement strategies and behaviors
- Effective and ineffective parental involvement strategies
- Suggested topics for training regarding working with parents

Major themes regarding each of these topics are presented below according to topic.

## Who participated in the study at Johnson Academy?

Eleven teachers representing kindergarten through fifth grade and the related arts voluntarily participated in interviews. The Principal, Vice Principal, and Family Partnership Specialist also participated in interviews; however, their responses are not discussed in this report due to the different nature of the information that they supplied and the commitment to protect all participants' confidentiality.

## What are some important things to keep in mind when we consider these findings?

The information gleaned from these 11 interviews of teachers gives us a good indication of what many teachers at Johnson Academy think, believe, and do about involving parents in their children's education. However, because only a sample of teachers participated in these interviews, it is possible that not all teachers' opinions are well represented by these results. Also, a teacher's relationship with parents is a complex subject, and it is possible that the interview did not cover all important topics related to teachers involving parents. One other point to keep in mind is that the results presented in this report are based solely upon self-reported information gathered in interviews. There were not any observations of classroom practices to confirm teachers' statements about practices and behaviors with parents.

## Major Themes Regarding Parental Involvement

### What are examples of ways that parents are involved?

Teachers listed a number of ways that they perceive parents to be involved in their children's education including, but not limited to:

- calling the teacher
- looking for weekly letters with homework information
- asking the teacher for and doing activities at home
- coming to the school to volunteer
- chaperoning or attending parties
- bringing in supplies or snacks
- attending conferences
- supervising and checking homework
- learning new methods for teaching math and literacy skills
- attending PTA meetings, open house, and registration

Teachers also described what they pictured to be an "involved" parent. They described this parent as one who: supports them; respects their comments, suggestions, and teaching; wants the child to do well in school; reads to the child and/or supervises homework; has high expectations for the child; returns phone calls; attends conferences; and returns forms that request their signature.

## What are examples of ways that some parents are not involved?

Teachers listed fewer ways in which parents were not involved in their children's education. However, at least three or four teachers struggled with the same types of non-involvement. The examples they gave included, but are not limited to:

- parents not doing their part at home (e.g. with reading or homework)
- parents who have been contacted multiple times and have not responded
- parents who are not involved unless their child is in trouble
- parents who do not return notes or forms that request their signature
- parents who do not attend PTA, conferences, open house, or registration

## What are teachers' beliefs about why parents are not involved?

In response to the question, "Why do you think some parents are not involved in their child's education? What is going on there?" teachers offered many possible reasons. The following reasons were given by multiple teachers, meaning many teachers are aware of these barriers to involvement:

- the parent is intimidated by the school setting due to low level of education and/or a poor socioeconomic background
- the parent had bad experiences in school
- the parent's work schedule does not permit at-school participation
- the parent doesn't have transportation
- the parent is busy with other life demands
- the parent doesn't have a phone
- the parent doesn't know what to do at home with the child
- the parent has limited reading skills

Teachers also offered many reasons that revealed a more negative outlook about some parents. Some additional reasons for some parents' lack of involvement are below. However, it is important to note that all interviewed teachers realized that these do not apply to all, or even most, parents at Johnson Academy.

- the parent doesn't want to bother because she doesn't really care about her child's schooling
- the parent's participation isn't mandatory (e.g. volunteer hours are mandated for zoned parents, conferences, etc.)
- the parent thinks that it is the school's responsibility, rather than a shared responsibility, to educate the child
- the parent doesn't perceive education to be important or beneficial
- the parent is not invested in the school because he doesn't pay anything for the child to attend

- the parent doesn't think that her child needs additional practice at home
- the parent doesn't think that his involvement is necessary because the child is in an upper grade
- the parent is young and immature
- the parent doesn't trust the school or teachers
- the parent is from an urban area
- the parent does not perceive school as a friendly, welcoming environment

## What beliefs about parents emerged?

Although the interview did not ask teachers specifically to talk about their beliefs about parents, many thoughts about parents were expressed. Some beliefs were spontaneously expressed by multiple teachers and thus appear to be major themes surrounding teachers' beliefs about parents. These themes are discussed below.

Teachers mentioned that it is important to encourage the parents of Johnson Academy to see that education is the key to getting out of poverty. The teachers thought that many parents don't believe that education is essential to their children's success. However, all teachers stated beliefs that parents want the best for their child.

Teachers talked about approaching parents to offer both positive and negative comments about their child. The teachers perceived this to be a purposeful strategy so that the parent doesn't automatically expect a negative comment and become defensive.

Teachers stated that sometimes when they talk with parents, parents will be supportive in their presence, but believed that the proof of parental support is in the parents' and/or students' behavior (e.g. homework completion, returned reading logs, etc.). Some teachers also felt that they could talk to parents and give them suggestions, but in the end parents are going to do whatever they want to do. Teachers were also concerned about the negative message that is sent to a student when a parent doesn't follow through on a teacher's suggestion.

Teachers mentioned that parents may not know how to help their child at home. They also talked about parents not realizing that their behavior toward the child may not always be the most developmentally appropriate way of parenting or responding to the child (e.g. insulting the child and consequently lowering the child's self-esteem). Teachers believed that parents behaved this way because it was how they were raised by their parents.

Teachers talked about serving food at PTA meetings as a strategy to increase attendance and parental participation. The teachers remarked that it was an effective strategy to involving parents who typically would not attend school-

based events. Teachers also expressed a sense of disappointment that some parents so not seem intrinsically motivated to attend.

Teachers talked about their ability to tell which parents were involved in their child's education (and which parents were not involved) by the child's behavior/schoolwork. Teachers believed that students who were receiving extra practice at home made greater gains through the year than did students who did not receive extra practice at home. This belief was offered by more lower-grade than upper-grade teachers. However, many teachers in various grades talked about the importance of continued parental involvement throughout a child's schooling. They also thought that many parents don't realize that it is important to remain involved across the child's school years.

Teachers remarked that the most difficult-to-reach parents were the ones with whom they most needed to have a positive working relationship. The teachers mentioned that the parents who they believed most need to attend workshops and PTA events are the ones least likely to come.

Teachers stated that the methods they currently use to teach reading and math skills are different from methods parents may have learned (i.e. the way parents learned reading and math is different from the way their children are learning reading and math). Teachers struggled with how to involve parents at home with homework or extra practice due to these differences in methods.

## What beliefs about students emerged?

Again, although the interview did not ask specifically for teachers to talk about their beliefs about students, many thoughts about students were expressed. Some beliefs were spontaneously expressed by multiple teachers and thus represent major themes surrounding teachers' beliefs about students and the effects of parental involvement on students' development. These themes are discussed below.

Teachers stated that when they are not able to involve a parent in the child's education at home (e.g. the parent will not supervise homework, read to the child, practice skills with the child, etc.), that they would try to make up for the lack of involvement within the classroom. That is, teachers will offer supplementary practice and intervention services to the student or they will spend extra one-on-one time with the student, if possible.

Teachers mentioned that students enjoy receiving "good notes" to take home to their parents. They believed that the parents are happy to receive positive information about their child and that the child is encouraged and reinforced by parents' positive reaction to the notes.

Some teachers talked about students in their classrooms who seemed to be performing below their maximum level due to a lack of parental involvement at home. However, if these children did not present problems in the classroom (i.e. behaviorally), teachers indicated they did not make extra effort to contact the parent (as they would if the child was presenting problems).

Teachers also mentioned the difficulties that they have with student discipline. Teachers believed that the students have inconsistent rules and expectations between home and school environments, and that this inconsistency causes behavior problems.

## What beliefs about themselves as teachers emerged?

In talking about involving parents, teachers would often make reference to their own thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Some beliefs were mentioned more than once and thus represent major themes. These themes are discussed below.

Teachers talked about investing their time in involving parents. They mentioned that developing a relationship with parents takes persistence and time-consuming effort. However, teachers' motivation for investing that time was the benefit for their students they believed would come from parental involvement. They suggested that if involving parents helps their students academically and developmentally, it would be a worthwhile expenditure of their time. In other words, they suggested you take the time to work with parents because you care about your students and you want the very best for them.

Teachers also often sympathized with parents. For example, when teachers commented on the young age of some of the parents, they also talked about the difficulties that such early parenthood might bring. Teachers made efforts to understand the parent's life circumstances.

At times, I mentioned home visits as one means to involve parents. Some teachers responded that they would not feel comfortable visiting the homes of their students. Teachers also felt that if it would really make a difference in their students' lives, then it is something that they would do.

## What are some parental involvement strategies?

Teachers talked about multiple strategies that they use in order to connect with parents and involve them in their child's education. Some of the strategies that teachers mentioned include, but are not limited to:

- phone calls

- talking to parents in the hallways at school
- talking to parents during car duty
- talking with parents during registration and open house
- starting a conversation with a parent with a positive comment about the child
- establishing a relationship with parents from the beginning of the school year, before any problems occur
- sending home a weekly letter with pertinent information and homework
- sending home conduct grades and graded papers requesting the parents' signatures
- sending notes home
- sending home the math curriculum sheets
- offering trainings and workshops for parents
- having parent-teacher conferences
- inviting parents to PTA meetings
- sending home guided reading books

### What are some effective and ineffective parental involvement strategies?

During the interview, teachers were asked if any strategies they have used to involve parents have seemed to work well and if any strategies have seemed to not work well. The responses to these questions were fairly vague e.g., it is possible that teachers have not been encouraged to consider the effectiveness of their strategies. It is possible that teachers are consumed with the sometimes difficult logistics of getting in touch with parents in order to communicate with them. For example, many teachers were quick to point out that sending notes home to parents is not an effective strategy, and that phone calls seem to be a better way to get in touch with parents. However, many teachers also commented that, on second thought, phone calls were not always effective either because some parents change phone numbers and may not inform the school (and this was a source of frustration for teachers). Thus, the logistical difficulties of communicating with parents may outweigh efforts to consider the effectiveness of parental involvement strategies.

### What are suggested topics for training regarding working with parents?

Teachers were asked about any questions they had regarding working with parents and any suggestions they had for training sessions devoted to parental involvement. Topics mentioned most often include:

- activities to promote parental support of student academic development at home (e.g. projects, interactive homework assignments, etc.)

- working with parents to address students' discipline and behavior problems
- how best to communicate with the parents of Johnson Academy and establish mutually supportive relationships
- strategies for maintaining contact with all parents
- strategies for working with parents and students from an urban background

Teachers also talked about their desire for practical strategies for parental involvement that they can implement in their classroom. Teachers mentioned that the best training is simply implementing a practice, or in other words, "just doing it."

### What are some suggestions for using this information?

All in all, the teachers of Johnson Academy seem to be making a concerted effort to reach out to parents and involve them in their children's education. Some of the most encouraging practices that these teachers described (in comparison with some teachers described in the research literature) include making positive contacts and comments, sending home weekly information sheets with daily homework suggestions, and reaching out to parents before a problem with the child occurs. Teachers were also aware of and sympathetic about the barriers to involvement that some of the parents face. Additionally, Johnson Academy provides multiple workshops and resources for parents. Much is already being done to make parents feel like valued partners in their children's education and development.

These interviews also revealed a few areas of current strength in family-school relationships that might be made even more effective. For example, some teachers mentioned that the Family Partnership Specialist hosted many helpful workshops and programs for parents, and others were clear that they felt comfortable asking the Family Partnership Specialist for additional information, guidance, or help when they had an issue or concern about a parent. Some teachers also mentioned that the Principal and Vice Principal had additional knowledge of some of the families at Johnson Academy, and they felt that they could turn to the administration for help when they were not able to contact a family or were concerned about a family. However, teachers also mentioned some uncertainty about what information the Family Partnership Specialist, the Principal, and the Vice Principal had about families and what outcomes occurred after they shared a concern about a particular student or family. Perhaps stronger opportunities for regular communication between and among the administration, staff, and teachers would foster the increased exchange of helpful information, especially regarding hard-to-reach families. For example, the use of e-mail might help all parties stay informed about concerns, questions, or requests for additional information about families.

Second, as discussed above, it seems as though teachers have not thoroughly focused on the effectiveness of the parental involvement strategies that have been used. Seemingly, many teachers have a suite of three or four activities that they do repeatedly to involve parents (e.g. phone calls, talking with parents in the hallways, talking with parents at drop off/pick up, and homework sheets)—and this is wonderful. However, when these strategies do not work, it seems that some teachers do not attempt to alter their approach or vary their attempts to involve parents. Also some, but not all, teachers do not select different involvement strategies based upon the family's circumstances, personality, preferences, etc. Perhaps an increased awareness of the variety of techniques and strategies that can be used to involve parents, and support for varied strategies according to the situation, would be helpful to increase parental involvement at Johnson Academy.

Third, teachers suggested that they would like to know more about involving parents and working with urban parents in the most effective manner. The training topics above were suggested by the teachers in response to an interview prompt, but nearly all teachers expressed that they would appreciate additional training related to parental involvement strategies and techniques. Given teachers' expressed desire to increase skills in developing relationships with parents, perhaps practical professional development is appropriate.

## Thank You!

I would like to thank all of the teachers, the administration, and the Family Partnership Specialist for taking the time to talk with me about parental involvement at Johnson Academy. Your openness and honesty are greatly appreciated. I cannot thank you enough for your participation.

## Teacher Invitations Log

This sheet asks you about what you have done to interact with parents of the students in your classroom. Please think about the week of (appropriate dates here) when you answer. Also, if you have already implemented your target strategy for this week, don't forget to count those invitations.

### How many times did you talk with parents?

Directions: Write the total number of times that you did each activity on the line beside the activity. (Please think about the past five school days when you answer.)

- \_\_\_ Phone call attempts
- \_\_\_ Number of phone conversations with parents
- \_\_\_ Sent individualized note home
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent at school
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent at his/her home

### What did you talk about?

Directions: This section asks you to answer the question: I talked about the following topics with \_\_\_(how many?)\_\_ parent(s) in the past five school days. Write the total number of parents with whom you talked about each topic on the line beside the topic.

- \_\_\_ Student problems or failures
- \_\_\_ Student accomplishments or improvement
- \_\_\_ The importance of their involvement and the difference that it can make
- \_\_\_ Ways the parent can help the student academically
- \_\_\_ Ways the parent can help the student behaviorally
- \_\_\_ Ways to access resources to help themselves or their family
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent about how to encourage their child
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent about how to reinforce their child
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent about how to instruct their child
- \_\_\_ Talked with a parent about how to model good behaviors for their child
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### How many times did you send things home to ALL parents?

Directions: Write the total number of times that you sent the following materials home to all parents in the past five school days on the line beside the activity.

- \_\_\_ Newsletter with class or school information
- \_\_\_ Graded homework
- \_\_\_ Student conduct/behavior report
- \_\_\_ Homework assignment sheet
- \_\_\_ Math Home Links sheet

- \_\_\_ Guided reading book and/or reading log
- \_\_\_ Interactive homework
- \_\_\_ Interactive at-home project
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How many times did you send things home to SOME parents?**

Directions: This section asks you to answer the question: I sent the following materials home to \_\_\_(how many?)\_\_ parent(s) in the past five school days. Write the total number of parents to whom you sent the following materials on the line beside the material.

- \_\_\_ Student conduct/behavior report
- \_\_\_ Guided reading book and/or reading log
- \_\_\_ Interactive homework
- \_\_\_ Interactive at-home project
- \_\_\_ School work or activities the parent can choose to complete at home
- \_\_\_ Specialized information for the parent on how they can help their child
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How many times did you do OTHER things to involve parents?**

Directions: Write the total number of times that you did each activity on the line beside the activity. (Please think about the past five school days when you answer.)

- \_\_\_ Invited a parent to observe, volunteer, or attend an event at school
- \_\_\_ Conducted a partnership-focused conference
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Teacher Report

### Session 1: Why should I involve parents? What difference does it make?

Goal: To talk with two parents about the importance of their involvement and the effects that parental involvement can have on students' learning and school success.

*How did you talk with each parent? (In person? Over the phone? At school?)*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What did you say to each parent about parental involvement and how it positively affects children? Please be as specific as you can in recounting each conversation.*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*How did each parent respond? What did each parent say to you? Again, please be as specific as you can in recounting each parent's comments.*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*Are there any other comments or important information about the interactions?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## Teacher Report

### Session 2: Multiple practical strategies for involving parents

Goal: To implement at least one new parental involvement strategy with two families.

*What strategy did you implement with each family? What did you do with each family to implement the strategy? Please be as specific as possible in your descriptions for each.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*What was each family's response to your strategy? If you sent something home, was it completed and returned? If you talked with a parent, what did they say to you? (Again, please be as specific as you can for each family).*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Are there any other comments or important information about the interactions?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## Teacher Report

### Session 3: Ways to conduct a partnership-focused conference

Goal: To conduct a partnership-focused conference with the parent(s) of two of your students. To invite each parent, prepare for the conference with each, conduct the conference in a partnership-focused way, and follow up afterwards.

*What did you do to invite each parent? How did each parent respond to your invitation? Please be as specific as possible in your descriptions for each.*

Parent 1:

Your invitation:

Parent's response:

Parent 2:

Your invitation:

Parent's response:

*What did you do to prepare for the conference? What did the parent and student do to prepare? (Again, please be as specific as possible.)*

Parent/Student 1:

Your preparations:

Parent's preparations:

Student's preparations:

Parent/Student 2:

Your preparations:

Parent's preparations:

Student's preparations:

*What happened at the conference? What did you say? What did the parent say? What did the student say? (Again, please be as specific as possible.)*

Parent/Student 1:

Some of the things you said:

Some of the things the parent said:

What did the student say/contribute?:

Parent/Student 2:

Some of the things you said:

Some of the things the parent said:

What did the student say/contribute?:

*What was each parent's reaction to the conference? Would you describe the conference as an overall positive, neutral, or negative interaction? Why? (Please be as specific as possible for each).*

Parent 1:

Parent's general reaction (with specific examples):

Your general evaluation of the 'tone' of the conference (please offer examples to illustrate):

Parent 2:

Parent's general reaction (with specific examples):

Your general evaluation of the 'tone' of the conference (please offer examples to illustrate):

*What did you do to follow up after the conference?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## Teacher Report

### Session 4: Four specific ways to equip parents: encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction

Goal: To talk with two parents about at least one of these specific ways of helping their child. To provide a definition of the construct, to give examples of how they may apply the construct, and to give examples of effects that they can anticipate as a result.

*How did you talk with each parent? (In person? Over the phone? At school?)*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What construct(s) did you talk about with each parent?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What did you say to each parent to define the construct(s)? Please be as specific as you can in recounting each conversation.*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What did you say to each parent to give examples of behaviors or beliefs to which he/she can apply each construct? (Again, please be as specific as possible.)*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What did you say to each parent about the expected effects for the child? (Again, please be as specific as possible.)*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*What was each parent's response to what you said? If the parent said something to you, what did he/she say? Please be as specific as possible in recounting each parent's comments.*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

*Are there any other comments or important information about the interactions?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## Teacher Report

### Session 5: Parent and teacher roundtable discussion

Goal: To identify at least one strategy learned from the discussion and to implement it with two families.

*What is the strategy that you learned/refined from the discussion? What did you do with each family to implement the strategy? Please be as specific as possible in your descriptions for each.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*What was each family's response to your strategy? If you sent something home, was it completed and returned? If you talked with a parent, what did they say to you? (Please be as specific as possible for each.)*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Are there any other comments or important information about the interactions?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## Teacher Report

### Session 6: Involving parents with interactive homework and projects

Goal: To create an interactive homework or project to share with two families and develop a mechanism by which to know if the family completed the homework or project and how they felt about it.

*What was the homework or project? What did it require each family to do together? Please be as specific as possible in your descriptions for each.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Did each family complete the homework or project? (Yes, no, or partially)*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*How did each family respond? Did each family provide any comments or feedback? If so, what did each say? Please be as specific as possible in recounting each.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Are there any other comments or important information about the interactions?*

Parent 1:

Parent 2:

## PALS Session 1 Outline

### Introduction to Program

- Briefly review program objectives (what you will know and be able to do by the end of the program; see PALS information handout)
- Talk about weekly format (review, topic, summary, and action plan)
- Discuss ground rules (see handout)
- Hand out notebooks
- Review calendar; point out contact information
- Introduce Parental Involvement Logs, Teacher Invitations Log, and Teacher Reports detailing instructions for each
- Explain what type of information each of these assessments will yield; talk about weekly graphs

### Topic 1: Why should I involve parents? What difference does it make?

- Why should you make an effort to involve parents? What do you think will happen as a result of reaching out to parents?
  - Have participants write out their responses to this question on note cards. Discuss answers as a group
- Did you know...? (See Session 1 handout)
  - Provide clear examples of what the research says about the effects of parental involvement
    - list specific immediate and long-term outcomes (e.g. attendance, math achievement, behavior, graduation rates, etc.)
    - point out examples of parental involvement in urban schools and effects
  - Discuss how involving parents aligns with Title I goals and school goals

### Summary

- What you can do
  - Explain to parents why their involvement is important and some of the outcomes they can expect to see in their child
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - Parent might emphasize how important school is to their child
- How might this information affect children
  - Child might do better in school and in life

### Action Plan

- Collect Efficacy Scale if you have not returned it via e-mail.
- Complete Plan for Implementation sheet now. Choose two target families with whom to talk about the importance of involvement and the difference that it can make for children's educational success.
- Complete your Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log next week.

## PALS Session 2 Outline

### Review

- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Log
- Ask how the use of the logs worked
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Topic 2: Multiple practical strategies for involving parents

- Think about all of the things that you do to work with parents to involve them in their child's education. What is one strategy that you have used that has worked very well and that you want to tell others about?
  - Have participants write out their responses to this question on note cards
  - Discuss answers as a group and write down on white board
- Present novel strategies
  - Handout containing ideas of ways to involve parents
- Brainstorm new ideas
- Compile a list to hand out to participants at the next session
- Talk about the importance of varying your strategies. If one technique is not working, try another.

### Summary

- What you can do
  - We have compiled a list of multiple, practical things that you can do to involve parents. You can use this list as a reference tool.
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - If you...(pick a strategy from the list), then the parent might...(talk about way that parent can react)
- How might this information affect children
  - When the parent...(talk about what the parent does), then the student might...(talk about how it can positively affect the student)

### Action Plan

- Complete Plan for Implementation sheet now. Choose one strategy (or more, if necessary) that you have not used before and implement it sometime before next session with two target families (of your choice).
- Complete your Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log next week.

## PALS Session 3 Outline

### Review

- Hand out compilation of participant-generated involvement strategies from Session 2
- Introduce graphs; note that only comparison is with yourself
- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Logs
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Topic 3: Ways to Conduct Partnership-Focused Conferences

- Present the Four Steps for Conducting Partnership-Focused Conferences
- Review the associated handouts (Parent Conference Planning Worksheet, Thinking About School Worksheets, Teacher Conference Planning Worksheet, and Teacher Problem-Solving Conference Planning Worksheet)
- Review the Communication Tips handout; ask for additional suggestions
- Break into pairs of participants. Role play leading a partnership-focused conference to practice. Be sure to play both the teacher and parent roles.

### Summary

- What you can do
  - During your conferences you can let the parent speak first. Ask them about their child. Actively listen to their response. Integrate their perspective.
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - When you engage the parent, they might be more willing to collaborate with you. So, in the future if there are problems, the parent might be more willing to work with you to solve the problem. For example if the child is not turning in their homework, the parent might be more willing to supervise the child's homework because the parent knows that you have the child's best interest in mind.
- How might this information affect children
  - With the parent on your side, you can turn to them for help in fostering the child's learning. With our example, the child will be more likely to complete their homework and have the parent check it, which might lead to better achievement.

### Plan for Action

- Complete Plan for Implementation now. Think about how you will conduct partnership-focused conferences with two target families (of your choice).
- Complete the Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log .

## PALS Session 4 Outline

### Review

- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Logs
- Talk about accurate completion of Logs and Report
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Topic 3: Four Specific Ways to Equip Parents: Encouragement, Modeling, Reinforcement, and Instruction

- Distribute Session 4 Handout
- Talk about research that shows that parents want to know specifically and explicitly how to help their children
  - When talking with parents, teachers can tell parents how they can employ one or more of the four constructs.
  - These constructs are four specific things that you can encourage parents to do with their children.
- Provide a definition of each of the constructs
- Divide the participants into four groups. Assign each group a construct.
  - Have each group brainstorm different ways that they can talk with parents about that construct (e.g. Encourage what behaviors and beliefs? Reinforce what behaviors and beliefs?)
  - Come together to share answers

### Summary

- What you can do
  - In your conversation with a parent, you can tell him/her what reinforcement is and give examples of behaviors to reinforce in their child. Don't forget to be specific.
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - That parent might reinforce positive behaviors in their child. For example, the parent might tell a child how much they like it when they turn the television off during homework time.
- How might this information affect children
  - When the parent reinforces positive behaviors, the student is more likely to repeat the positive behavior. So next time the student is doing their homework, he/she will be more likely to turn the television off.

### Action Plan

- Complete Plan for Implementation sheet now. Think about what conversations you will have in the next week with two target families (of your choice).
- Complete your Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log next week
- Our next session is a roundtable talk with parents. Be thinking about the questions you want to ask (see suggested questions handout).

## PALS Session 5 Outline

### Topic 5: Parent and Teacher Roundtable Discussion

- Introductions; state name and grade/area you teach or grade your children are in
- Explain that the purpose of PALS is to support Brown Academy's communication with parents and that the purpose of the session is to set aside time to talk about important issues/suggestions/questions
- We tend not to ask parents to share their expertise so please feel comfortable about sharing your perspectives and insight about Brown; responses will also inform work with other schools
- Remind participants that they are to implement something they learn from this session next week in their work with parents
- Participants and parents lead the discussion. The facilitator will supervise the conversation.
- Conclude and thank parents

### Review last week

- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Logs
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Summary

- What you can do
  - Of all the things that you learned today, which is the most important? What is one way that you can apply that information to your work with parents?
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - Think about what might happen as a result of applying that information.
- How might this information affect children
  - Think about what might happen as a result of applying that information.

### Action Plan

- Complete Plan for Implementation sheet now. Think about how you will apply that one most important thing that you learned today with two target families (of your choice).
- Complete your Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log next week.

## PALS Session 6 Outline

### Review

- Hand out notes and ideas generated from the Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion
- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Logs
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Topic 6: Involving Parents with Interactive Homework and Projects

- Why do some of your students make more progress throughout the year than others? What is going on with those students that make greater gains?
  - Listen to participants' responses.
  - Ask if they believe that out-of-school practice makes a difference.
- Talk about the literature regarding the importance of children's invitations to involvement. Suggest that providing interactive homework/projects is one way that children can involve their parents in their learning.
- Have teachers brainstorm and design a project/homework assignment that can be completed at home, that requires parental involvement, and that utilizes resources that all families are able to obtain
  - Provide examples of Epstein's TIPS program
  - Provide examples of grade-appropriate projects
- Talk about the literature that shows parents have more time over the weekend to work with their children. Suggest that the teachers assign this project/homework on a Friday to be completed by Monday.

### Summary

- What you can do
  - You can give parents interactive projects or homework. In this way the child is involving their parent, which is an important motivator of parents' involvement decisions.
- How might this information affect parents' interactions with children
  - Parents might really enjoy working with their child on this project. It is a way for parents to reinforce their child's learning.
- How might this information affect children
  - Students will benefit from completing the project, but also from the positive interaction with their parent.

### Action Plan

- Complete Plan for Implementation sheet now. Think about when you will assign your project/homework to two target families (of your choice).
- Complete your Teacher Report when you have implemented the strategy.
- Remember to fill out the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log next week.

## **PALS Session 7 outline**

### Review

- Collect Teacher Invitation Logs and Parental Involvement Logs
- Complete Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale and Program Evaluation form
- Discuss Teacher Reports and collect

### Topic: Celebrate Your Accomplishments!!

- Recognition and praise for a job well done; facilitator will cite two accomplishments per participant and hand out certificates of completion

## PALS Session 1 Ground Rules

1. We will begin and end each session on time.
2. Our sessions will be focused but informal (this means I can stand up and move around when I want to).
3. Our conversations will stay in this room. Opinions, questions and concerns that we share are confidential.
4. We'll all focus on respecting each other and listening well to the questions and ideas that each one of us offers (be a good listener, pay good attention when others are talking, minimize side comments).
5. Participate! (What we learn and how well we learn it depends on all of us participating fully.)
6. No idea is out of bounds.

## PALS Session 1

### Did you know...?

#### Some of the benefits of parental involvement from a sample of research studies

##### **Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Achievement**

- Students made *faster gains in reading and math in Title I schools* when their teachers were especially active in reaching out to parents of low achievers in particular (Westat, 2001).
  - Note: The growth in *reading scores* was 50% higher for those students whose teachers reported high levels of teacher outreach to parents. The growth in *math scores* was 40% higher for those students whose teachers reported high levels of teacher outreach to parents.
- Teachers and schools who were active in reaching out to *all* parents reported higher percentages of students who scored *satisfactory or above on state mandated achievement tests* (Sheldon, 2003).
  - Note: Subject areas include *Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies*.
- Teacher and school practices that encourage families to support their children's mathematics learning at home helped increase the percentage of students who scored *at or above proficiency on standardized mathematics achievement tests* (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).
- Teacher leadership in parent involvement in learning activities at home helped improve *reading achievement* (Epstein, 1991).
  - Note: Student reading achievement improved even after teacher quality, students' initial achievement level, parents' education, parents' understanding of the school program, and quality of students' homework were taken into account.
- Longitudinal studies of at-risk urban families have shown that parental involvement is associated with *lower grade retention rates, lower rates of placement in special education services, lower dropout rates, and higher on-time high school completion rates* (Barnard, 2004; Reynolds & Ou, 2004).

##### **Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Behavior**

- The greater the number of family involvement activities that teachers and schools implemented, the *fewer the number of students disciplined* by being sent to principals' offices, given detention, or placed on in-school suspension (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

- Parental involvement has been associated with student *self-control*, *responsible behavior*, and *cooperative behavior* in the classroom (McWayne, et al., 2004).
- Students whose parents support their academic development are less likely to get into fights with other students, break school rules, and get sent from the classroom or to the principal for misbehaving.

### **Effects of Parental Involvement on Student Attendance**

- Elementary schools that implement family-school-community partnership practices have *higher student attendance and lower chronic absenteeism* than schools that offer fewer family-school partnership practices (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004)

### **Communication and Parental Involvement**

- Parents who receive more consistent information about their children's school performance report being more committed to helping their children improve than parents who receive only sporadic information (Helling, 1996).
- Parents want and value *specific suggestions* from teachers about how to help their children academically (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995).
- Parents seek good communication skills in their children's teachers, citing it as one of the most desirable characteristics a new teacher could have (Lupi, 2001; McDermott, 2001).
- Parents and teachers consider communication the number one factor that increases and supports trust between teachers and parents (Adams & Christenson, 2000).
- Parents report that effective communication practices by a new school makes the transition from preschool to kindergarten more positive (Rimm-Kauffman, 1999).
- Involved families tend to agree that the level of their involvement depends on outreach from teachers and school administrators (Urban Institute, 1999).
- Teachers' invitations to parents to be involved are one of the strongest predictors of parents' school-based and home-based involvement in supporting their children's learning (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2006).

## PALS Session 2

### Multiple Practical Strategies for Involving Parents

#### Communication Strategies

- Send an introductory letter at the beginning of the school year (For an example template, see attachment A from the San Diego City Schools Parent Involvement Kit).
- Create a newsletter that incorporates the same color, quality, and paper size so that parents automatically recognize the format as an important note from you.
- In place of written newsletters or introductory letters, send home a cassette recorded version or CD.
- Send home “literacy bags” with books and a feedback journal (For an example of a family reading log, see attachment C from the San Diego City Schools Parent Involvement Kit).
- Call each parent at least once a month (For an example “worksheet for calling parents”, see Attachment B from the San Diego City Schools Parent Involvement Kit).
- Schedule “getting to know you” conferences in which you ask parents about their child’s personality, strengths, and challenges and about their own expectations, goals, and concerns. Think of this as a listening and learning conference.
- Record a daily one-minute voice mail message for parents and students to call at the end of each day.
- Create a video to demonstrate an instructional technique or how to complete a class project to send home with students.
- Survey parents to determine their schedules, availability and best places, numbers, and times for contacting them. Also provide parents with information about how and when to contact you.
- Survey parents to find out how they would like to be involved and what they would like to know from the school about helping their child learn.
- Give parents a checklist of steps to take when there are difficulties or conflicts with school personnel (see Hartman & Chesley, 1998 for a good example).
- Provide an easy way for regular two-way communication between the classroom and home (e.g. using the home-school notebooks or Teacher/Parent Gram examples on attachments E and F from the San Diego City Schools)
- Send a personal or student-made thank you note after an event attended by parents. Or send a “we missed you at our event—hope you can attend next time” note.
- Present or send an award to parents for participation (e.g., a certificate).

## Activities to suggest that parents do with their children:

### Reading

- **Sorting and Stacking:** Ask the child to match and stack dishes of similar sizes and shapes. Have the child sort flatware. This is like recognizing the shapes of letters and numbers.
- **Telephonitis:** Give the child practice in reading numbers left to right by dialing a telephone. Make a list of numbers the child can read, and have the child make a call or two.
- **Let 'Em Eat Shapes:** Cut bread into different shapes—rectangles, triangles, squares, circles. Make at least two of each shape. Ask the child to choose a pair of similar shapes, then to put jam on the first piece, and to place the second piece on top to make a sandwich.
- **Hidden Letters:** Ask the child to look for letters of the alphabet on boxes and cans of food and household supplies. For example, find five A's or three C's, or any number of letters or combinations on cereal boxes, soup cans, bars of soap. Start with easy to find letters and build up to harder ones. Then have the child write the letters on paper or point out the letters on the boxes and cans.
- **Street Smarts:** Put reading skills to practical use. Gather bus route maps and schedules to a special place in the area—zoo, aquarium, a museum, a park. Let the child plan a trip for friends or family. Figure out the travel time required, the cost, the best way to get there, and the best time to make the trip.
- **TV and the World:** Post a world map next to the TV set. Watch the news with the child and have him/her find world news spots. Keep reference books such as dictionaries and the world almanac close by. In this way, children find answers to questions when their curiosity is high.
- Give parents a list of important questions to ask children when reading with them (e.g. Attachment H from the San Diego City Schools)
- Provide parents with weekly ways to support literacy inside and outside the home (see Attachment J from the San Diego City Schools)

### Writing

- **Comic Strip Writing:** Use comic strips to help with writing. Cut apart the segments of a comic strip and then ask the child to arrange them in order. Then ask the child to fill in the words of the characters (orally or in writing).
- **And That's the End of the Story:** Improve listening skills and imagination. Read a story aloud to the child and stop before the end. Ask the child how the story might turn out. Then finish the story and discuss the ending with the child. Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Which ending did you like the best?
- **Picture Stories:** Develop imagination and creativity. Have the child select four or five pictures from magazines and newspapers, and put them together to tell a story. Ask the child to number the pictures—1, 2, 3, etc. First, ask them to tell the story with the pictures in numerical order. For variety, rearrange the order of the pictures and tell a new story.

- Day-by-Day Calendar: Turn a large calendar—commercial or home made—into a personalized family communication center. Have the child fill in the blanks with morning messages, weather reports, birthdays, special events, or notes to the family.
- On holidays, help the child make cards and write greetings to friends and relatives. On vacations, encourage the child to keep a journal or send post cards.
- Create a class mascot (e.g., Clifford, a large purple stuffed frog) and send it home each week with a different student. Include with the mascot a notebook (the mascot's journal) and maybe a Polaroid/disposable camera. Ask the student and parent to record in the notebook what the mascot did with the family over the weekend and include a photo or drawing.

#### Math

- Laundry Math: Ask the child to sort laundry—before or after washing. How many socks? How many sheets?
- Napkin Fractions: Fold paper towels or napkins into large and small fractions. Start with halves and move to eighths and sixteenths. Use magic markers to label the fractions.
- Weigh Me: Teach estimating skills. Ask the child to guess the weight of several household objects—a wastebasket, coat, glass full of water, pan. Then show the child how to use a scale to weigh the objects. Next, have them estimate their own weight, as well as that of other family members, and use the scale to check their guesses.
- A Trip to the Supermarket: Ask the child to choose a dish to prepare for a meal—a sandwich, a salad. Have the child check to see what supplies are on hand and then make a shopping list. At the supermarket, let the child select the food on the list. If appropriate, ask the child which items are the best buys and make selections. The child could also write the price of each item on the list and if possible figure the total, checking the prices against the sales receipt.
- On the Move: Sharpen math skills on trips around town. At the gas station, ask the child to watch and see how much gas you needed and the cost per gallon. On the highway, ask the child to read the signs and check different speed limits. Ask him or her to watch the speedometer and notice how fast or slow the car is going. Have the child estimate distances between cities and check estimates on a road map.
- Newspaper Math: Use the weather section to check temperatures across the nation and the world. This is good geography practice. Discuss baseball and football scores and averages on the sports pages. Who are the high scores? What are the percentages?
- Have the child calculate how much milk, juice, cereal, etc. the family buys and consumes per day or per week.

#### Science

- Ice is Nice: Improve observation and questioning skills by freezing and melting ice. Add water to an ice cube tray and set it in the freezer. Ask the child how long he or she thinks it will take to freeze. For variety, use

different levels of water in different sections of the tray. Set ice cubes on a table. Ask the child how long they will take to melt. Why do they melt? Place the ice cubes in different areas of the room. Do they melt faster in some places than in others? Why?

- Float and Sink: Encourage hypothesizing (guessing). Use several objects—soap, a dry sock, a bottle of shampoo, a wet sponge, an empty bottle. Ask the child which objects will float when dropped into water in a sink or bathtub. Drop the objects into the water to see what happens.
- What Does It Take to Grow?: Teach cause-and-effect relationships. Use two similar, healthy plants. Ask your child to water one plant and ignore the other for a week or two, keeping both plants in the same place. Next, compare the plants and ask the child why the two plants differ.

#### Social Studies

- A Closer Look: Help your child become aware of family responsibilities. Make a chart of family chores, including the name of the person responsible, the days and time required, etc. Discuss ways to change or improve these job assignments.
- History Time Line: Record history at home. Stretch a roll of shelf paper along the floor. Use a ruler to make a line about three feet long. (Use a separate sheet for each child.) Ask the child to fill in the important dates in their own lives, starting with their birth. Those familiar with U.S. history can fill in major dates since the founding of our country. Display these finished time lines in a special place for all to see.
- The Foreign Touch: Travel abroad at home. Visit ethnic shops, food stores, and restaurants in the community. Before the trip, have the child find on a map different countries you will “visit.” After the trip, encourage the child to talk about what they have seen.

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**PALS Session 3**  
**Parental Involvement Strategies**  
**Recommended by PALS Participants**

September 25, 2006

1. Invite a guest or mystery reader to read a story in the library
2. Create and use a website
3. Send a thank you card
4. Send a behavior folder home
  - Keep post-its with notes with dates
  - Staple them together monthly
  - Use them as a reference (e.g., for conferences)
5. Host a parent night before open house is scheduled
  - Serve light refreshments
  - Introduce yourself; provide information about classroom policies and procedures; provide contact information
6. Home visit tutorial
  - Arrange a meeting at the parent's home
  - Take the parent a sample of the child's work
  - Provide a demonstration of an instructional technique
7. Host meetings in a neutral location (e.g., skating rink)
8. Send home a weekly or monthly newsletter with homework information, reminders, notes, etc.
9. Have students bring Agenda Mates to related arts
10. Host a Math Night to provide parents an opportunity to ask questions
11. Send positive notes, or Happy Grams, home with students
12. Noble Notes:
  - Previously used at Brown Academy; quite effective
  - Post cards printed on yellow paper with a knight logo
  - Sent through the mail as a surprise to parents and students
13. Send home a weekly report to keep parents informed.
  - Include information about assessments, grades, conduct, etc.
  - Ask parents to return the reports to the teacher
  - Collect and return the reports to parents every nine weeks
14. Invite parents to be the audience for students' presentations of written reports
15. Send home written information or make phone calls
16. Student led conferences
  - Students report on their own strengths and challenges to the teacher and the parent
17. Parent Science, Reading/Literacy, Math Nights
  - For Literacy/Reading night, have teachers read a story in costume to demonstrate literacy techniques

- Present information that can equip parents to assist their children at home
  - Provide “make and take” activities that engage parents and students in interactive, educational projects
  - Teach parents how to use reading logs, etc.
18. Video/Tape Record classroom activities to send home to parents
- These provide a snapshot of the *processes* that are difficult to communicate just through written or verbal communications
19. To give parents a voice, survey them at the beginning of the year about their child’s interests, learning styles, needs, etc.

## PALS Session 3

### Four Steps for Conducting Partnership-Focused Conferences

#### **Step 1: Invite the parent. Some suggested strategies include:**

- Have the student create and take home an individual invitation
- For those parents that you think might be less likely to attend, consider having the student lead the conference as a means to encouraging parent attendance
- Call the parent and personalize your invitation to them. Let them know how much you're looking forward to meeting with them, ensure that they received the Parent Conference Planning sheet, and remind them to bring it to the meeting.

#### **Step 2: Prepare for the conference**

- Send home the Parent Conference Planning Worksheet
- Have students complete the Thinking About School worksheet (there are two versions, one for younger and one for older students)
- Review the handout Communication Tips for a Partnership-Focused Conference
- Prepare student portfolios or folders with examples of work, test results, other assessments, and any parent or teacher notes
- Review the Teacher Conference Planning Worksheet or the Teacher Problem-Solving Conference Planning Worksheet. Think about what you might say. Anticipate what the parent might say and how you might respond.
- Arrange a comfortable environment
  - Consider offering hot cider or cold drinks
  - Arrange chairs so that there is not a desk or table between you and the parent

#### **Step 3: Conduct the conference**

- Follow the Teacher Conference Planning Worksheet or the Teacher Problem-Solving Conference Planning Worksheet to guide the discussion
- Be sure to conclude the conference on a positive note, summarizing strengths, areas for growth, and any agreements made

#### **Step 4: Follow up after the conference**

- Review the conference with the student if he/she wasn't present at the conference
- Share information with other school personnel, if needed. Parent(s) may need other assistance or support
- Send a follow-up note/letter, make a phone call, or schedule a follow-up conference
- Follow through on what was planned

Adapted from *Parent-Teacher Conferencing: A Workshop for School Staff*, Janet Chrispeels, 1990.

# PALS Session 3

## Communication Tips for a Partnership-Focused Conference

- Keep voice low and well controlled
- Note your non-verbal behavior (Are my arms crossed? Am I maintaining eye contact? What are facial expressions saying?)
- Stop and ask yourself, “Am I truly listening or am I planning what I am going to say next? Is each person just presenting his or her own perspective or are we collaborating?”
- REFLECT, PARAPHRASE, AND SUMMARIZE
  - Am I understanding you correctly that \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What I hear you saying is \_\_\_\_\_. Is that correct?
  - “I sense you are concerned that Dale may be feeling a bit lonely and finding it hard to make new friends quickly.”
  - “Like you, I am also quite concerned about your daughter’s work. I know her to be a highly capable child. Indeed, her earlier work this year and her placement in the gifted enrichment program validated her ability. However, our job now is to find out what is interfering with her usual excellent progress. Let’s see if we can put our heads together here and pinpoint the specific academic problem and then work together to help her.”
  - “It sounds like we agree that Jeff is enthusiastic and puts effort into his work for class. We definitely want to encourage his attitude, but his socializing in the lab keeps him from the quality work of which he is capable. We will keep a check on his lab work and report writing. Your idea of special social activities with his school friends on Friday nights is great. Let’s talk again in three weeks to see how Jeff is going.”
- Use the sandwich theory:
  - Suggestions for improvement are placed between positive comments
  - This assures a positive beginning and ending for the conference, but also makes sure that the “meat” or purpose of the conference receives the bulk of attention
- Give parents very specific suggestions:
  - Vague suggestion: “Johnny needs to learn his multiplication facts, so please make sure he studies them at home.”
  - Specific suggestion: “As you can see from these assessments, Johnny is making progress toward learning his multiplication tables. However, he is still having some difficulty with some of his sevens, eights, and nines. There are approximately 10 to 12 facts in the 7, 8, and 9 times tables that he is consistently missing. We have set a

goal for Johnny to master all of his multiplication facts by the end of the third marking period.”

- Sample follow-up statements:
  - I will continue to check in with you regularly to let you know how your child is doing. Please feel free to call me with any ideas or concerns. The best time to reach me is\_\_\_\_\_.
  - I'll call back in a few days to see how our plan is working. What is a good time to phone?
- Sample statements to facilitate two-way communication:
  - I understand, but nevertheless...
  - You may be thinking about what I've said. Would you like some more information?
  - Is there a question that you would like to ask?
  - You may wish to think about that and let me know what you think later this week. It is okay to take some time. When would be a good time for me to call back and talk with you more?

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**PALS Session 3**  
**Teacher Conference Planning Worksheet**

**1. Establish Rapport**

Encourage note taking and the participation of the parent and student.

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**2. Describe Positive Attributes of the Student**

Encourage parents and students to share their perception of student's strengths.

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**3. Present Student's Growth and Progress**

Ask parents and students to share how they feel about academic/social progress and actively listen for concerns.

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**4. Present Academic/Social Areas Needing Improvement**

Focus on how instructional program will address student's needs.

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**5. Write Ways Teacher, Parent, and Student Can Work Together**

Give very specific, detailed suggestions if parents are not sure what to do.

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**6. Conclude Conference on a Positive Note and Plan Follow-Up**

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**PALS Session 3**  
**Teacher Problem-Solving**  
**Conference Planning Worksheet**

1. Establish Rapport and State Purpose of the Conference

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2. Describe the Problem and Share Actions Taken

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3. Listen to Parent and Student Perspectives and Possible Solutions

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4. Restate Problem and Consequences if the Problem is Not Solved

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5. Develop an Action Plan to Solve the Problem  
(What will be done by the teacher, parent, and student)

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6. Decide on Follow-up and Conclude Conference on a Positive Note

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# PALS Session 3

## Parent Conference Planning Worksheet

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Room Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Conference Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Preparing for the Conference** (Please complete this section at home before the conference.)

A. What I think my son/daughter does well at home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What I think my son/daughter does well at school: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Questions I would like to ask the teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. One problem I would like to discuss with the teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Action Plan:** Ways the teacher, my child, and I can work together to improve academic progress. (Complete this section with the teacher at the conference.)

A. What the teacher will do at school: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What we will do at home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. How we will check our progress (for example, notes, phone calls, follow-up conference):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# PALS Session 3

## Thinking About School

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you enjoy most at school? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What do you enjoy least in school? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In the classroom, what subjects do you like to study the most (for example, reading, math, writing, science, art) and why?

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4. In the classroom, what subjects do you like to study the least (for example, reading, math, writing, science, art) and why?

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5. What do you want your parents or teachers to be sure to know about your work at school?

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# PALS Session 3

## Thinking About School

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The activity I enjoy most in school is: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What I enjoy least in school is: \_\_\_\_\_

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3. My easiest subject is: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. My hardest subject is: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. The area or subject I would like to improve is: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What I want my parents to know about my work in school is: \_\_\_\_\_

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## PALS Session 4

### Four Specific Ways to Equip Parents: Encouragement, Modeling, Reinforcement, and Instruction

The following four mechanisms are some of the things parents can do to be positively involved in their children's lives. Encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction function as mechanisms through which parents' involvement behaviors affect student learning and abilities.

**Encouragement:** Parents' explicit affective support for the student's engagement in school- or learning-related activities.

- When parents praise their children for positive school-related attitudes and behaviors (e.g., interest in school and learning, working hard on school assignments, using varied learning strategies), children are more likely to value and repeat those attitudes and behaviors.

*Dictionary definition: to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence; to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc.; to promote, advance, or foster*

**Modeling:** Parents involving themselves in their children's educational lives (e.g., asking questions about the school day, reviewing homework, attending school events) and engaging themselves in learning activities (e.g., reading the paper, talking about ideas on a TV show) demonstrate that they regard school-related activities as important and valuable. Modeling theory suggests that students learn in part by observing and imitating people they perceive as responsive, competent, respected, and accessible, like parents.

- When parents spend time with or for their children in relation to school activities—and engage in learning-related activities themselves—children have opportunities and encouragement to incorporate these parental examples into their own learning attitudes and behaviors.

*Dictionary definition: setting a standard or example for imitation or comparison; serving as an example*

**Reinforcement:** Refers to the learning principle that behavior patterns occur and are maintained because of their consequences, or when they are positively reinforced. So, children are more likely to repeat behaviors (or learn patterns of behaviors) when they consistently associate those behaviors with positive outcomes (e.g., parental interest, praise, rewards).

- To the extent that parents use reinforcements that the child values and apply these to areas central to school success (e.g. studying well for tests, paying attention in class, completing homework), reinforcement theory predicts that children will engage in more of the rewarded behaviors, and will thus be more likely to do well in school.

*Dictionary definition: to strengthen the probability of a behavior by giving or withholding a reward*

**Instruction:** Emerges in social interactions between parent and child during involvement activities as they engage in shared thinking and collaborate on learning skills, tasks, strategies, and outcomes.

- Can be closed-ended (involving orders, commands, requests for correct answers or the “right way” to solve a problem) or open-ended (involving questions and requests to plan, anticipate, and explain).
- To the extent that parents engage in drill, practice, and review work with their children (i.e., closed-ended instruction), they are likely to help their children learn the factual information component of school tasks.
- To the extent that parents ask their children how they solved a problem, what other ideas they can think of for addressing a homework issue, etc. (i.e., open-ended instruction) will tend to contribute to higher-level thinking skills in children.

*Dictionary definition: to furnish with knowledge, orders, direction, or information*

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# PALS Session 4

## Sample Questions for Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion

Teachers' Questions to Parents:

1. How can teachers make parents feel welcome at this school?
2. How can teachers make it easier for parents to help their children do well in school?
3. What types of things do you wish teachers would tell you?
4. What do you want to know more about regarding ways to help your child?
5. What are things that teachers can do to help keep the lines of communication open?
6. What is your best experience with a teacher? Why?
7. What is your worst experience with a teacher? Why?
8. How can teachers communicate with you more effectively?
9. What is one thing that you wish teachers understood about parents?

Questions I want to ask:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# PALS Session 6

## Ideas from the Parent Teacher Roundtable Discussion

- ❖ Parents need information to help their children with math at home
  - All teachers should send home the math reference book
  - Send home the answers to math problems
  - The school might want to hold a math workshop night to teach parents the “new ways” of doing math
- ❖ Parents need information on reading comprehension skills
  - Sequencing information
  - Send home copies of the hand (characters, setting, problem, events, conclusion) so that parents can work with their children in the same way that they are learning at school
  - Grade specific folders with relevant information to keep it concise and together
- ❖ Parents need access to the school library
  - Communicate when the library is open (e.g., before/after school?)
  - Hold a family reading night
- ❖ Parents want to know if their child is failing and/or about his/her strengths
  - Communicate this information more often than just at conferences (e.g., soon after school starts, after the first test)
  - Send the information through phone calls, letter in the mail, etc, just not through the child because it might not make it home
  - Ask for the parents’ e-mail address or preferred method of communication
- ❖ All teachers should use the Agenda Mates consistently
  - To encourage parents’ use, make the child’s grade tied to it
  - Suggest to parents that they need to have a specific routine for reviewing the Agenda Mate
  - Teachers must be consistent and enforce use of the Agenda Mate
- ❖ Parents need information on how to help their children
  - Hold tutoring sessions for parents
  - Conduct small group sessions on how to interact with their children regarding learning
  - Have time to interact with teachers about math and reading skills
  - Survey parents to ask them what they want to know in the tutoring sessions

**Family Involvement Teacher Efficacy Scale**

Please circle the most appropriate response.

		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Moderately disagree</i>	<i>Disagree slightly more than agree</i>	<i>Agree slightly more than disagree</i>	<i>Moderately agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
1.	Parents' attitudes towards school are mostly determined by their background and demographic characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	When parents show increased interest in children's work at schools it is usually because I've placed extra effort in sharing with them samples of their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	Teachers should take time to meet with parents at least once a year as a way of effectively getting involved.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	It is the teachers' role to implement strategies to get parents to volunteer in school-related activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Fostering opportunities for parents and students to participate in community programs is not within a teacher's role.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I don't have the necessary skills to offer training that may enable parents to serve as representatives in decision making bodies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Teachers should take the time to seek information related to students' family background, culture, and parental views and expectations for their children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I can effectively design and utilize a survey for families to share information and concerns with me about their children's goals and strengths.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	As a teacher, I feel that when my students' basic needs are met at home, they are more apt to achieve in my class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	Teachers possess the skills to design learning activities for students to complete with parental assistance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	I can provide parents with the necessary skills to assume advocacy roles in their children's education.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	I am capable of working with language minority parents and teach them strategies to help their children at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	Teachers have the ability of holding informational meetings concerning school/classroom policies, programs, and assessments, as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Moderately disagree</i>	<i>Disagree slightly more than agree</i>	<i>Agree slightly more than disagree</i>	<i>Moderately agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
14.	Teachers possess the knowledge to provide parents with training in basic parenting skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	I feel confident sending folders with students' work home periodically for parents' comments and review.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	Teachers are not very powerful influences in promoting the involvement of parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	I am able to maximize the use of volunteers by identifying parents' interest and talents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	The awareness and understanding that parents have about school courses, programs, and activities is related to their sociocultural background.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.	When I see change in homework completion it is usually because I've taken an extra step in getting parents involved in the process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	Teachers should promote the involvement of parents as members of school committees related to safety issues, curriculum, and personnel selection.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	I don't know how to effectively implement strategies to keep parents informed about school events and upcoming student activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	I am effective at providing enough opportunities for working parents to participate in school/classroom related activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	Teachers play a crucial role in providing parents with the needed skills to support their children in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.	Teachers can effectively get parents to understand the importance of joining organizations and actively participating in groups such as the PTA/PTSA.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	I feel frustrated in my attempts at involving parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.	I can design and implement a parent workshop that will provide parents with strategies to assist their children with specific skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27.	I do not have enough training to provide parents with suggestions on parenting and child rearing practices for the age and grade levels I teach/work with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28.	I am capable of setting up parent conferences at least once a year to discuss students' progress.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Moderately disagree</i>	<i>Disagree slightly more than agree</i>	<i>Agree slightly more than disagree</i>	<i>Moderately agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
29.	Teachers cannot change the realities of the home environment facing many students in today's classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30.	Teachers have received the preparation and training to provide parents with skills to monitor and assist with schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31.	I am unable to implement effective practices and activities focused on increasing parental involvement due to my numerous responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32.	Teachers should not be burdened with the responsibility of finding ways to get parents involved in family support programs related to nutrition, health, and parenting skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33.	When communicating with parents, barriers such as cultural or language differences are difficult to overcome by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34.	When my students are showing progress it is usually because I have been able to effectively engage their parents in providing additional support at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35.	Even when I really try, I can't get through to most parents of students at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

We understand that the following information may be of a sensitive nature. We ask for this information because it helps us describe the range of teachers in the group. Please circle the most appropriate response.

Ethnic Origin  Asian/Asian-American  Black/African-American  Hispanic/Hispanic-American  
 White/Caucasian  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Sex  Male  Female

How many years have you worked as a full-time teacher?

a) less than 1 year b) 1-3 years c) 4-6 years d) 7-9 years e) 10-15 years f) 16 years or more

What grade levels do you currently teach? (circle all that apply)

a) pre-kindergarten b) kindergarten c) first grade d) second grade e) third grade  
f) fourth grade g) fifth grade h) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest degree earned?

a) BA/BS b) MA/MS c) other \_\_\_\_\_

Garcia, D. C. (2004). Exploring connections between the construct of teacher efficacy and family involvement practices: Implications for urban teacher preparation. *Urban Education*, 39(3), 290-315.

## PALS Program Evaluation

Please answer the following, using the scale provided below, to describe how useful you found the following components of the program:

	<b>1</b> not useful	<b>2</b> little bit useful	<b>3</b> useful	<b>4</b> very useful
Session 1: Why should I involve parents? Research regarding the effects of parental involvement				
Session 2: Multiple, practical strategies for involving parents				
Session 3: How to hold partnership-focused conferences				
Session 4: Four specific ways to equip parents: Modeling, encouragement, reinforcement, and instruction				
Session 5: Parent teacher roundtable discussion				
Session 6: Interactive homework and projects				
Taking time at the beginning of each session to discuss the involvement strategy implemented during the previous week				
Taking time at the end of each session to complete the Plan for Implementation sheet				
Filling out the Teacher Invitations Log				
Filling out the Parental Involvement Log				
Completing the Teacher Report				
Bar and line graphs of My PALS Data				

Next time we conduct this program, should we keep all six content-focused sessions? Please circle:

Yes

No

If not, which should we take out? Why?

What did you think about the Teacher Invitations Log and Parental Involvement Log?

Should we use the Teacher Invitations Log next time?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Should we use the Parental Involvement Log next time?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

If not, what are your suggestions for keeping track of participants' involvement practices and parents' responses?

Tell me two or three specific things that you learned from this program:

Will you make any changes in the way that you work with parents because of PALS? If so, tell me two or three things you will do differently than before:

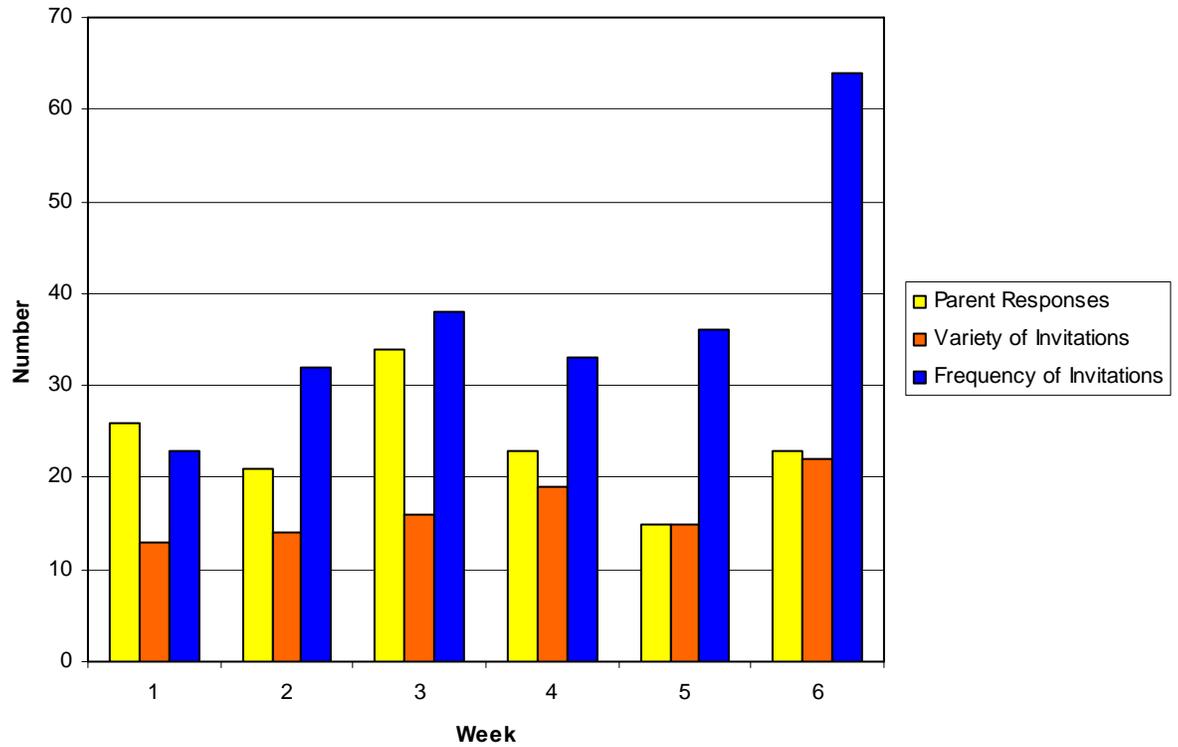
What did you like most about the program?

What did you like least about the program?

What suggestions do you have for improving the program?

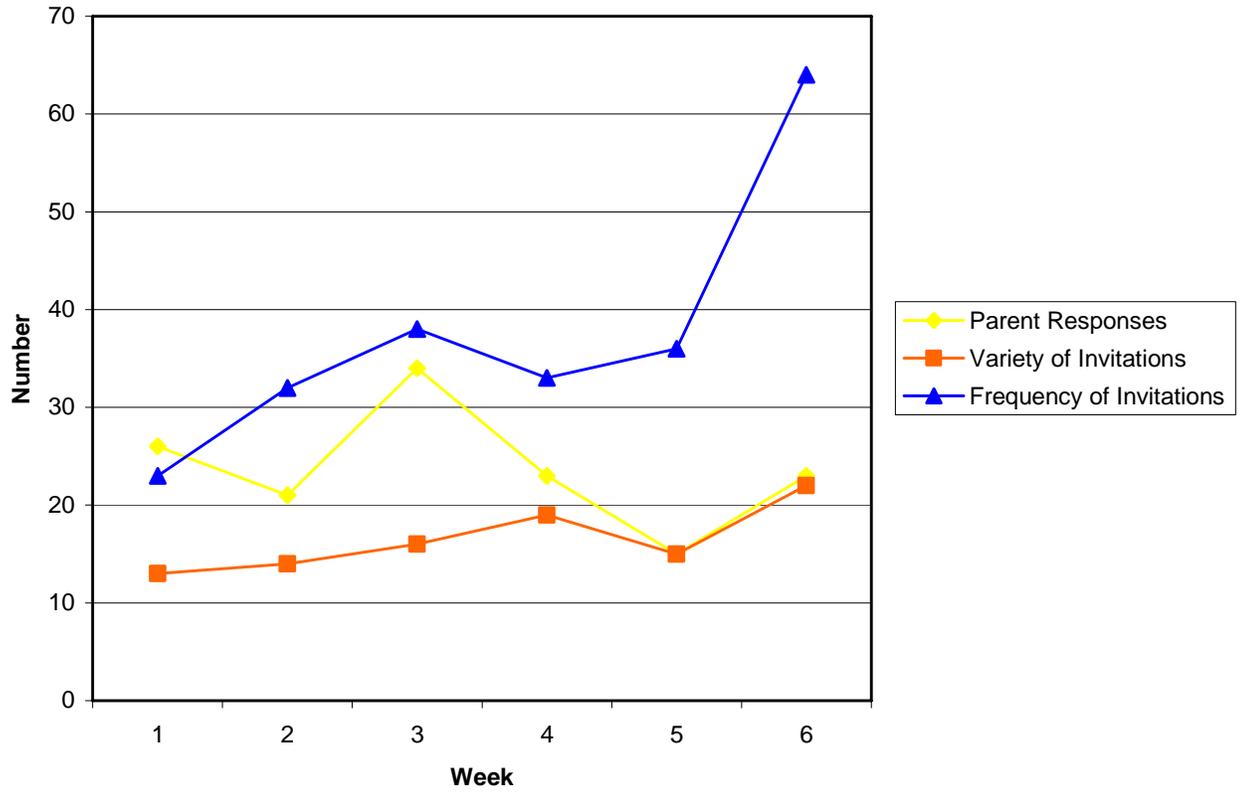
### Example Feedback Bar Graph

#### PALS Outcomes



# Example Feedback Line Graph

## PALS Outcomes



Example Plan for Implementation

**Session 2: Multiple practical strategies for involving parents**

Goal: To implement at least one new parental involvement strategy with two families.

*Which two families will you implement the strategy with? Write their initials as a reminder.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*What strategy or strategies do you want to implement with each family?*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Describe what you will do with each family.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*Will you need extra resources to implement this strategy? What are they? How might you get those resources? Who might you ask for help if you need it?*

Family 1:

Family 2:

*When will you do this with each family? Note a possible timeline for each.*

Family 1:

Family 2:

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