Parent Involvement That Supports Children Academically and Promotes the Development of Independence

By

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A Master's Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Education - Montessori

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Major Advisor's Signature

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Date

University of Wisconsin – River Falls

2014

ABSTRACT A significant body of research exists connecting parent involvement to the academic success of a child. This research explored practical ways to encourage and remove barriers to that involvement while continuing to foster the child's independence in the second plane of development. Participants in the research were members of an upper elementary class of 4th and 5th grade students in an urban public Montessori school in the Midwest. The researcher, a Montessori teacher, studied ways to integrate Montessori's ideas of developing independence with the conventional understanding of the importance of parent involvement. The author developed tools to encourage parent involvement by all parents and then asked whether the tools promoted academic success as well as independence. Data was collected through tracking work completion, parent participation in monitoring work-completion, parent feedback surveys, a parent interview and anecdotal records. The research showed that many parents were able to support their child's academic success with an unfamiliar curriculum, like Montessori, if they understood their role was to provide accountability, support in time management and support in workload management. The research also showed that for those families who are English Language Learners or without access to email, supporting their children academically was more challenging. Additional research needs to be done on developing tools to break down barriers for the ELL families as well as families without access to email.

Keywords: parent involvement, Montessori, independence

Research, educational policy and even conventional wisdom point to the importance of parent involvement in children's academic success. Research indicates that there are positive academic outcomes resulting from parent involvement starting in early childhood and extending into adolescence and beyond (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005); children come to school better prepared, achieve higher standardized test scores and attain higher graduation rates. Parent involvement also plays an important role in social and emotional learning, preventing risky behavior into adolescence (A ACASAColumbia White Paper, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2012). Recognizing these outcomes, educational policy at the federal, state and local levels has been directed at helping parents become involved in children's academic lives including mandating involvement through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Seeing first hand the impact parent involvement can have on achievement, teachers and parents are collaborating in implementing programs to increase parent involvement (Adams, Boyd, Galiunas-Johnson, Sprague & Williams, 2004). The importance of parent involvement in children's education is undeniable. The challenge is how to encourage successful parent involvement for all children, regardless of parents' socioeconomic status, educational or cultural background.

Literature Review

In order to encourage parent involvement that successfully supports children academically, while at the same time promoting the child's developing independence, educators must remove barriers, provide tools and empower parents with knowledge of the curriculum that strengthens their feelings of competence.

The Power of Parent Involvement

The 2008 article by the Center on Innovation & Improvement, *"The Power of Parent Involvement: Evidence, Ideas and Tools for Student Success,"* highlights research evidence pointing to the major role parent involvement and school-family partnerships play in children's learning and behavior. It is essential, through the relationships parents have with the school, that parents are aware of their powerful influence. Yet, parents describe three major barriers to involvement: time and life demands, factors in the school environment and lack of knowledge of specific ways to help. Focusing on this last barrier, parents must not only be given the tools with which to help their child but be supported in a way that makes them feel *confident* in their ability to help. In addition, parents need an understanding of how influential they are in their children's lives even into adolescence.

Influence on Substance Abuse

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University produced a 2012 report on *"The importance of family dinners VIII"* substantiating how influential parents are with teens. The center surveyed a thousand American teens and

their parents and identified factors that influence teen substance abuse. The consistent findings were that frequent family dinners build the quality of the relationships between parents and their teens and consequently deter substance abuse. The simple family dinner made a significant difference in the lives of teens as it built and maintained connectedness between parents and their children; feeling that parents understood their day-to-day lives made teens feel supported and reduced their stress. The study confirms the idea that parents are the single greatest influence on their children, even as teens and with something as important as substance abuse. In order to fully engage in parent involvement, parents must understand how influential they are in all facets of their children's lives.

Influence on College Retention

Hoover and Supiano (2008) report on parent involvement at the college level. Although stories of the helicopter parent abound, this is not the experience of the majority of students according to this 2008 national survey. On the contrary, most students would like parents to be more involved; this is especially true for students whose parents did not attend college. These students in particular would like to have parents support their autonomy by being more involved in decision-making. Parents continue to be influential in their children's lives into young adulthood.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Even when parents understand their influence and that their involvement has a positive effect on their child's academic achievement, they experience barriers to fully

participating. Williams & Sanchez (2011), in their article *Identifying and decreasing barriers to parent involvement for inner-city parents* looked at the obstacles that arise prohibiting parent involvement, especially for inner-city African American parents. Parents and school personnel identified four types of barriers: time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources and lack of awareness, with the biggest obstacle being time. With less time for engagement, parents reported feeling "isolation, alienation and disengagement" (p. 56). Parents were not feeling empowered or confident in their ability to help their children. Parents also reported a lack of financial resources as a barrier to involvement; if they could not pay school fees they felt their participation in their child's education was unwelcome. Again, parents were not feeling empowered, capable and competent, and in this case, even welcome.

Empowering Parents

Due to the large body of research showing a positive relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (e.g. Burcu & Sungur, 2009; Coleman, 1991; Comer 1986; Epstein, 1991, 1992; Ho Sui-Chi & Willms, 1996; Lareau, 1989; McNeal, 1999; National Associate of Secondary School Principals, 1992; Patel, 2006; Walberg, 1984), parent involvement has become the panacea for failing schools and failing students. However, in *Checking in or checking out: investigating the parent involvement reactive hypothesis* the author points out that "the overall picture may be less impressive" (McNeal, Jr., 2012, p.79), McNeal's research looked at 8th, 10th and 12th graders and three dimensions of parent involvement: parent-child discussion, monitoring and education support practices, and how these types of involvement affected science achievement and

truancy. The most relevant finding to come out of this research was that there appear to be times when parent involvement is negatively associated with achievement and behavior. Epstein (1991) concluded that although some achievement test scores were higher, this was not the case in mathematics. Epstein goes on to say that achievement scores may be higher in only those subject areas in which parents feel "less apprehensive about helping" (p. 80). The study does not imply that parent involvement should be abandoned; on the contrary, it suggests that educators examine the barriers to helping in subject areas where parents feel less comfort and proficiency. It may suggest that educators develop tools to empower parents not only in certain subject areas, but also in unfamiliar or nontraditional curricula, like Montessori.

Dimensions of Parent Involvement

In the 1996 study, *Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement*, Ho Sui-Chu and Wilms identified four dimensions of parental involvement and analyzed the relationship of each dimension with parent background and academic achievement using the NELS, a sample of 24,599 eighth-grade students and their parents and teachers. The four dimensions analyzed included: home discussion, school communication, home supervision and school participation. Consistent with previous research, SES had a positive relationship with parental involvement. However, the effect was relatively small. In addition, the perception among educators is that successful schools encourage parent involvement and establish practices that encourage communication with parents, encourage parents to assist their children with schoolwork and encourage parents to volunteer in classrooms and in school governance. The prevailing wisdom is that these

practices lead to higher levels of academic achievement. The findings suggested that

these schools with these characteristics are uncommon; levels of communication and

levels of parent involvement in the home were about the same across all schools. Schools

did differ significantly in parent participation as volunteers or attendance at PTO; but this

type of involvement had minimal effect on achievement. Involvement at home, especially

"discussing school activities and helping children plan their programs, that had the

strongest relationship to academic achievement*"* (Ho Sui-Chu, 1996, 137). The findings

did not support the theory that parents with high SES and parents in two-parent families

are more involved in their children's education. Of the four types of parental

involvement, *home discussion* was most strongly related to academic achievement.

However, few schools have strong influences on the learning climate in the home. The

authors expect that "big gains in achievement could be realized through programs that

give parents concrete information about parenting styles, teaching methods and school

curricula" (Ho Sui-Chu, 1996,138). Encouraging parent involvement includes

empowering parents with knowledge to make them feel competent in helping their

children at home. With home discussion being the most strongly related to academic

achievement, educators must "examine particular policies and programs that support

home learning" (Ho Sui-Chu, 1996, 138).

Not all Parent Involvement Promotes Achievement

   Supportive or Controlling Parent Involvement.

Not all parent involvement is equally positive or promotes achievement. Roger, Wiener, Marton & Tonnock analyzed data using the Parent Stress Index (PSI/SF), Family-School Questionnaire (FWQ), Parent Involvement Project Questionnaire (PIPQ), Conners' Parent Rating Scale (CPRS), Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ-III), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV), as well as student and parent questionnaires. The study compared the effects of parent involvement styles on the academic success of children with ADHD symptoms, looking specifically at two dimension of parenting behavior, support and control. Supportive parental involvement is characterized by behaviors that lead children to "experience a sense of initiative and confidence in relation to their learning" (Rogers, 2009, p.90). These positive behaviors lead to academic achievement and include showing interest, paying attention, and giving praise and reinforcement. Controlling parental involvement, on the other hand, is characterized by the "exertion of pressure by parents through the use of commands, punishment or coercive interactions" (Rogers, 2009, p.90). These behaviors lead to lower academic performance and include parental punishment, criticism and intrusion into school issues. Findings indicated that high levels of parenting stress were associated with more controlling parenting behaviors with regard to their children's academics. In other words, when parents were feeling more stress in their parenting role, they engaged in more controlling parenting strategies which were in turn associated with inattention in the home and lower academics. Further, if parents were stressed about their parenting, they felt less capable of helping their children academically. In contrast, lower levels of parenting stress were associated with a more supportive parenting style. These parents were more likely to report having children who displayed less inattention and high

academic achievement. This study brings into focus the idea that not all parent

involvement is equally positive or promotes academic achievement. In order for parents

to feel less stress, they have to feel capable of helping in positive ways.

Home-based or School-based Involvement.

As we have just seen, not all parent involvement promotes academic achievement.

The article, *The How, Whom, and Why of Parents' Involvement in Children's Academic

Lives: More Is Not Always Better,* looked at educational policy that encourages parent

involvement and research that takes the perspective that more parent involvement is

better for children. Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack (2007) contend that <u>more</u> is not

always <u>better</u> and that we must consider the how, whom and why of parent involvement

in order to make it beneficial to the academic and emotional growth of children. In this

study a distinction was made between school-based parent involvement, "practices on the

part of parents that require their making actual contact with schools," and home-based

parent involvement, practices "related to school that take place outside of school, usually,

though not always, in the home" (2). School-based involvement, such as general school

meetings, open house, science fair, parent-teacher conferences is higher among parents

with higher SES and education. Parents' involvement in home-based activities, such as

homework, course selection, responding to academic endeavors, talking about academic

issues and engaging children in intellectual activities, is relatively frequent with 70% of

parents helping their children at least once a week in these ways regardless of SES,

ethnicity or education of the parent. Unfortunately, parents' home-based involvement

does not always appear to have a direct link to academic achievement. Why is this home-based involvement not providing the intended results?

Skill or Motivational Development Models

The article described two mechanisms by which parent involvement enhances academic learning, the skill development model and the motivational development model. In the *skill development model*, parent involvement improves academic achievement by providing a "skill-related resource for children" (p.3). When parents are involved with developing skills they gain useful information about how their children are learning in school; they gain accurate information about their children's abilities; they provide children with opportunities to learn from practice and instruction; and teachers see the involvement and give their children more attention toward developing their skills. With the *motivational development model*, parent involvement improves academic achievement by providing children with a "variety of motivational resources" (Pomerantz et al., 2007, 3). When parents are involved in developing motivation they model the value of school and in turn, their children view school as valuable; they model active strategies for dealing with challenges and for taking control of a situation to make positive change; they make children more familiar with school tasks, which may lead them to feel more competent.

How Parents are Involved

In order to understand how to fully realize the benefits of parent involvement, the authors looked at the *How* of parent involvement. How parents are involved makes a

difference. The authors focused on four parenting styles that determine how parents interact with their children: autonomy support vs. control, process vs. person-focus, positive vs. negative affect, positive vs. negative beliefs about children's potential.

When parents are involved in an *autonomy-supportive manner*, children benefit from experiencing solving problems on their own, develop initiative and see they are capable of influencing their surroundings. When parents become involved in a controlling manner, they deprive children of feeling autonomous and capable.

When parents are focused on the *process,* the importance of learning and effort, they enhance skill and motivational development. This strategy may lead to intrinsic motivation and mastery orientation. When parents are *person-focused*, importance is placed on the attributes the children already have; little focus is placed on effort or learning. This strategy may lead children to concentrate on demonstrating their intelligence and may foster extrinsic motivation.

When parents use a *positive affect* with their children when helping with homework, they establish a sense of connectedness. This may develop academic skills and motivation. However, when parents display *negative affect* around academic activities, this may reduce motivation and does not provide a model for handling challenges.

Parents interact while holding positive or negative beliefs about their children's potential. When parents hold *positive beliefs*, they may foster children's skills by engaging them in a challenging way and enhancing their motivation. When parents hold *negative beliefs* about children's potential, their involvement may occur at a lower level and decrease their motivation.

Whom of Involvement: the Child

Next, the article focused on the *Whom* of parent involvement, the child. One attribute of the child, their "competence experiences," may play a significant role in the outcomes of parent involvement. These perceptions of their capabilities interact with parenting styles leading to either successful or unsuccessful parent involvement. Children with few or negative competence experiences may be sensitive to the style of parent involvement due to their need for greater resources and motivation. These children could be "particularly vulnerable when parents' involvement is controlling, person-focused, affectively negative, or accompanied by negative beliefs" (Pomerantz et al, 2007, 13). Children with negative competence experiences are most like to benefit from involvement characterized by autonomy-support, a process focus, positive affect and positive beliefs about their potential. Conversely, children who have positive competence experiences may not be as sensitive to these styles of involvement. The effectiveness of parent involvement is contingent upon what the child brings to the table. Educators must support parents in making all involvement beneficial regardless of competence experiences.

Benefits Beyond Academic Achievement

While enhancing academic achievement has always been the goal of parent involvement, there are other *Whys* of parent involvement as well: academic achievement (motivation, engagement and performance), mental health (emotional function, resiliency, self-esteem) and social functioning (developing relationships). Recent research

suggests the possibility that parents' involvement also promotes mental health, emotional health and social functioning.

The authors (Pomerantz et al, 2007) suggest the following interventions to foster quality parent involvement: ensure that parents feel empowered and have a sense of control in the school context by providing them with information about the malleability of children's ability as well as the skills to assist children in developing their ability; foster a positive environment in which parents do not feel pressure to ensure their children perform up to standards; provide parents with a sense of control by encouraging them to focus on the learning process rather than performance and to focus on improvements over time instead of comparisons to other children. This approach will maintain positive affects and beliefs about their children.

Empowering Parents

In order to encourage parent involvement that successfully supports the child academically, socially and emotionally while, at the same time promotes the child's developing independence, educators must remove barriers, provide tools and empower parents with knowledge of the curriculum that strengthens their feelings of competence. Everyone from policy-makers to educators agrees that parent involvement is a key component to student achievement. What that involvement should look like and how to ensure it for every child is still unclear. Parents are the most influential factor in the lives of children. Since much of involvement is home-based, we must improve the effectiveness of those interactions by removing the invisible barriers of perception; perceptions about their child's abilities and perceptions about their own capabilities. We

must also help parents understand that school-based involvement is only one type of involvement; there is no shame in not being able to attend a school event or to volunteer in the classroom. Educators must provide parents with the tools, helping them perceive themselves as capable, competent, informed and prepared. By providing parents with the keys to understanding a nontraditional curriculum, like Montessori, educators can involve parents in a way that allows them to assist. Our next challenge is to design programs and tools that empower parents and involve them in the most successful ways.

Parents' Role Beliefs

The role that parents believe they *should* play in their child's education becomes a determinant in parental involvement. In *School Influences on Parents' Role Beliefs*, Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey look at Role Theory and how parents construct role beliefs around involvement in their child's school; parents develop a set of beliefs about how they are supposed to be involved. The study examined the links between role construction and various forms of invitation to involvement: perceived student invitation, perceived teacher invitation, perceived school expectations of involvement and the perceived school climate.

Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey's (2013) exploratory study indicated that the motivators of parental involvement are also motivators of parent beliefs. In other words, parents' perceptions of school expectations for involvement, the school's climate and student invitations to involvement predicted parental role beliefs about their own involvement in their child's education.

These findings suggest that the actions schools take to encourage parents' involvement behaviors also work to encourage positive parental beliefs about what they are supposed to do to support their child's learning. Just as important, the findings show that parents' current experiences with schools were more influential than past school experiences in predicting their role beliefs. Regardless of our perceptions of parents' past experiences, we must create positive and specific invitations to all parents.

Helping Families

The precursor to improving parent involvement and helping students is helping families. William Jeynes (2007) article, *Help Families by Fostering Parental Involvement* recommends that we show an interest in our students' families before asking them to support our schools; families must feel valued. Jenyes also suggests that if you think about involvement differently, you may find that many families are already more involved with their children's education in very effective ways.

"Schools must acknowledge that they cannot alone ensure a child's success in school." (Jeynes, 2007, 2) Schools seems to understand that they must get more low-income parents and parents of color involved in their child's education but they seem to be working toward this outcome based on outdated research mostly aimed at white middle-income families. Current research shows that poor and minority parents become involved when they feel valued and "loved." Schools must be perceived as helping entire families, not just students.

Jeynes (2007) offers several ways to show "sincere" assistance and to reach out to parents as "acts of love." *Offer parents access to basketball courts, weight rooms and other athletic facilities* as a way to reach out to fathers, especially poor noncustodial fathers who feel unwelcome at school. *Offer a once-a-week Parents Day* offering a free lunch or dinner attached to a school event in an attempt to change the perception that schools are only asking for more time and more money. *Incorporate an "adopt a block" outreach* to change the perception of schools as "takers;" schools can follow the lead of many churches and participate in broader outreach into the neighborhood around the school.

Finally, Jeynes (2007)suggests *recognizing existing involvement.* The article describes many low income and minority parents are more involved than schools realize. Parents may not be involved in the outward forms of involvement but they are involved in less visible forms, namely setting high expectations for and building strong communication bonds with their children. Jeynes refers to recent research based on meta-analysis of studies on parent involvement indicating that these hidden forms of parent involvement may be more important than the outward forms (Jeynes, 2007). If we are to "foster greater parental participation, especially among parents of at-risk children, [we] should start by telling parents what they're doing right."(p.2).

Family Routines and Rituals

As previously addressed, family routines are essential to a child's social, emotional and academic success. In Spagnola and Fiese's article, *Family Routines and*

Rituals: A Context for Development in the Lives of Young Children, they define and distinguish between family routines and family rituals. While both family routines and rituals are specific repeated practices that involve two or more family members, family routines are characterized by communication that is instrumental, involve a momentary time commitment and are repeated regularly, holding no special meaning. Family rituals, on the other hand, involve communication with symbolic meaning, establishing and perpetuating the understanding of what it means to be a member of the group. "Both have the potential to serve important roles in maintaining the structure and emotional climate of daily family life. However, when rituals are disrupted, family cohesion is threatened. Thus, both have the potential to serve important roles in maintaining the structure and emotional climate of daily family life.

Family routines and rituals surrounding table and dinner routines contribute to language development; bedtime routines that include nightly reading support the development of early literacy skills; and family routines provide a structure for culturally acceptable behavior in young children.

Over time, routine gatherings, like family dinners, form the foundation of rituals that build emotional connections between family members, allowing them to feel "emotionally supported" and like a valued member of the family. However, the mere presence of a ritual may not have the desired effect. If family gatherings are filled with conflict then emotional bonds can be weakened or destroyed.

Spagnola and Fiese (2007) found evidence that suggests that strong family routines can even "mediate the effects of parental efficacy on positive child outcomes. Further, parents who monitor their children's whereabouts and are involved in their

routines at home are "less likely to have children who engage in risky behaviors."

Therefore, parents who see themselves as competent in establishing and carrying out

routines may also "feel better equipped to keep track of their children's activities and

have children who are engaged in healthy activities." (p.293).

It appears that parent involvement, in this case behavior monitoring (keeping

track of homework assignments, scheduling an after school appointment, knowing the

sharing schedule), is part of family routines. The evidence suggest that "parents who

actively monitor their children's whereabouts and are involved in their routines at home

are less likely to be involved in risky behaviors." (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder &

Samerofff, 1999). Further, the degree to which parents monitor behavior depends on their

feelings of competency in establishing and carrying out the routines. Educators must

invest in supporting parents' feeling of competency so they are able to monitor and

support their child's school behaviors. This alone may be a way to help struggling

students by helping parents establish positive routines around school.

Family Routines and Adolescence

Family routines continue to be linked to academic success at various ages. In a

study by Roche and Ghazarian, *The Value of Family Routines for the Academic Success*

of Vulnerable Adolescents (2012), we see the effect of family routines on academic

success during adolescence. Direct attempts to regulate adolescents' behavior (such as

rules, communication and behavior limits) conflict with adolescents' desire for autonomy

and independence. Family routines, however, go unnoticed and are pervasive in

adolescents' daily lives therefore becoming a good means of effecting student success.

Roche and Ghazarian's study looked at family routines (shared meals, evening and bedtime practices, children doing homework, and family members reading or playing quietly) and their effect on academic success. Family routines in day-to-day life were associated with increases in adolescent academic success, with additional support for the hypothesis that family routines indirectly, through early academic success, affect academic outcomes during late adolescence. In other words, family routines set youth on a course of early academic competence, which benefits children well into late adolescence.

"Family routines in the lives of adolescents, regularity in everyday family activities symbolizes an ideal integration of parent support and behavior control. Routine family practices around shared meals, quiet time, and homework imply parental presence and authority, while simultaneously enhancing opportunities for family members to maintain connection. As youth strive to become more autonomous during adolescence, routines may help parents effectively guide and protect their adolescent children without seeming overly intrusive or controlling." (p. 889). This time of early adolescence may offer a "critical window of opportunity for parental influence on youth success in school."

It appears that the stability and assuredness of day-to-day routines provide adolescents with an "arena of comfort" as they learn to cope with their changing lives. When established in early childhood, family routines promote academic success that translates to later academic success.

As educators we must offer our support to families, and ultimately our children, in their attempts to develop routines by contributing to parents' feelings of competency.

Introduction

The purpose of this action research project is to develop tools and systems that encourage parent involvement that supports the child academically while, at the same time, promotes the child's developing independence. As a Montessori teacher in an upper elementary classroom, I strive to help children grow academically but also to support them on their path to independence. In the second plane of development, this jump to independence is vital; children must learn to manage time and workload. Without the necessary executive functioning skills, students will have difficulty finding success in middle school and high school where time and workload must be managed independent of parents. Therefore, any parent involvement tools developed must not only take into account the child's need for academic support but also the opposing need for independence.

- What kinds of parent involvement are most effective in the upper elementary classroom?
- What kinds of parent involvement are least effective and possibly destructive in the development of independence?
- What barriers to involvement do parents experience and how can we remove them?

Through my action research, I hoped to offer educators tools and systems that encourage parents to provide minimal yet targeted and effective support; offer tools that allow parents to feel competent in their ability to support their child academically, even with a nontraditional curriculum like Montessori; and offer tools that reduce the barriers that some families experience. Ultimately, my goal was to offer tools that help the child

become independent. As Maria Montessori said, "Any child who is self-sufficient

…reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is

derived from a sense of independence.

Methodology

The study took place at a public Montessori school in a large urban school

district in the upper Midwest; the school sits in a more affluent pocket of the city. The

school has a population of approximately 655 students, with 74.27% Caucasian; 18.83%

African American; 4.75% Asian and the remaining 2.15% Hispanic/Native

American/Pacific Islander. The school consists of one self-supporting pre-K fee-based

classroom; four Kindergarten classrooms; seven 1st/2nd grade classrooms; four 3rd grade

classrooms and six 4th/5th grade classrooms. During the 2013-2014 school year, the

school was named a "new-comer destination site" by the school district, bringing an

unexpected increase in ELL students from Somalia.

Data was collected from students and parents at the beginning of two academic

school years in my own 4th/5th grade classroom. During the first school year, the

classroom consisted of 33 students; fifteen 5th graders (9 girls and 6 boys) and eighteen

4th graders (9 girls and 9 boys). At the beginning of the second school year, sixteen of the

eighteen 4th graders looped into my classroom again, creating a classroom of sixteen

veteran 5th graders (7 girls and 9 boys) and twenty new 4th graders (10 girls and 10 boys).

Therefore, I was able to follow the same sixteen students from the beginning of their 4th

grade year to the beginning of their 5th grade year, allowing me to observe changes in

parent involvement and student success across this transition from 4th to 5th grade.

Research was conducted by collecting data on students' daily on-time completion rates for work assigned, along with the parents' daily involvement rate, measured by the presence or absence of the parents' signature. New parent involvement tools and systems were introduced and then changes in the student on-time completion rate and the parent involvement rates were tracked. Additionally, a parent survey was conducted with parents from both academic years, with additional questions administered to those parents whose children transitioned from 4th to 5th grade in my classroom. Parent interviews were conducted; anecdotal records were collected; and cased studies were recorded.

Procedure

In this upper elementary Montessori classroom, lessons were given in each curriculum once per week. When an assignment was given following the lesson, it was due one week later. Children needed a tool to manage their time and workload over that week. Therefore, children were asked to record the assignment and its due date in their planner, a simple calendar (Appendix A). During the first academic school year, all children were also given another tool, a work log (Appendix B), which detailed the child's workday along with noting the assignments due each day. When students turned in their work in the morning, the work log was marked by the teacher with a "complete" or "incomplete" for the day's assignment. Parents were asked to check the work log each night for the "complete" or "incomplete" and sign it, indicating they had reviewed their child's work completion for the day and that they had checked in with their child to make sure the assignment for the following day was complete. The child's on-time completion rate was calculated by the percentage of days on which their assignment was complete.

The parents' involvement rate was calculated by the percentage of days on which they signed the work log. This request for parents to review, check and sign the work log was a means of minimal support to keep the child on-track with work completion, while at the same time, holding the child responsible and accountable for completing daily assignments.

At the beginning of the second academic year, the work log was eliminated leaving only the planner as a tool for parent support. As during the previous year, children were asked to record the assignment and its due date in their planner in order to manage workload and due dates. When students turned in their work in the morning, the planner was now marked by the teacher with a "complete" or "incomplete" for the day's assignment. Parents were asked to check the planner each night for the "complete" or "incomplete" and sign it, indicating they had reviewed their child's completion rate for the day and that they had checked in with their child to make sure the assignment for the following day was complete. The child's on-time completion rate was calculated by the percentage of days on which their assignment was complete. The parents' involvement rate was calculated by the percentage of days on which they signed the planner. This request for parents to review, check and sign the work log was intended to be a more streamlined means of support to keep the child on-track with work completion, while at the same time, holding the child responsible and accountable for completing daily assignments.

The children's on-time completion rates and the parents' involvement rates were tracked across two periods from 8/27/13 to 9/30/13 and from 10/1/13 to 10/31/13 for the first academic year. On-time assignment completion rates and parents' involvement rates

were tracked across these same periods from 8/27/14 to 9/30/14 and from 10/1/14 to

10/31/14. This data allowed me to observe patterns and connections between parent

involvement rates and student completion rates. A grade-level class average was

determined for 4th and 5th grades for both academic years, in order to determine whether

the change in parent involvement tools and systems changed the rate of parent

involvement.

   In addition to simplifying the parent involvement tool from planner and work log

to just the planner, I also began to discuss parent involvement with families differently. In

the first academic year, I utilized the fall Curriculum Night to discuss the various

curricular areas and introduce the work log and how to use it. At the beginning of the

second academic year, I focused the fall Curriculum Night on how the role of the parent

in supporting their new 4th grader and returning 5th grader is different than it was in lower

elementary. In an upper elementary classroom, the parent's responsibilities include

providing a quiet place to work, maintaining high expectations and checking in with the

child every day by reviewing and signing the planner. The parent's role is no longer to

help the child do the assignment. The student's responsibilities include keeping record of

assignments in the planner, completing the work on time and self-advocacy – asking

questions of peers and teachers when understanding falters. It is not the parent's

responsibility to know how to complete the assignment. I gave this message in response

to a barrier to involvement I had heard many times from parents, *I need more information*

about how to do the Montessori lesson in order to help with homework. Parents did not

feel competent with a nontraditional curriculum.

I provided a brochure addressing their roles, emphasizing the importance of the child's developing independence and how to support this development as well as their academic success (Appendix C). I also provided a list of age appropriate chores (Appendix D) as a way for parents to support their growth at home, by providing children with responsibility and accountability. The discussion, along with the brochure and chores list, asked parents to think about their role differently as their child entered the second plane of development. Data was collected on attendance at Curriculum Night and compared to the resulting parent involvement and student completion rates.

Data was also collected on parent access to an email account as a means for parent communication, as well as a student's English Language Learner (ELL) statue. The data was compared to the resulting parent involvement and student completion rates.

A parent feedback survey was conducted with parents during both academic years (Appendix E). A second survey was conducted with the parents of students who have now moved on to middle school (Appendix F). Surveys were distributed through email, in the children's weekly take-home folders and at fall conferences. Finally, data was collected and recorded through parent interviews and anecdotal notes.

Results

It appears that the minimal parent involvement, simply reviewing and signing the child's planner does positively affect the child's completion rate (Figures 1, 2 and 3). As we look at the change in completion rate and parent involvement rate across the two data collection periods in the 2014-15 academic year, we see that 63.8% of the time student completion rates followed parent involvement rates. In other words, if the parent

involvement rate dropped from the first period to the second period, the student

completion rate dropped as well. Conversely, if the parent involvement rate increased

from the first period to the second period, the student completion rate increased too.

This effect could be seen with one of my students, Tyanna, who struggled with

behavior and academics during her 4th grade year. As a 5th grader, Tyanna's behavior

improved significantly, allowing her to focus on academics. Tyanna's mother, a single

parent, supported me when consequences arose from her daughter's poor behavior

choices last year. Mom seems to understand how important academics are to her

daughter's success; she even moved to a new neighborhood so Tyanna could attend our

Montessori school. However, mom seems to have difficulty setting boundaries, carrying

out consequences at home and following through with the academic support. Tyanna had

a 68% completion rate at the beginning of the 2014-15 academic school year, with Mom

signing her planner 81% of the time. As the school year progressed, Tyanna's completion

rate dropped to 31%, when Mom signed the planner only 22% of the time. Tyanna started

getting behind in her work and did not want her mom to find out so she stopped showing

her the planner. Mom did not ask to see it and the downward trend began. I contacted

Mom, discussed additional ways I would support her child at school and asked her to

review the planner each night. Consequently, the completion rate, as well as the child's

confidence, has shown improvement once again. I am so hopeful for this child.

Additionally, for those students whom the parent involvement rate did not affect

work completion rate, all but 2 of those students had completion rates between 80% and

100%. Aidan is an example of a student whose parents rarely signed his planner,

averaging only 34% of the time, but his work was completed 83% of the time. Aidan, the

youngest of 3 children in his family, is very bright, has a good work ethic and habits, and has watched 2 older siblings achieve academic success. His parents are more relaxed with their third child and have allowed him to manage his own work. Aidan is capable of doing so.

In other words, when a student has developed the executive functioning skills necessary to manage time and workload, the parent involvement tool does not hinder their independence; they no longer need even the minimal parent involvement to complete assignments on time. However, when a student is struggling, the parent involvement tool helps support their progress. It appears that, if the parent does not support the struggling child by signing and reviewing the planner each day, the child will continue to struggle.

Sheena is such a child. Sheena is a kind but struggling 4th grader who lives with her grandmother whom she refers to as "Mom." Sheen has the desire to do well in school but not the discipline. Her completion rate dropped 15 percentage points from the first to second period of the year, as her mom's participation dropped 40 percentage points in that same time period. I met with Sheena's mom early in the year and she told me that she did not have time to sign the planner each night or help with academic support. As the year has progressed, Sheena's struggles have only increased as self-confidence declines. I received an email from her mom explaining how Sheena feels overwhelmed saying, "She was in tears over having to go back to school." I immediately asked if we could meet; Mom said she appreciated my offer but that time was an issue for her. Instead, I spoke with Sheena and together we developed some strategies. Sheena needs support from her mom with work habits or she will continue to struggle.
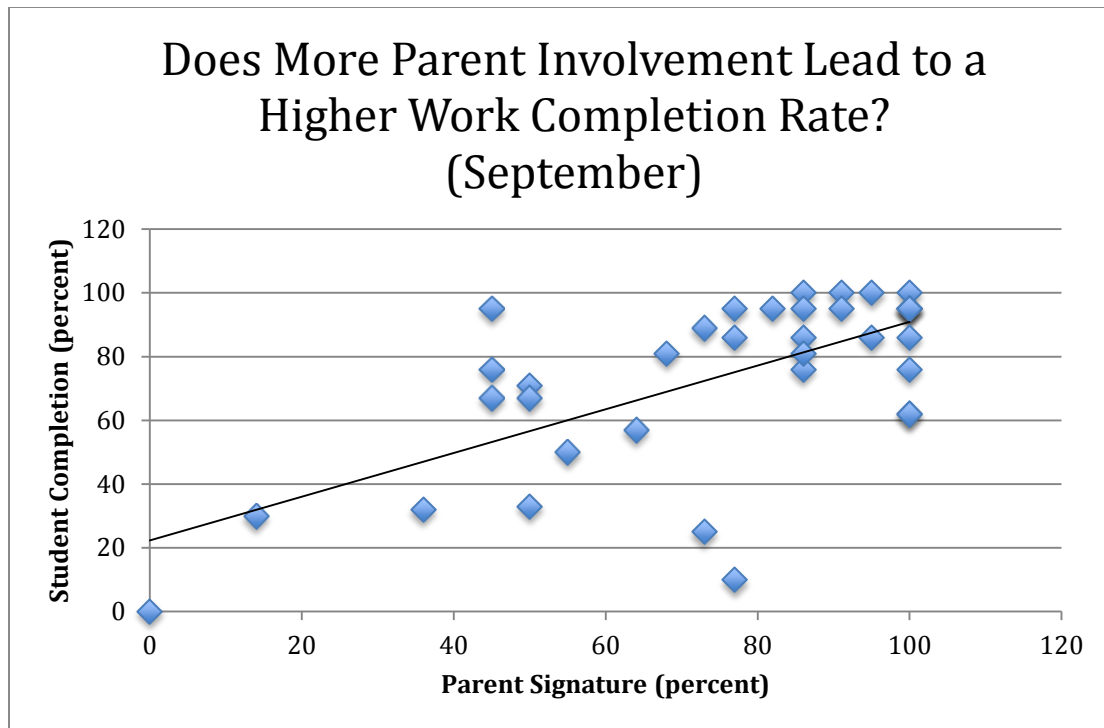
Figure 1: Comparison of Parent Involvement to Student Completion Rate for September 2014
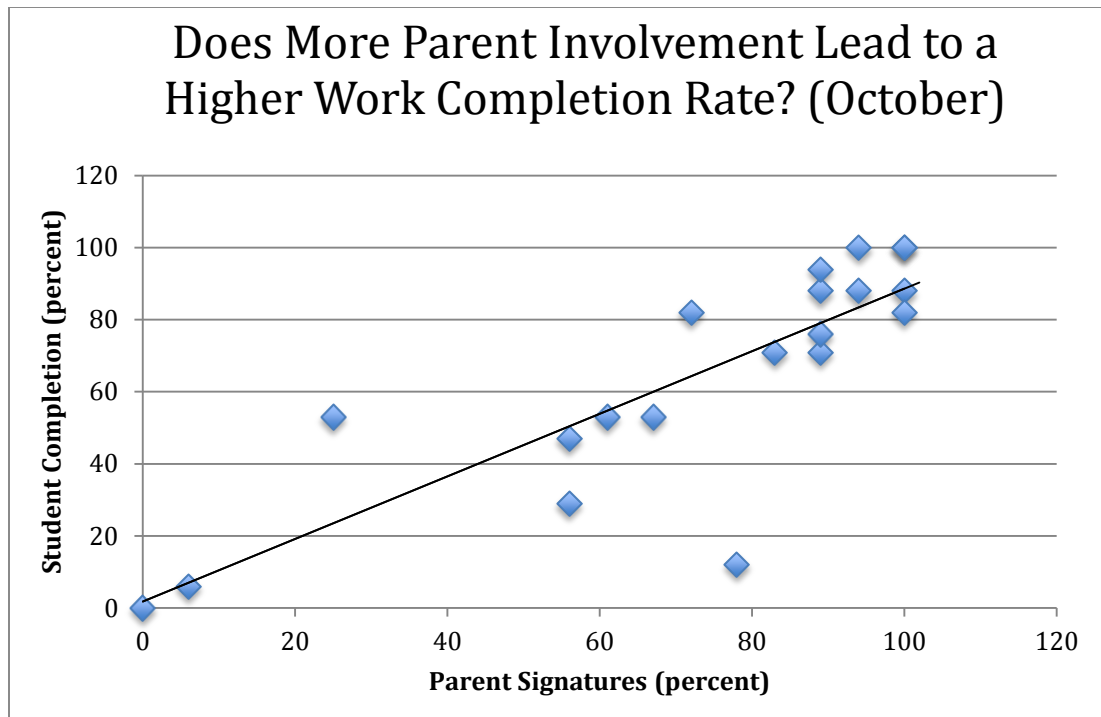
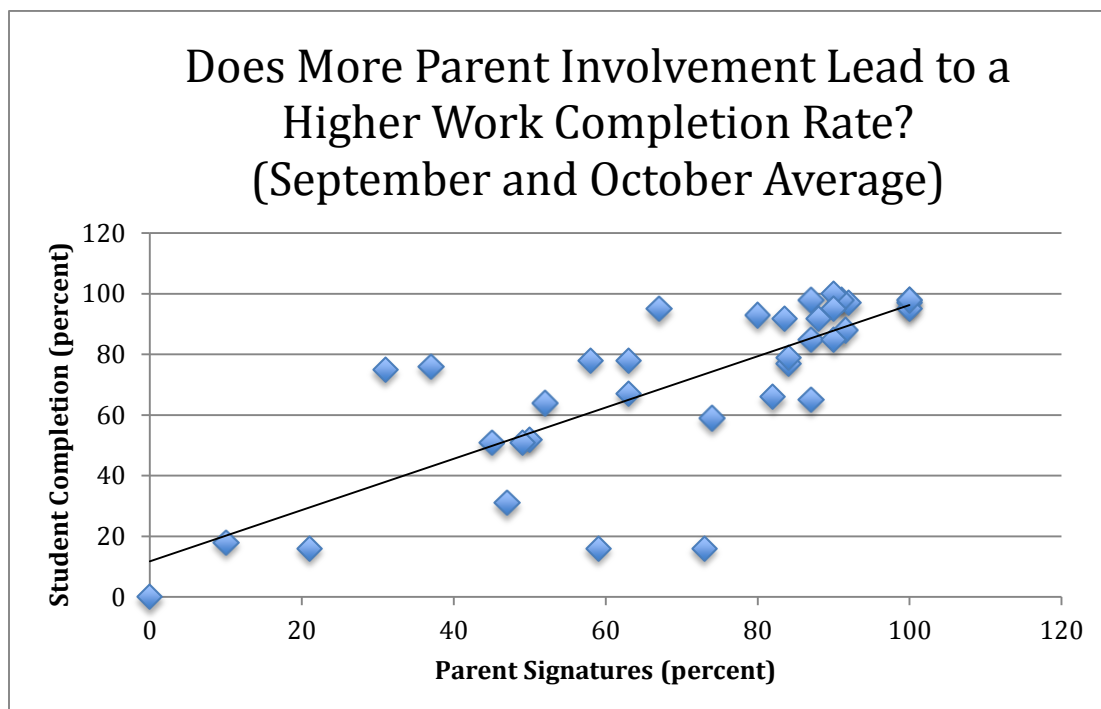Figure 2: Comparison of Parent Involvement to Student Completion Rate for October 2014

Figure 3: Comparison of Parent Involvement to Student Completion Rate: an average for September and October 2014

Looking at the results of the data collected for the same group of children as they moved from 4th grade to 5th grade, it would seem that parent involvement rates did not change significantly, with 66.2% and 65.75% respectively. It would appear that the simpler tool for involvement had no measurable effect on the rate at which parents reviewed and signed. However, looking at the same group of students as 4th graders and then again as 5th graders (figure 4), student completion rates went from a group average of 58.6% to a group average of 72.8%, possibly indicating that students who were struggling to complete work as new 4th graders became more independent as 5th graders and were able to raise their completion rate regardless of parent involvement.

Khaled is one such child. Khaled and his parents were born in Iraq, but Khaled came to the United States as a young boy. Therefore, he sounds like and functions as a native speaker. His parents, however, do not speak English very well and are consequently disconnected from the school and their son's progress (parent involvement rate of 26) except to know that he is a "good boy." Although Khaled is a bright boy, he struggled with the increased responsibility, accountability and workload of 4th grade (completion rate of 32%). In addition to his work in my classroom, Khaled also attends Arabic school on the weekends with homework there as well. As a 5th grader, however, Khaled has learned to manage his time and workload even though his parents' involvement as reflected by signature on his planner has gone down to 16%. He has been able to succeed academically, regardless of parent involvement.
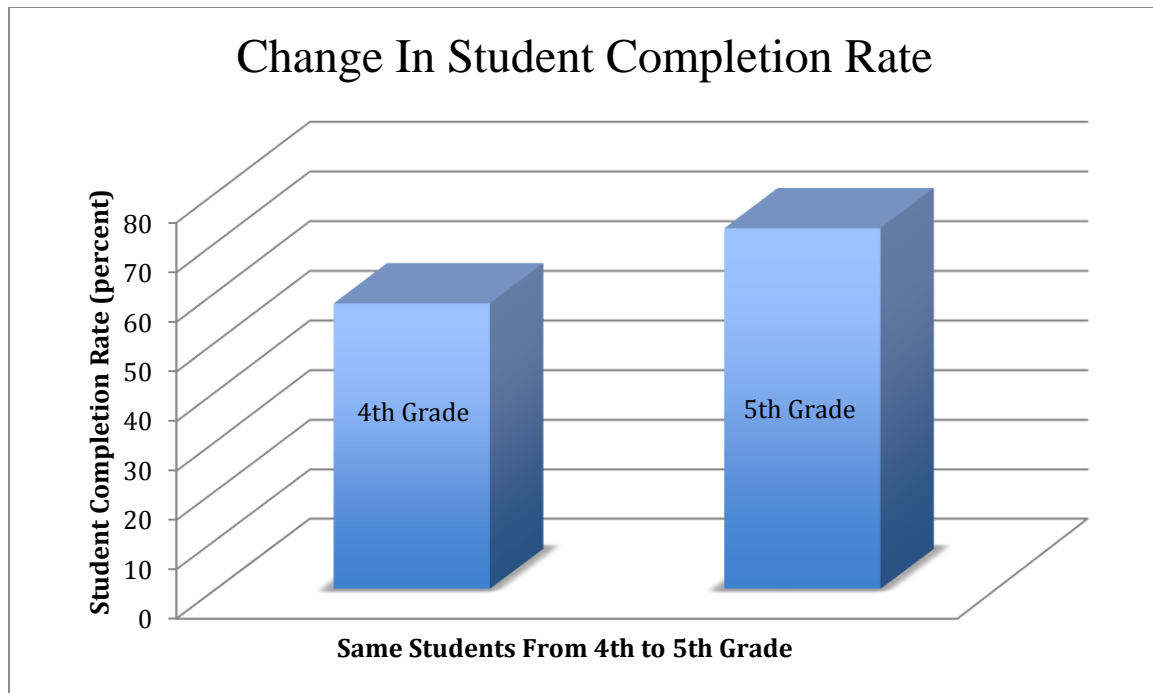
Figure 4: Change in Completion Rates for Students from 4th (2013) to 5th Grade (2014)

When looking at children entering 4th grade, we also see a higher rate of parent involvement in the second year of the study, with 70.85% of new 4th grade parents signing the planner, as opposed to 66.2% of new 4th grade parents signing during the first year of the study. This increase could be attributed to the changes made with the simplification of the involvement tool, the change in focus during curriculum night, the addition of the brochure describing the parent's role in supporting their child and accompanying list of "Age Appropriate Chores" or simply a different parent group.

The data collected looked at attendance at the fall Curriculum Night and its effect on parent involvement rates and student completion rates. Seventy percent of the 4th grade parents attended the fall Curriculum Night; the average completion rate for those

students reached 71%, compared to 43% for students whose parents did not attend
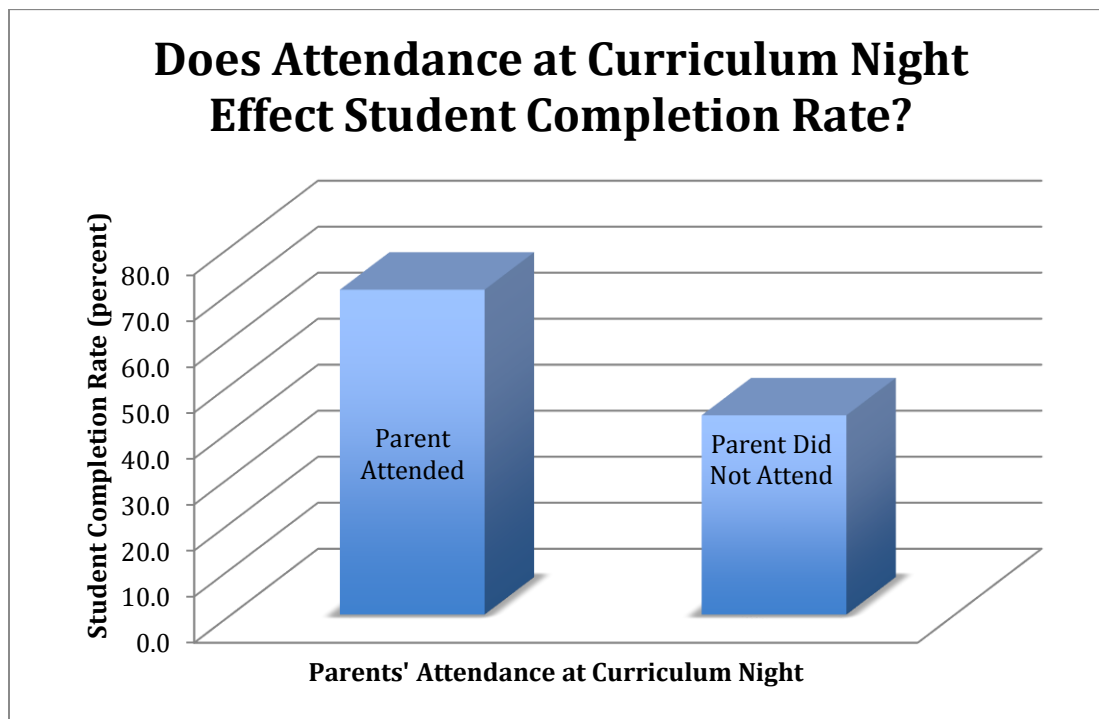
Curriculum Night (Figure 5).

Does Attendance at Curriculum Night Effect Student Completion Rate?

Figure 5: Parent attendance at Curriculum Night and student completion rate.

Only 19% of 5th grade parents attended the fall Curriculum Night; the average

completion rate for those students was 84%, compared to 70% for students whose parents

did not attend Curriculum Night. While some 5th graders were already reaching

independence and did not need their parents to be in attendance, others did. While

attendance at Curriculum Night did seem to make a difference in the child's academic

success, the reasons for that success are inconclusive.

I heard a lot of positive feedback from Curriculum Night and the focus of the

discussion on independence. One parent told me that she felt like I was talking directly to

her as I spoke about the importance of the children's developing independence. She said,

"I have the potential to be the 'helicopter' parent but I can see how important it is to allow her to succeed or fail on her own and I'm just there to support her in either case."

When looking at barriers to parent involvement, we must look at parent access to an email account. Only 4 students or 11% of the students in the 2014-15 class do not have an email address. Those parents without email addresses have an average parent involvement rate of 36% and their students have an average student completion rate of 31%. When looking at barriers, we must consider that all of these students without email addresses are students of color and two out of the four are English Language Learners (ELL).

Darius' family does not have an email account, putting him at risk for low parent involvement (16%). All newsletters, permission slips and informational literature are sent home as a paper copy but I do not know if his parents ever receive them. Darius' family does not participate any school activities in or out of the classroom. Darius struggles in all academic areas (21% completion rate). When Darius was a 4th grader, I completed all the necessary interventions in order to allow him to be tested for special education services, help that Darius desperately wanted. But his father would not sign the parental consent to allow it; he did not want his son to be "labeled a special ed kid," and I could not get him to come in to talk to me about it. I watched Darius' confidence plummet and his anxiety soar. This year, I was able to catch Dad when he was picking up Darius early one day and asked him to come in to conference with me. During that meeting, Dad expressed his concern that Darius would be removed from my classroom and put into a self-contained special education classroom. Now able to understand his reluctance to allow services for Darius, I was able to explain that Darius would remain in my

classroom but be given extra resources and help. Throughout the conversation, I could see that Dad could relate to his son's fears, saying, "I was just like you Darius. You just have to work hard." Dad may have some anxiety about being involved in school even today as a parent. Darius is now being tested for special education services.

A parent feedback survey was distributed to all parents in the 2014-2015 classroom electronically and by paper (Figure 6). The survey was given to parents at conferences, sent as an attachment to an email request and also sent home with students. Feedback could be provided anonymously or with a signature. Fifty-three percent of the parents responded to the survey.

Parent Feedback Survey 2014-2015

Place an "X" in the box that best describes your experience. SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree DK=Don't Know	SA	A	D	SD	DK
I feel capable of supporting my child's academic success at home.	57.9%	36.8%	5.3%		
The unfamiliarity of the Montessori curriculum makes it more challenging for me to be involved in supporting my child.	5.3%	10.5%	47.4%	31.6%	5.3%
My child's teacher invites me to visit the classroom.	100%				
My child's teacher shows respect for people of all races, ethnic groups, and cultures.	78.9%	10.5%			
The teacher suggests ways I can help my child learn at home.	78.9%	10.5%			
When my child's teacher assigns homework, it is clear and meaningful.	68.4%	26.3%	5.3%		
My child's teacher is easy to reach.	100%				
My child's teacher and I work together to help my child learn.	100%				

Figure 6: Parent Feedback Survey 2014-2105

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being "very involved," how involved would you say you are in your child's school; please include time supporting homework.

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being "very involved," how much involvement in your child's school (including supporting homework) do you think is optimal?

When reviewing survey results from parents of students in the 2014-15 classroom, we see that 94.7% of parents either *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* that they feel capable of supporting their child's academic success at home. For 79% of parents, the unfamiliarity of the Montessori curriculum does not make it more challenging to provide support. The

survey results seem to indicate that the respondents feel welcome and respected in the classroom, with 100% of the parents *strongly agreeing* that the teacher invites them to visit the classroom and 0% indicating that the teacher lacks respect for people from other cultures. All parents also seem to perceive some level of partnership with the teacher, with 100% of respondents *strongly agreeing* that the teacher is easy to reach and that they work with the teacher to help their child learn. The final two questions are about learning at home. While 100% of the participants *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the teacher suggests way to help their child learn at home and 94.7% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the homework assigned is clear and meaningful, 5.3% disagreed with this statement.

One of the respondents that disagreed with the statement that homework is clear and meaningful is a parent who admittedly struggles with allowing her children to develop independence. Kristi has difficulty allowing her son to problem-solve on his own and allowing him to complete assignments on his own. Therefore, she feels a need to understand how to do the assignment.

Parents were asked to rate their involvement on a scale of one to ten, with 10 being "very involved;" 94.5% of the respondents rated their involvement at seven or higher. A smaller percentage, 87.6%, said that optimal involvement should be at seven or higher. Looking at these ratings through another lens, we see that 31.3% of the parents who responded to the survey said they *should be more involved*, while 25% said *their actual level of involvement is greater than what they would consider the optimal*. The greatest percentage of participants in the survey, 37.5%, said *their current level of involvement is optimal.* There were two respondents (10.5%)who *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the unfamiliarity of the Montessori curriculum makes it more challenging to

be involved in supporting their child; but those same respondents indicated that they felt capable of supporting their child's academic success at home. Interestingly, these same respondents said that their current involvement is lower than what they would consider optimal involvement.

When asked about their involvement and optimal involvement, parents said:

- I am involved, "Probably to the point of obnoxiousness."

- The optimal amount of involvement, "Depends on your child."

- I was so involved, "the poor kid couldn't get by with anything."

- "We try to balance support with opportunity to grow. It needs to be balanced."

Two additional questions (Figure 7) were given to parents whose children were in my classroom as 4th graders and are now 5th graders.

What barriers to involvement in the classroom/school as well as involvement in homework support, did you experience last academic school?
Have you experienced any change in those barriers to involvement since last academic year?

Figure 7: Parent Feedback Survey 2014-15

The barriers reported by respondents fell into the category of time and work obligations. None of the respondents mentioned the nontraditional Montessori curriculum.

One respondent, however, did mention the difficulty of understanding the assignments when trying to help her child complete the work. This mom, who is parenting her child with 3 other adults due to divorce and remarriage, wanted to be able

to manage her son's work with greater control; this micromanagement may hinder her son's developing independence. Although he successfully attained a level of independence, it took him longer than some of his peers. Mom explained,
"A significant barrier is lack of website/online resources to review lessons so we can be familiar with the given lesson in order to help our child…I would value being able to access the lesson material at school so I understood expectations."

Reflections

The purpose of this action research project was to develop tools that encourage parent involvement while promoting the child's independence. The tool on which I focused primarily was the planner. The planner seems to allow children to take responsibility for their work while encouraging parents to ask questions, open discussions and review work all as a means of support. One of the challenges of this research is discovering what other activities are generated by parents signing the planner; certainly it cannot be the simple act of signing without any other interaction that promotes a higher work completion rate. As a parent who also had a child in a classroom using the same system, I know that having my child ask me to sign her planner every day prompted a discussion about what happened during her day; allowed me to assess each day how she was doing and to then congratulate or redirect her; showed me that I needed to help her practice certain skills; and made me appreciate how hard she worked. Children want you to know what is going on in their day-to-day lives and this tool is one way to build on that knowledge and therefore the relationship. All of these activities sprung from that

singular requirement to sign the planner. However, the study is limited by not knowing which of these activities actually promotes the completed work and subsequent academic success.

I have learned that even minimal parent involvement does make a difference in a child's success, especially for the children that are struggling either academically or with executive functioning skills. However, in order for parents to become involved they must feel competent and engaged. I learned that attendance at Curriculum Night is an important tool of engagement and understanding leading to the success of students. Finally, I learned that the barriers that parents of ELL children and parents without email addresses experience have not been overcome in my classroom.

As my action research continues, I would like to build on the success of the in-school fall Curriculum Night and find ways to deliver the same information to parents who do not attend. The Parent Guide brochure is a start but there may be better ways to transfer this information. I would also like to develop tools for overcoming the barriers to involvement experienced by parents without access to the Internet and parents who are English Language Learners. Would providing assistance setting up Internet accounts that are accessible from the public library increase involvement for parents without Internet access? Would it be possible to have the Parent Guide brochure translated into Somali? Would the dissemination of information in this way increase the involvement of Somali parents? I would like to research the effectiveness of using these tools across all of the upper elementary classrooms in the school. Finally, I would like to extend my research into helping parents build stronger and more resilient families by building family routines and rituals. I feel passionate about the need for parent education. Therefore, I would like

to continue working to help parents understand the importance of involvement and the importance of a child's developing independence.

"Independence is not a static condition; it is a continuous conquest, and in order to reach not only freedom, but also strength, and the perfecting on one's powers, it is necessary to follow this path of unremitting toil." Maria Montessori (The Absorbent Mind, p. 90)

Appendix A

Appendix B

WORK LOG   ROOM 116   Name:

December 2, 2013

	Monday 12/2	Tuesday 12/3	Wednesday 12/4	Thursday 12/5	Friday 12/6	
	Quote and Math	Quote and Math	Quote and Math	Quote and Math	Quote and Math	
		Art	Music	Science	Gym	
	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	
9:00	Daily Math	Daily Math	Daily Math	Daily Math	Daily Math	
	ARITHMETIC	WORD STUDY	GRAMMAR	GEOMETRY	SOCIAL STUDIES	
		Spelling Test				
	Media (10:10-11:15)				5-min math fact score: 100	
11:30-11:50	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	
11:50-12:10	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
	Literature Circles Notes and Outline	Thesis Statement Notes and Outline	Thesis Statement Notes and Outline	Thesis Statement Notes and Outline	Thesis Statement Notes and Outline	
	Afternoon Meeting	Afternoon Meeting	Afternoon Meeting	Afternoon Meeting	Afternoon Meeting	
Assignment Due	Complete Incomplete	Complete Incomplete	Complete Incomplete	Complete Incomplete	Complete Incomplete	
Parent Initials						

PLEASE REVIEW THE ASSIGNMENT THAT WAS DUE TODAY AND WILL BE DUE TOMORROW AND SIGN.

Appendix C

The Focus in Upper Elementary Shifts

- All students receive grade level lessons. Differentiation comes in the follow up work assigned instead of solely from lessons.

- Responsibility shifts from you to your child as she builds independence and prepares for middle school.

- It can be a difficult transition for both student and parent. Some feelings of stress are normal and expected.

My Contact Information

email provided

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled." - Plutarch

Parent Guide
Helping your 4th or 5th Grader Succeed

"The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind."
~Maria Montessori

HOMEWORK and CLASSWORK

- Students should complete about an hour of homework every day.
  - o Independent reading and journaling
  - o Multiplication fact memorization
  - o Spelling work
  - o Unfinished class work
  - o Sports/music lessons
  - o Service learning
  - o Quarterly projects
- Assignments should be completed in class
  - o Notes and materials are available in class
  - o Plenty of time given in class to complete work
  - o Support from peers and teacher in the classroom
- Quarterly Projects
  - o Evolve from Montessori Great Lessons and Minnesota State Standards
  - o Mini-lessons given for each step in the process
  - o Students will be given some time to work in class
  - o Some work will need to be completed at home

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Complete work on time and to the best of his ability
- Take legible and accurate notes at all lessons and use them when completing work
- Keep an accurate record of assignment due dates in planner
- Use planner to guide work in class and at home
- Ask questions of teacher and peers when understanding falters.

PARENT SUPPORT

- Check in with your child every day by reviewing and signing her planner
- Provide a quiet spot in your home to complete homework
- You may need to sit with your child to keep him on task to start
- Make sure all assignments are complete
- Maintain high expectations for your child

You are not responsible for knowing how to complete the assignments. Please help your child take responsibility for her learning by encourage her to ask questions in class if she does NOT understand a lesson or an assignment. *Self-advocacy is an important step toward independence.*

FOSTERING INDEPENENCE

- Have your child help with household chores
  - o See handout for age appropriate chores

- Ask your child to pack her lunch and backpack every morning and unpack them every evening.
- Make it your child's responsibility to show you his planner and any forms to be signed each day.

"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed."

~Maria Montessori

Appendix D

Age-Appropriate Chores for Children

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Ages 2-3
- ☐ Put toys in toy box
- ☐ Stack books on shelf
- ☐ Place dirty clothes in laundry hamper
- ☐ Throw trash away
- ☐ Carry firewood
- ☐ Fold washcloths
- ☐ Set the table
- ☐ Fetch diapers & wipes
- ☐ Dust baseboards

Ages 4-5
- ☐ Feed pets
- ☐ Wipe up spills
- ☐ Put away toys
- ☐ Make the bed
- ☐ Straighten bedroom
- ☐ Water houseplants
- ☐ Sort clean silverware
- ☐ Prepare simple snacks
- ☐ Use hand-held vacuum
- ☐ Clear kitchen table
- ☐ Dry and put away dishes
- ☐ Disinfect doorknobs

Ages 6-7
- ☐ Gather trash
- ☐ Fold towels
- ☐ Dust mop floors
- ☐ Empty dishwasher
- ☐ Match clean socks
- ☐ Weed garden
- ☐ Rake leaves
- ☐ Peel potatoes or carrots
- ☐ Make salad
- ☐ Replace toilet paper roll

Ages 8-9
- ☐ Load dishwasher
- ☐ Change light bulbs
- ☐ Wash laundry
- ☐ Hang/fold clean clothes
- ☐ Dust furniture
- ☐ Spray off patio
- ☐ Put groceries away
- ☐ Scramble eggs
- ☐ Bake cookies
- ☐ Walk dogs
- ☐ Sweep porches
- ☐ Wipe off table

Ages 10-11
- ☐ Clean bathrooms
- ☐ Vacuum rugs
- ☐ Clean countertops
- ☐ Deep clean kitchen
- ☐ Prepare simple meal
- ☐ Mow lawn
- ☐ Bring in mail
- ☐ Do simple mending (hems, buttons, etc.)
- ☐ Sweep out garage

Ages 12 and up
- ☐ Mop floors
- ☐ Change overhead lights
- ☐ Wash/ vacuum car
- ☐ Trim hedges
- ☐ Paint walls
- ☐ Shop for groceries w/list
- ☐ Cook complete dinner
- ☐ Bake bread or cake
- ☐ Do simple home repairs
- ☐ Wash windows
- ☐ Iron clothes
- ☐ Watch younger siblings

Appendix E

PARENT/FAMILY FEEDBACK SURVEY

Dear Parents/Families,

Your child's success is my core mission. In order to continually improve my teaching practices, I must understand my successes and challenges. I want to hear your thoughts, opinions, ideas and perceptions as part of a research project.

Please respond to the survey below, putting an "X" in the box that best describes your experience during the first 8 weeks of school. No names will be associated with any survey results. I appreciate your time and participation.

Thank you!
Michelle Loomans

Place an "X" in the box that best describes your experience. **SA** = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree **DK**=Don't Know					
	SA	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**DK**
I feel capable of supporting my child's academic success at home.					
The unfamiliarity of the Montessori curriculum makes it more challenging for me to be involved in supporting my child.					
My child's teacher invites me to visit the classroom.					
My child's teacher shows respect for people of all races, ethnic groups, and cultures.					
The teacher suggests ways I can help my child learn at home.					
When my child's teacher assigns homework, it is clear and meaningful.					
My child's teacher is easy to reach.					
My child's teacher and I work together to help my child learn.					

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being "very involved," how involved would you say you are in your child's school; please include time supporting homework.

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being "very involved," how much involvement in your child's school (including supporting homework) do you think is optimal?

What barriers to involvement in the classroom/school as well as involvement in homework support, did you experience last academic school?
Have you experienced any change in those barriers to involvement since last academic year?

Thank you for your participation!

_____
Signature (If you wish)

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