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FACTORS THAT AFFECT  
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GIFTED EDUCATION

by

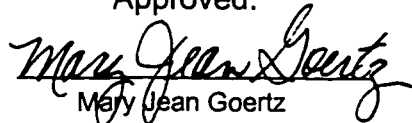
Lynne A. Mahony

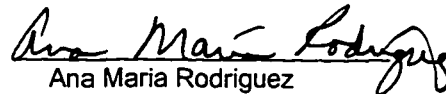
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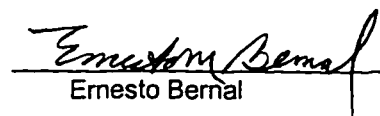
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Education  
in Gifted Education

Department of Educational Psychology  
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## ABSTRACT

### FACTORS THAT AFFECT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN GIFTED EDUCATION

LYNNE A. MAHONY

This study was completed to identify various factors that affect the level of involvement of parents who have children in gifted programs. Specifically this thesis attempts to identify the reasons parents do or do not attend parent meetings for the gifted, and the types of agendas at the meeting that these parents find to be the most beneficial.

The population studied consisted of parents of 117 gifted students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, located in a school district on the Western Slope in Colorado, who completed the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey. Data were compiled by axial coding and analyzed for development of qualitative theory, frequency of answers, strategies, or suggestions given towards the end result of bettering parental involvement in gifted education.

The findings and literature support the view that parents of the gifted strive to support their gifted child's education, but often lack the necessary knowledge, time, and information to demonstrate this desire. Communication between the gifted student, teachers of the gifted student, and parents of the gifted child needs to be frequent and three-way in order for parental involvement in gifted education to be successful. Several parents stated that their children need to be the primary focus of meetings, and that a reminder from the children themselves would keep their involvement at a high level. Responses as to why parents' levels of involvement in gifted education were not greater overwhelmingly pointed to time conflicts and frustrations as to how to be better involved in key issues and concerns.

Several suggestions and strategies involving technology and increased communication among students, teachers and ultimately parents may assist parents of the gifted in their quest for increased levels of parental involvement. Only by working together, inclusive of all facets in gifted students' lives, can gifted children hope to achieve great success in their future endeavors - both inside the classroom and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....v

LIST OF TABLES.....vi

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....1

    Overview .....1

    Problem Statement.....2

    Research Questions .....2

    Definition of Terms .....2

    Limitations .....3

    Significance of the Study.....3

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....4

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY .....12

    Restatement of Research Problem .....12

    Population and Sample .....12

    Instrumentation.....13

    Validity and Reliability Assessment .....13

    Data Collection Procedures.....14

    Data Analysis Procedures .....15

    Summary .....17

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS .....18

    Population .....18

    Instrumentation.....18

    Research Findings.....18

    Summary .....30

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND  
IMPLICATIONS .....31

    Summary .....31

    Conclusions .....31

    Recommendations.....33

    Implications .....34

REFERENCES.....36

APPENDICES .....38

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Partnership Pyramid (Equation for success).....	10
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## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.	Validity of Survey Instrumentation: A Sample Matrix of Pilot Results for Parental Involvement in Gifted Education.....	14
TABLE 2.	Sample Parental Involvement Qualitative Data Matrix.....	15
TABLE 3.	Parental Qualitative Data Matrix - Reasons Parents Gave for Attending Meetings for their Gifted Child .....	20
TABLE 4.	Parental Qualitative Data Matrix - Reasons Parents Give for Not Attending Meetings for Their Gifted Child .....	22
TABLE 5.	Qualitative Data Matrix - Factors Affecting Parental Involvement.....	27

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

According to the U.N. Declaration, "Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give" (p. 78). To give credence to this belief, the focus for gifted education in the 21st century is in successfully parenting the gifted child. One of the most significant trends in gifted education will highlight the family (Colangelo, 1988) and its involvement with the school system as key to the success of the gifted child. According to Snodgrass (1991), parents recognize the importance of their gifted children striving to do their best in school; however, they do not appear to realize the critical role they play in this endeavor. Parents are, after all, their child's first influential teachers. By continuing to stay involved in their child's education, parents can function as partners with the classroom teacher, thus positively facilitating the educational process of the child. Increased involvement between the home and school environments has proven to be a significant factor in academic achievement levels (Snodgrass, 1991).

Bevevino (1988) found that a decline in parental involvement occurs as a child progresses through the school system. According to Bevevino, parents begin to "neglect their responsibility to encourage and aid their gifted children in academic success" during the intermediate and secondary school grades (p. 10).

Keeping parents involved in a gifted child's education will build a positive partnership to support education and academic achievement are concerned. Gifted children are one of America's greatest resources; by enabling their success society will reap extraordinary benefits from their later work. "As the twig is bent, the tree inclines" (Peter, 1977, p. 135).



### Problem Statement

The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that contribute to parental involvement in gifted education.

### Research Questions

1. What are the reasons parents of gifted children give for attending or not attending parental meetings called by the gifted and talented program?
2. Is there a relationship between parental attendance at meetings for their gifted child and the income of the parents, the ethnicity of the child, or the child's grade level?
3. Does a relationship exist between the agendas of parental meetings (topics, issues, concerns) and the level of parental involvement of parents who attend meetings for the gifted?
4. Is ethnicity a factor that affects parental attendance?

### Definition of Terms

**Agenda:** A list of things to be done constitutes the definition of agenda by the Montrose County School District RE-1J Frameworks (1996).

**Attendance:** The act or fact of being present and the number of times a person attends are defined as attendance by the Montrose County School District RE-1J Frameworks (1996).

**Gifted Education:** As defined by the Advisory Council for the gifted and talented program in Montrose County School District RE-1J Frameworks (1996), a gifted education is offered to a student who demonstrates extraordinary ability or achievement, creativity and task commitment in one or more of the following areas: intellectual ability, specific academic ability, visual and performing arts and leadership. Intellectual ability is inclusive of higher level thinking skills and/or problem-solving skills. Specific academic ability can be demonstrated in math, science, language arts and social studies.

Low-Level Involvement: To commit oneself emotionally as a participant to a lesser degree than is average or standard is termed low-level involvement by Colangelo (1988).

Parental Involvement: Involvement, to draw in as a participant and to commit oneself emotionally, by a mother, father, both parents, or a guardian, is defined as parental involvement by Colangelo (1988).

### Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is that a self-selected sample of parents from a school district on the Western Slope of Colorado answered the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey. This study is offered in the belief that other gifted and talented programs may find some common ground upon which to build increased parental involvement.

### Significance of the Study

Presently, according to Vestal (1993), parental involvement in gifted education is in decline. Parents of gifted children often find themselves in the dilemma as to how they can best be involved in their gifted child's education. Some have a zeal and are readily involved in their child's schooling; however, many others are timid when it comes to being involved with school personnel and gifted education. Therefore, the significance of this research study is to determine why parents are or are not involved in the education of their gifted child. The objective of the researcher is to utilize qualitative and quantitative analyses to determine suggestions and strategies which could enhance, enrich, and increase parental involvement in gifted education in the future.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

One of the most critical issues in gifted education is that of the parent and school relationship. The role that the parents play in the education of their gifted child is tantamount to all other school issues. Creating a relationship where both parties mutually benefit requires knowledge as to how the parents of the gifted and the school as an institution functions, both independently and symbiotically. Although parents of gifted children do want to assist in their children's education, specific roles and expectations for their involvement often cause confusion. Parents prefer to give all of the "education power" solely to the schools, thereby having an immediate scapegoat when they are dissatisfied. However, when parents advance to the other end of the spectrum and aggressively pursue involvement in their gifted child's education, they are viewed as demanding, pushy, and a threat to the often tenuous home-school relationship already in existence where gifted education is concerned (Dettman & Colangelo, 1980).

#### Effective Approaches to Parent Involvement

Dettman & Colangelo (1980) utilize three basic approaches which could be combined to bolster parental involvement. These approaches are the parent-centered approach, the school-centered approach, and the partnership-approach. According to Colangelo, these approaches are thought to have their bases in counseling, although the partnership-approach has definite merit for increasing the number of involved parents in gifted education. Because the partnership synthesizes the influences and resources of both home and school, it requires active, involved cooperation both from parents and school personnel (Dettman & Colangelo, 1980). Figure 1, Interaction Model Depicting Attitudes of Parents and Schools Regarding the Role of the School in Gifted Education,

illustrates the strengths that both the home and school environments possess for a successful and active team approach to learning.

This foundation, building upon involved parents, may provide for increased achievement for gifted students. Students in gifted programs will benefit from the knowledge and expertise and resources that parents and school personnel actively bring to the learning environment. Parents functioning as such an important equation in the education of their gifted child will prove an invaluable asset to the gifted child's classroom teacher and the school system itself.

The parent-centered approach, although worthy in its own right, relies heavily on the degree of motivation and availability of resources for which the parent is willing to search. In this approach many opportunities that could be afforded the gifted child may fall by the wayside, depending upon the education and socioeconomic status of the parents (Dettman & Colangelo, 1980).

The school-centered approach may be able to provide trained experts in the field of gifted education, and may have a less limited arena of resources; however, it still falls short because of lacking the bridge necessary to fully involve the parents. In order to provide the gifted student the most well-rounded educational opportunities, the school and parents must work together to successfully achieve educational goals, as well as lifelong goals for the enrichment of the gifted child. Allowing the home and school partnership to become fully integrated would help to make learning, namely a love of learning, a positive, continual process for the gifted child (Dettman & Colangelo, 1980).

#### Characteristics of Families Displaying Effective Parental Involvement

In a study by Clark (1987), ten characteristics of effective families who displayed involvement in their children's education were identified. The first indicated that involved parents believed that they actually can make a difference in their gifted child's academic and personal development. By demonstrating this

positive outlook and belief system, gifted children know that their homes are a haven for support and understanding--both critical elements of involved parents. The second characteristic is parents who frequently communicate their high expectations to their children demonstrate that they are involved. The third characteristic of effective parental involvement is parents and gifted children who have a clear vision of a successful future and how to attain this dream of success. Fourth, parents of gifted children must instill a belief that hard work, motivation, and commitment are the keys to success. The fifth characteristic is parents who are involved, strive to guide their children towards an active lifestyle. In this capacity, these gifted children search for as many opportunities and community resources which they can utilize for their advantage and development. The sixth characteristic of effective families is involvement in the importance in home-centered learning activities such as leisure reading, games, extracurricular sports, youth programs, part-time jobs, or family outings. Seventh, gifted children need to feel important to their families. In this way the family can be viewed as a mutual support system and problem-solving faction. An equally important trait in families of gifted children is that these families possess clearly understood and consistently enforced limitations and household rules. While setting these standards may prove difficult, resolving conflicts in a fair and loving manner is critical. Ninth, parents of gifted children need to be extremely involved in their child's school and parent-teacher organizations. One method of parents facilitating this involvement is to frequently contact their child's teachers, thereby, demonstrating a unified force for their children. Last, Clark (1987) stresses emphasis on spiritual growth. Parents must encourage and inspire their children, by being positive role models, to strive for inner peace and love. In so doing, the gifted child can understand and use his/her needs and talents to help others.

### The Role of School Personnel in Effective Parental Involvement

School personnel are the second necessary element of effective parent involvement in gifted education. Only in this equation, parents + schools = involvement and student success, can gifted students strive for academic achievement and lifelong happiness. Yoshia, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell (1978) strongly urge schools to incorporate parents into their gifted programs' planning meeting(s). Further, in a study done by Braggett, Ashman, and Noble (1983) at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia, parents of gifted children were urged to attend parenting workshops and meetings. These workshops were designed to define parental roles in helping gifted children succeed in school, in social settings, in interpersonal matters surrounding their physical needs, and in enrichment activities. In this study parents were allowed to explore the structure and organization of the school system in relation to their gifted children's needs. These parents raised questions about channels of information, staff hierarchy, counseling, and the role of administration. Knowledge in each of these areas afforded parents of the gifted the opportunity to share the responsibility of providing for gifted children the very best that involved parents and involved schools have to offer.

In assisting parents in becoming proactive, involved support systems for the schools, educators offer these suggestions (Campbell, 1992):

- Educators who are experienced in parent involvement must help preservice and practicing teachers work comfortably with parents.
- Convenience to parents is the primary consideration when scheduling educational programs.
- Communication between school and parents is immediate, frequent, meaningful, and positive.

- Schools should always seek to build the self-esteem of children and parents.
- Improvement of parental involvement, especially with those who have seldom, if ever, been involved, the initial thrust must be social; once parents are more involved with the schools, the staff should work toward increased educational involvement.
- Effective parent involvement programs break down any remnants of turf.
- A school should be the center of the community. Educators should coordinate services for parents to avoid duplication of services and to make the school a positive force in the lives of families.
- Effective involvement programs place parents in prominent positions on school governance committees and strategic planning groups.

(pp. 5-8)

See Appendix A for additional supporting strategies. Utilizing these suggestions and strategies for a starting point in building an involved, working partnership between parents of gifted students and schools will prove a worthy investment for all parties involved.

#### Gifted Students' Roles in Effective Parental Involvement

Gifted students themselves reported several insightful suggestions for increasing parental involvement (Loucks, 1992). Their ideas include parent attending performances or athletic events, accompanying gifted student on field trips, serving as resource persons for classroom activities, serving as volunteers and on school committees, participating in parent-teacher organizations, taking advantage of learning opportunities offered by the school, helping with fund-raising activities, and assisting with proms, float building, set building and similar activities where specific skills are needed.

Gifted students and their parents need to invest time, energy, and effort in order to create a positive, rewarding partnership between themselves and the school environment. The school's best interests may be served by designing parent involvement approaches that focus specifically on increasing parents' sense of positive influence in their children's school success (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). Parents of gifted children recommend that they can positively impact their children's school success by:

- Receiving information on their child's social, as well as academic behavior.
- Receiving immediate, relevant advice (e.g., how to teach children to do certain things, suggestions for enrichment activities, and information regarding current academic and social progress as opposed to long-term recommendations regarding future educational or vocational outcomes).
- Receiving copies of reports written about their children.
- Limiting the use of professional jargon.
- Recommending that teachers keep them informed of their gifted child's academic progress. (Dembinski & Mauser, 1978, pp. 12-13)

These suggestions, as well as those previously mentioned support the idea that an open, friendly, helpful climate should be found in the home and school environments. Also, communication between the parents and the school personnel should be frequent, clear, and two-way. Decision-making regarding school policies should involve both parties to insure school success for the gifted child. As illustrated in Figure 1 parents of the gifted and the community-at-large, should work together to actively promote this partnership philosophy, of parents of the gifted child and school personnel building a rewarding partnership. This



partnership will combine the workings of parents of the gifted with school personnel which will aide in the academic success of the gifted student.

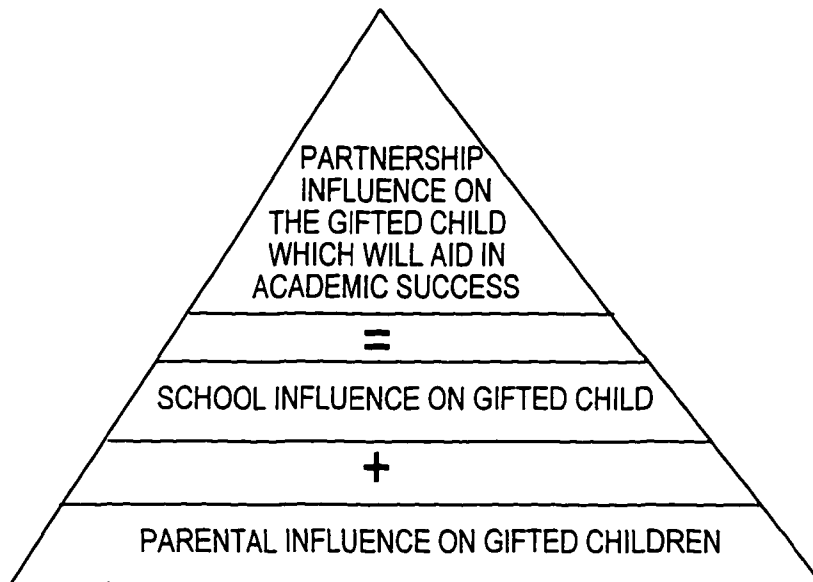


Figure 1. Partnership Pyramid (Equation for Success)

The following ten parental involvement programs for parents of gifted students in Southern Illinois (Loucks, 1992, p. 21) have been reported to be highly successful:

- 1) Parent/student switch day. Students are excused for one full day if a parent takes their place at school.
- 2) Parent/student fund raising. One example of parent/family involvement is fund raising for a family camping trip.
- 3) Roundtable discussions. At the end of the first grading period, teachers and parents meet and participate in roundtable discussions. See Appendix B for the remainder of the ten parental involvement programs.

Administrators involved in using these suggestions noted varying degrees of success dependent upon the planning and advertising efforts. Principals stated,

however, that they received excellent publicity for their schools and improved parental involvement.

Each of these ten suggestions may prove beneficial for the enhancement of parental involvement in gifted education; however, Clark (1992) stressed even further the need to incorporate parental inservice as a key factor. Clark addressed the importance of parents contributing to the teacher/parent planning and evaluation conferences. However, only through inservicing parents of the gifted in planning and evaluation techniques, can parents work hand in hand with schools. Only by working cooperatively, can parents of gifted students and school personnel form a change for increasing the level of parental involvement. Partnerships between school and home would allow objectives, concerns, consultations, and options for increasing the success of the gifted student to be explored. Parents have a vital interest in their gifted child's education and the bearing they have on it. A promising team approach could enable goals for gifted advocacy support, parental efficacy, and paradigm changes in gifted education to be met head on with all parties involved benefiting from the knowledge gained and risks taken. "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other, wings" (Peter, 1977, p. 78).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology utilized in this research study. The contents of the chapter are: (1) a restatement of the research problem, (2) the population and sample used for data collection, (3) the design of the research instrumentation, (4) data collection procedures, (5) data analysis, and (6) the chapter summary.

#### Restatement of Research Problem

This study was to determine why parents of gifted students are or are not involved in their gifted children's education. Specifically, are topics (issues and concerns), agendas, and the schools' current methods of implementing parental involvement impacting parental involvement positively or negatively? The specific questions to be investigated are as follows:

1. What are the reasons parents of gifted children give for attending or not attending parental meetings called by the gifted and talented program?
2. Is there a relationship between parental attendance at meetings for their gifted child and the income of the parents, the ethnicity of the child, or the child's grade level?
3. Does a relationship exist between the agendas of parental meetings (topics, issues, concerns) and the level of parental involvement of parents who attend meetings for the gifted?
4. Is ethnicity a factor that affects parental attendance?

#### Population and Sample

A population of parents of the 117 identified kindergarten through twelfth grade gifted students in a school district on the Western Slope in Colorado were surveyed.

### Instrumentation

A Parent Involvement Strategies Survey (see Appendix C) was created utilizing nine short-answer questions and 11 open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were developed to determine why parents of gifted students either are involved in their education or are not involved. The survey questions were designed to elicit comprehensive, detailed, and varied responses of the parents' perceptions of their degree of involvement in gifted education. In order to discover strategies for the enhancement of parental involvement, parents were asked to state their suggestions as to effective, insightful topics, agendas, issues, and organizational activities that would increase their participation in their gifted child's education. Additionally, parental attendance at meetings for the gifted and talented was studied to determine levels of parental involvement. A number of factors such as age, ethnicity, and income level were considered to determine if these variables were in any way indicative of their attendance at meetings. Similarities and dissimilarities were noted and recorded.

### Validity and Reliability Assessment

Fifteen parents of gifted students comprised the group that validated the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey. The pretest form of the parental involvement survey provided space for the participating parents to make comments or suggestions about the survey itself. Only two corrections from the pretest form were made before the distribution of the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey. The two corrections consisted of: changing number of children to number of children in household, and age of parents to age of mother and father. A matrix was developed to analyze the respondents' feedback of validity and reliability of traits of parents of the gifted and their degrees of involvement in gifted education.

Table 1.  
Validity of Survey Instrumentation: A Sample Matrix of Pilot Results for Parental Involvement in Gifted Education

Survey Sub-Subsections	Specific Feedback Received	Researcher Action Taken
# of children in household		
Ethnicity		
Income level of parents		
Age of parents		
Religious background of student		
Parent meetings (for the gifted) attended		
Parental involvement level		
Reasons for/for not attending		
Beneficial agendas		
Parents' greatest motivator in education		
Suggestions/strategies for improving parental involvement.		
What can the school do?		

Data Collection Procedures

The superintendent of the district was contacted by interview about the study prior to data collection. One hundred seventeen parents of identified gifted students (kindergarten through twelfth grade) in the school district on the Western slope in Colorado were sent a letter (see Appendix D), an informed

consent form (see Appendix E), and a Parental Involvement Strategies Survey (see Appendix C), in June 1996. Data were gathered by questionnaire and attendance records of Advisory Council meetings. Parents were asked to return the informed consent form and the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey by July 28, 1996. A phone call during the last week of July served as a reminder for the non-respondents.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Data from the survey were compiled and analyzed qualitatively to determine factors that affect parents of gifted students' parental involvement. Qualitative data matrices were created to summarize the respondents' comments from the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey (see Table 2). Summary descriptive phrases for each parent were recorded for analysis of their levels of parental involvement in gifted education. Responses covered topics such as beneficial agendas, number of parental meetings attended, and suggestions/strategies for increasing parental involvement in gifted education. Attendance of parents at Advisory Council meetings was tallied. Couples attending the same monthly meeting were given the point value of one. If couples attended separate parental meetings for the gifted, the point value was two.

Table 2.

### Sample Parental Involvement Qualitative Data Matrix

---

Question 1. What were the reasons parents give for attending or not attending parental meetings for their gifted child?

#### Parent

Parent 1:

#### Responses

1a. Issues and concerns, I have always been on the PAC Parent Advisory Council) at school where my children attend.

Table 2, continued.

	b. I am always involved with fund-raisers and chaperoning events.
Parent 2:	2. I like to understand basic curriculum and criteria for my child.
Parent 3:	3. I can't answer this question; my wife has been the one who has attended the meetings.
↓	↓
Parent 52:	52.

In addition, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated between the following variables (X's) and parental attendance at meetings: income of the parents and grade of the student during 1995-96. These studies of zero-order correlations (bivariate correlations) were included to see if one or another of these other variables is related to parental attendance, so that other possibilities may be considered at a later time in another study. An intercorrelation matrix of these variables was also studied and a stepwise multiple correlation coefficient (R) was computed to see if some of these variables taken together account for more of the variance in parental attendance than any one of the variables does by itself.

Finally, parental attendance will be examined by the ethnicity of the parents to determine if the minority parents have equivalent representation at meetings. The survey provides for five ethnic categories, so a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) will permit us to see whether parental attendance varied by ethnic group. A difference in this analysis would indicate that a special outreach may need do be made to one or more groups of parents. A difference would signal the researcher to examine the parents' responses to the survey by group in

addition to the general summary in the hope of finding keys to guide the outreach.

### Summary

Chapter 3 presented a restatement of the research problem, description of the population and sample for data collection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4, the next chapter, contains the findings of the study.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents findings collected to determine factors that affect parental involvement in gifted education. The findings are organized by answering each of the research questions. Respondents were assigned numbers, and responses are presented using parent and number notations.

#### Population

Fifty-two parents of 117 identified gifted and talented students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, or 44 percent of the parent population, completed a survey to determine various factors affecting their involvement in gifted education. In order to ensure confidentiality for the parents, each was assigned a number from 1 to 52. All results were recorded using this code.

#### Instrumentation

To determine the factors that affect parental involvement in gifted and talented education, parents completed the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey. Items on the survey ranged from the age of the student, the students year in school, factors as to why parents do or do not attend parental meetings for the gifted, agendas parents find beneficial, and suggestions for improving parental involvement in gifted education. Responses were coded according to the parent giving the answer, as well as the frequency and uniqueness of the responses given.

#### Research Findings

This section is organized according to the following four research questions:

1. What are the reasons parents of gifted children give for attending or not attending parental meetings called by the gifted and talented program?

2. Is there a relationship between parental attendance at meetings for their gifted child and the income of the parents, the age of the child, or the child's grade level?

3. Does a relationship exist between the agendas of parental meetings (topics, issues, concerns) and the level of parental involvement of parents who attend meetings for the gifted?

4. Is ethnicity a factor that affects parental attendance?

Research Question 1 What were the reasons parents give for attending or not attending parental meetings for their gifted child?

Table 3 reports parents' summary responses in regard to attendance at parent meetings for the gifted. Data presented in Table 3 highlighted information derived from question 12 in the Parental Involvement Survey. All respondents agreed that one reason for attendance at meetings for the gifted is to gather information and show their gifted child that they are interested in his/her education. Parent 7 stated, "For information, to get to know other parents and teachers, and to find out how to be involved." Parent 22 agreed, "The fundamental reason is that I am very interested in my gifted child's education."

Table 3.

**Parental Qualitative Data Matrix - Reasons Parents Gave for Attending Meetings for their Gifted Child**

---

What were the reasons parents gave for attending parental meetings for their gifted child?

<u>Parent(s) Code</u>	<u>Responses - Interesting Information</u>
2	"I like to understand the basic curriculum and criteria for my child - gather information for my gifted child."
7	"For information, to get to know other parents and teachers, and to find out how to be involved."
10	"To keep informed, have input in difficult issues, voice concerns."
20	"Interested in child's development."
30	"To see how my child is participating and what he is learning."
35	"Interesting topics. Information is something I think I could use and apply <u>now</u> ."
39	"Get information."
47	"If I feel I need to address a question - get more information."

<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Gifted Child's Importance</u>
15	"To show my child that her programs are important to me."
19	"To honor my gifted child."
22	"The fundamental reason is that I am very interested in my child's education."
25	"Like to be involved in anything that affects my children."
37	"To see if there is any more I can be doing to further her development."

Table 3, continued.

39	"Show child I care."
41	"Keep a pulse of student's progress scholastically, socially."
46	"We like to be involved in our child's life."
<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Support for Gifted and Talented Program</u>
15	"To help with specific tasks in the gifted program."
24	"Support program and think parental involvement is essential to keep the program going. Keep program from becoming too political and a program for students, not parents."
26 and 29	"Interested in quality education for my child. Interested in helping the gifted and talented program grow and expand."
36	"As a former teacher, I realize the importance of parental involvement and program support."
52	"I want to do anything I can to improve gifted education and the community's attitude towards it any way I can."

Table 4 reports parents' summary responses to the question asking why parents do not attend parental meetings for their gifted child. Data presented in Table 4 highlights information derived from the second section of question 12 on the Parental Involvement Strategic Survey. All respondents agreed that issues concerning time were the key reasons for non-attendance of parental meetings for the gifted. Parent 1 stated, "I work long, odd hours." Parent 4 agreed, "Time restraints." Parent 19 agreed as well, "Too many evening meetings result in conflicts; meetings take away from family time, and my priority is that the family have quality time." Additionally, a feeling of frustration caused by conflicting schedules was also aired by several of the respondents.

Table 4.

Parental Qualitative Data Matrix - Reasons Parents Give For Not Attending Meetings for Their Gifted Child

---

What were the reasons parents gave for not attending meetings for their gifted child?

<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Time</u>
1	"Work long, odd hours."
4	"Time constraints."
9	"Do attend, unless my schedule is too crazy."
10	"Conflicts - previously scheduled events of family time."
20	"Time and day of week scheduled - more pressing things going on in my life."
21	"Lack of time."
22	"Too tired, have a time conflict, etc."
25	"Time constraints, conflicts, and possibly each of specific interests in the topic/issue/etc."
31	"Work schedule."
36	"Too busy."
38	"Time - lack of it."
46	"Too busy - prior commitments."
47	"Not enough time/not important enough."

<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Frustrations caused by numerous conflicts</u>
15	"To air gripes."
16	"Repetition. Feeling manipulated/used by teachers or administrators. Frustration when meeting is sidetracked to one person's agenda. Feeling my priorities and ideas are at odds with others in the group."

Table 4, continued.

---

17	"Frustration: politics, repetition, personalities, others don't see same priorities."
18	"Feeling at odds with others' priorities. Been there, done that, and tired of spinning wheels."
29	"Parents only there to discuss concerns of their own child, not the gifted program for all students."
35	" <u>Sometimes</u> it is boring listening to a parent with <u>petty, problematic concerns</u> - parent soap - boxing."
37	"Frustrating politics - I have a hard time dealing with other parents' attitudes, district politics at times."
40	"Frustrated when topic doesn't involve my child."
45	"Very little ever gets accomplished, and I feel most meetings are a waste of time."
50	"I tried to be very involved in the gifted PTA-type association when we first moved here (5 years ago), but new ideas were not easily accepted."
52	"I hate sitting in meetings here because I often leave frustrated with narrow, self-righteous attitudes, and I feel I have wasted too much time on nothing."

---

Research Question 2 Is there a relationship between parental attendance at meetings for their gifted child and the income of the parents, the ethnicity of the child, or the child's grade level?

Zero-order (bivariate) correlations indicate that there were no correlations between attendance at parental meetings and parental income, ethnicity of the child, grade level of the child that were reliably different from .00. Correlations ranged from -.05 to -.19. The multiple regression coefficient yielded an R of .17, which was also not significant ( $F$  with 3 and 49 d.f. = .4759;  $p$  = .700).

**Research Question 3** Does a relationship exist between the agendas of parental meetings (topics, issues, or concerns) and the level of parental involvement in gifted education?

A definite relationship exists between the agendas of parental meetings for the gifted and the level of parental involvement displayed. During the 1995-1996 school year, an average of 10-15 parents attended the monthly advisory council meetings for the gifted. The agendas for these parent meetings typically were inclusive of upcoming speakers and clubs being offered for their gifted child, fund-raisers, family fun nights for families of the gifted, current trends in gifted education, and suggestions for curriculum for the gifted and talented. Frank Rainey, Colorado Department of Education director for gifted, spoke at a gifted and talented parent meeting did the attendance rise to 50 parents. His topics ranged from state issues, such as the budget allocated for the gifted during the 1996-1997 school year, to the movement in schools towards standards-based curriculum and assessments for all levels of learners including the gifted.

Parents responses varied as to the types of agendas found most beneficial:

Information, concerns regarding gifted education; See how gifted students can be helped if needed; To find out what's going on in gifted education; If my gifted child seemed to be unstimulated or unmotivated; To plan and encourage ways to keep child involved and motivated in the gifted program. To solve problems and evaluate progress of gifted students; Work sessions - getting things done - making changes where they are needed and seeing them through; I want to know exactly what is being taught to my child and how; Issues; Discipline problems; To demonstrate openness with teachers and advisors; Know what is going on, monitor how the needs of my child are being met, be involved with the process of the gifted and talented program; and To keep informed about what is going on with student achievement, assessments, etcetera.

**Research Question 4** Is ethnicity a factor that affects parental attendance?

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to study whether a difference in attendance occurred between the two ethnic groups represented, Whites and Mexican-American. An insignificant result ( $F=.118$  with 1 and 50 d.f.,  $p=.733$ ) occurred, but it was immediately realized that only two Mexican-American parents had attended. Recall that of the 117 parents of gifted children in the program, only 52 parents attended meetings, and of these only two were Mexican-Americans. The comparison was not really fair since it was based on too few Hispanics. A better analysis would have been to compare the proportion of parents by ethnic group who attended the meetings. To supplement this analysis, another was done to see if the parents of the two minority children represented a disproportionately small number of the 52, compared to the total number of minority children out of the 117 in the district.

The total number of children in the gifted program number 117. There are only five minority children, four Hispanic and one Asian. To test whether  $5/117$  (or .043) is a significantly different proportion from  $2/52$  (or .038), or just a chance fluctuation that would be expected to occur yearly with changes in the demographic composition of the students, a z-test of dependent proportions was conducted, incorporating Yates' correction for continuity because of the small numbers in the numerator (i.e., because of the very small proportions). The correction for continuity reduced the difference in the two proportions (.005) to zero.

Accordingly, the proportion of minority parents who attend meetings is no different than their proportion in the population of parents of gifted children. Since there is also no apparent difference in the number of meetings attended by



minority and majority parents, we may conclude that ethnicity is not a factor in attendance at meetings of parents of gifted children.

Table five highlighted the factors that respondents stated affected their levels of parental involvement in gifted education. Overwhelmingly, parents of the gifted stated that a lack of time curtailed their levels of involvement. Parent 37 stated, "Too many activities involve daytime which is hard for working parents. Somehow, if we working parents could have responsibilities that we could do in our spare time, evening meeting time would help. I'm always willing to do what I can with the time I have if I'm notified of a need." Parent 41 agreed, "I want to be involved with my children. But, time management with three children and other concerns and activities is usually our problem. Also, I suppose we expect to be contacted by school personnel when a meeting is needed, and we were only contacted once last year." Other factors that respondents felt affected parental involvement were communication, involvement at a level with which parents felt comfortable, and activities for the gifted being created in the home.

Table 5.

## Qualitative Data Matrix - Factors Affecting Parental Involvement

---

<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Time</u>
1	"More time."
4	"More convenient meeting times for parent meetings. More rapport with the school."
7	"Having enough time and energy."
21	"I do what I can in the time that I can away from work."
30	"I feel that the gifted and talented program to an elitist organization that I have no time or energy to change."
51	"I need fewer time commitments at this time."
<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Already Involved to a "Comfortable" Degree</u>
2	"I feel I am already fairly involved."
3	"At this time in my child's life, her life courses and goals are pretty well set and parent - approved. My desire to be involved would be dependent/responsive to her need/desire to have me involved."
5	"Right now we're involved in just about everything my son's in or is doing."
7	"I'm as involved as I can be."
9	"My input/involvement being <u>needed</u> to make things happen. I hate wasting my time. Assurance that others care and are involved, too, so I won't end up with too much of the work. Seeing results."
10	"A cause which I could be a part of helping."
12	"My abilities valued and needed."
17	"Feeling like the schools at the upper levels really encourage parental involvement."

Table 5, continued.

25	"I am involved when there is a need and when there is no need i.e. good teaching occurring I back away. I also help with field trips and volunteer. If the school needs parent involvement and asks, I'll always help."
28	"Both parents are really involved."
30	"If teachers and administrators genuinely wanted involvement and community-based education."
33	"By offering parents a chance to see what the students have accomplished - art fairs, displays, and teacher invitation, schools would invite more involvement."
36	"I feel as a parent that I should be more involved."
38	"If the activities were for the family we'd become more involved."
41	"At the present, trying to separate teaching and parenting roles I find it difficult to be heavily involved - I already am as a teacher."
44	" I am much more involved in the lower grades. High school students are so busy scholastically and socially."
<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Communication</u>
5	"More communication between schools and parents-when working, one newsletter per month is not too great!"
16	"Parental contact by staff. Presentation of inclusive plan of action and growth."
17 and 18	"Requests from teachers of the gifted."
37	"A little more open-mindedness and encouragement of new ideas communicated towards the parents."
49 and 50	"Just ask!"
51 and 52	"Communicate from more open-minded people associated with the gifted."

Table 5, continued.

<u>Parent(s)</u>	<u>Responses - Involvement Created in the Home Environment</u>
20	"I'm involved with my gifted child's education at home. We discuss homework, field trips, and even social activities. We use computer programs to practice math and language."
39	"We do a lot of activities for the gifted at home."
48	"I prefer to put my energy into enriching my kids' lives at home rather than beating my head against the wall. If my kids asked me to be more involved, then I would."

Respondents to the Parental Involvement Strategies Survey reflect a "snapshot" of the larger parent population found in the school district studied. Sixty-five percent of the respondents have two children in their household, 26 percent have three children, 7 percent have one child, and 4 percent have four children currently living in the household. Again, the respondents are similar to the larger school district population in the area of ethnicity. Ninety-four percent of the gifted students identified by the survey were Caucasian, four percent were Hispanic, and two percent defined themselves as "universal." Income levels of the respondents formed another facet for comparison of the data. Two percent of the parents surveyed reported that their annual combined income was \$0 - \$14,999; nine percent reported \$15,000 - 29,999; forty-one percent recorded income ranging from \$30,000 - \$44,999; thirty-five percent reported \$45,000 - \$64,999; and thirteen percent earned \$65,000 or above. Statistics which again are extremely representative for the district as a whole. Parents who previously had no level of attendance at meetings for the gifted listed factors which affected

their involvement to be times of the meetings for the gifted, dealing with the staff directly involved in the education of the gifted, and that home activities were involving and enriching enough for their gifted children.

### Summary

Chapter 4 began with a description of the population and instruments used in the study. The findings which answered each research question were discussed.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study and conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. Lastly, the recommendations are inclusive of suggestions and strategies for improving parental involvement in gifted education. The researcher may wish to share the results of the study with the parents themselves in a special, called meeting.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify various factors that affect parental involvement in gifted education.

The study was designed to determine reasons parents do or do not attend parent meetings for the gifted, and the types of agendas that these parents find to be the most beneficial. The population of the study consisted of parents of 117 gifted students kindergarten through twelfth grade. Data were compiled and analyzed for frequency and uniqueness of answers, strategies, and suggestions given toward the end result of bettering parental involvement in gifted education. The source of information was the Parent Involvement Strategies Survey. Answers from the survey were used as indicators of levels of parental involvement in gifted education. The major focus of the research questions was to determine reasons parents of the gifted do or do not attend parental meetings regarding their gifted children, and what would enhance their levels of involvement.

#### Conclusions

Conclusions from this study are organized by the following four research questions:

Research Question 1 What are the reasons parents of the gifted children give for attending or not attending parental meetings called by the gifted and talented program?

The summary findings for reasons why parents of gifted children do or do not attend parental meetings suggest overwhelmingly parents do attend to keep informed about their childrens' educations. Parents also attend meetings for their gifted children to get to know other parents and teachers of the gifted.

On the other hand, parents of gifted children almost unanimously agree that they do not attend parental meetings due to time and schedule conflicts.

Parents stated a feeling of frustration felt by not being able to attend or because the information being discussed is not conducive to their childrens' gifted learning environments.

This suggests to a small degree that although parents of the gifted do want to show involvement in their gifted childrens' educations, their work, prior commitments, or frustrations over others' priorities gets in the way of demonstrating their level of involvement.

Research Question 2 Is there a relationship between parental attendance at meetings for their gifted child and the income of the parents, the ethnicity of the child, or the child's grade level?

The summary findings for the relationship between parental attendance at meetings indicate that no relationship between the two exists. The sample showed that 52 parents of the gifted demonstrated no level of involvement.

Research Question 3 Does a relationship exist between the agendas of parental meetings (topics, issues, and/or concerns) and the level of parental involvement in gifted education?

A definite relationship exists between the agendas of meetings for parents of the gifted and their level of attendance at these meetings. This suggests that if the agendas and items to be discussed at a monthly advisory council meeting for the gifted are inclusive of "typical business matters -- such as the approval of minutes, updates on attendance at classes and after school clubs, and treasurer's reports" parents have little to no desire to attend. However, if a speaker on a specialized aspect of giftedness is scheduled, or the state consultant on gifted and talented is in town to speak, parents are much more

inclined to be present, thereby demonstrating an extremely involved level of involvement.

**Research Question 4** Is ethnicity a factor that affects parental involvement?

Because of the proportionally small numbers of Hispanic or Asian students either enrolled in the program, or whose parents did not return the survey, it was determined that ethnicity was not a factor that affects parental involvement in gifted programs.

**Recommendations**

This study was to determine factors that affect parental involvement in gifted education. Specifically identifying reasons parents do or do not attend parental meetings for the gifted, and the types of agendas these parents find to be the most beneficial. The findings support that time and conflicting schedules contribute to a low level of parental involvement in gifted education. Also, communication amongst the schools, the gifted child him/herself, and teachers of the gifted needs to be three way and occur with much more frequency. Additionally, agendas for meetings involving the gifted child him/herself as well as include speakers or presentations which can benefit the gifted child as a whole. This suggests that further study is essential. Recommendations for further study are:

1. Determine a schedule for parental meetings for the gifted which better addresses the dilemma faced by families with two working parents.
2. Determine further if socioeconomic status plays a critical role in the level of parental involvement in gifted education.
3. Determine if ethnicity and culture are contributing factors in the level of involvement gifted parents possess.



4. Determine if creating a speakers bureau (inclusive of speakers who are highly knowledgeable in various facets of gifted education) would benefit school districts across the United States and possibly worldwide.

5. Determine if school counselors involved in gifted education could help support and increase parental involvement in gifted education.

6. Conduct a study of gifted adults to determine the levels of involvement their parents demonstrated during their education, and suggestions for increasing parental involvement in gifted education today.

7. Develop a method, utilizing technology, which could increase parental involvement in gifted education without limiting the measure of this involvement to attendance at afterschool or evening meetings.

### Implications

The following implications are based not only on the findings and conclusions of this study, but also on the literature review in Chapter 2.

It is clear from these findings that time and communication are two key factors which affect the level of parental involvement in gifted education. Further, possibly the most critical issue in the education of the gifted is the relationship between school and home. Several parents responded on the survey that they were providing challenging and enriching activities for their gifted child at home. However, only by allowing school personnel and parents of the gifted to jointly offer resources and activities and suggestions to benefit gifted education will parental involvement be both appreciated and maximized. Parental involvement and active interaction from the school can allow for a successful team approach for the gifted child to increase his/her learning and achievements. Active and involved cooperation from both home and school personnel is necessary for the success of the gifted child (Dettmen & Colangelo, 1980).

Several parents of the gifted also stated that they became more involved in their children's gifted education only if their children wanted them to attend meetings with school personnel or to be involved in after school activities for the gifted. Possibly if schools and counselors stressed the importance of addressing the affective needs of the gifted child, the child may recognize the benefits of opening up the lines of communication between him or herself, the school, and the home. This may allow for increased parental involvement in gifted education.

Gifted students and their parents need to invest time, energy, and a willingness to be involved in order to succeed both in school and at home. Parental involvement does not ensure the success of the gifted child, but a lack of parental involvement does seem to allow for the failure of the child. Both the schools' and the parents' best interests may lie in the creation of parental involvement approaches which focus on increasing parents' sense of positive influence in their children's school success (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie 1992). It is, therefore, important that gifted children be both taught and allowed to use methods by which their parents are included in their educational pursuits and future successes.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS**

### Additional Supporting Strategies for Parents

- Staggering conference times to accommodate parents' work schedules.
  - Making daycare/baby-sitting available for major programs.
  - Busing parents to open house, using the students' regular routes.
  - "Bringing" a school to the site of a major employer.
  - A genuine open-door, open phone policy for actively listening to parental concerns.
  - Regular, professionally formatted newsletters.
  - Orientations for parents of students at all grade levels, especially in transition stages (from elementary to middle level education, from middle to high school level education).
  - An emphasis on relaying positive news to the parent.
  - Regular parent newspaper columns in the school publications.
  - Regular administrator column in the city's newspaper.
  - Daily or weekly attendance/academic checksheets for monitoring student progress by both parents and teachers.
  - Education must not assume that socioeconomically poor parents are poor parents. The school must work with parents from an empowerment rather than deficit model of involvement.
  - Schools can create "Family of the Week" displays.
  - In all parent conferences, educators must begin and end on positive notes, emphasizing the strengths of the gifted child (and parent, if a factor).
  - Parent attendance at school recreational activities, fine arts performances, bingo nights, etc.
  - "Pack-the-Place" nights at athletic events.
  - Grandparent's Day, incorporated into instructional activities utilizing the "seniors" expertise (a cross-generational experience).
- Effective parent involvement programs break down any remnants of turf.
- Teachers and principals bring parent to school.
  - Project-Business-type programs allow parents to talk about their careers.

- The school sets aside room at a centralized location for a parent center. The school provides print and video resources on topics such as parenting skills and post-high school career/educational options.
- School facilities should be open for the use of families after school hours (i.e., swimming pool and gymnasium for wellness activities, library, theater, and meeting rooms).
- High schools should call themselves community high schools and mean it!
- School officials must allow parents substantive input.
- School committees (with parent) representatives should meet with approximately equal ratio of parents to educators.
- Educators should not "stack the deck" with compliant parents. "Naysayers" must be represented.
- Committees, especially planning groups, should include parents from diverse backgrounds.
- School improvement plans should tap into the talents of parents.
- Secondary schools should activate inactive PTA's/PTO's.
- With regard to bond referenda, parents can be valuable resources in public relations and committee work (Campbell, 1992, p. 5-8).

**APPENDIX B**  
**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS**



### Successful Parental Involvement Programs

- 4) Good news cards. "Good News" postcards were printed with school events on the front of the card and teachers wrote positive messages about their gifted students on the back. Excellent parent/student responses were gathered from this type of communications effort.
- 5) Newsletters. Topics such as homework strategies, teacher features, "getting to know you" columns, reports on special projects, and parenting tips were included in weekly, monthly, quarterly, and/or annually mailed newsletters.
- 6) Parent/Teacher organizations. PTA/PTO organizations assist with parties/celebrations, educational programs for the gifted, and a variety of other tasks.
- 7) Soliciting parent/family volunteers. Checklist items for parents who volunteer, could include:
  - Speaking to classes
  - Duplicating materials
  - Tutoring
  - Chaperoning field trip/party
  - Monitoring
  - Creating bulletin boards or displays
  - Assisting in the computer lab
  - Helping in the library
  - Sponsoring competitions
- 8) Alumni events. Parent/alumni band concerts, basketball or other sporting events, and/or drama productions all helped to boost parental involvement and possibly as a fundraising activity.
- 9) Parenting classes. Successful topics for parents of the gifted are homework/tutoring strategies, developing affective skills, improving communication skills, parenting techniques, and improving wellness.
- 10) Invitational events. Parent/family involvement for the gifted student increased with parent participation at invitational events such as a parent tea, meet the teacher night, parent/teacher conferences, new student/parent orientation night, grandparent day, or financial aid/college information night (Loucks, 1992, p.21-23).

**APPENDIX C**  
**PARENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES SURVEY**

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES SURVEY

Please complete one survey form per child in the QUEST Program by answering questions 1 through 20 by checking the appropriate blank or by short answer. Responses to the survey will be kept confidential.

1. Student's grade in school during the 1995-1996 school year: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age of student: \_\_\_\_\_

3. # of children in household: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Ethnicity of student:	_____	Caucasian
	_____	Hispanic
	_____	Asian
	_____	African American
	_____	_____

5. Annual combined income level of parents:

_____	0-\$14,999
_____	\$15,000-\$29,999
_____	\$30,000-\$44,999
_____	\$45,000-\$64,999
_____	\$65,000 or above

6. Age of mother:

_____	18 - 24
_____	25 - 34
_____	35 - 49
_____	50 - 64
_____	65 +

7. Age of father:

_____	18 - 24
_____	25 - 34
_____	35 - 49
_____	50 - 64
_____	65 +

8. Religious background of student: (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Number of parent meetings (for the gifted) attended this past school year: \_\_\_\_\_

10. How has your level of involvement (increased/decreased) in your child's schooling changed in the past three years?

11. What are reasons that you would want to attend parent meetings? (Examples: topics, issues, concerns)

12. List reasons you do attend parent meetings.

13. List reasons you do not attend parent meetings.

14. What types of parental meetings (agendas) do you find most beneficial?

15. What would entice you to become more involved in your child's school community?

16. When you were in school, were your parents/guardians involved in your education? For example, did your parents volunteer in the classroom, help with schoolwork at home, act as a homeroom mother, aid in fund raising, and/or chaperone activities? Please explain how your parents helped with your education.

17. Which parent or guardian had a greater influence on your education?

18. How are you motivating your child to strive for post secondary education? (technical, vocational, college)?

19. List and explain suggestions/strategies for improving your parental involvement.

20. How can the school do a better job of keeping you involved in your child's education?

APPENDIX D  
LETTERS TO PARENTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - PAN AMERICAN

1201 West University Drive • Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999

Department of Educational Psychology  
School of Education, EDC 244  
(210) 381-3466

July 4, 1996

Dear Parents:

As a partial fulfillment of my master's degree from the University of Texas/Pan American, I have created the "Parental Involvement Strategies Survey". My research project is entitled, "Detriments To and Strategies For the Enhancement and Enrichment of Parental Involvement in Gifted Education".

Please thoroughly answer the survey questions and return them to me in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope by July 24, 1996. Each completed survey will be assigned a number to keep your identity anonymous and all responses confidential.

Thank you in advance for the much-appreciated help.

Sincerely,

*Lynne Hensley*

Lynne Hensley  
Quest Facilitator

*Jeanie Goertz*

Dr. Jeanie Goertz  
Coordinator of Gifted Programs  
University of Texas/Pan American

**APPENDIX E**  
**CONSENT FORM**



## Informed Consent Form

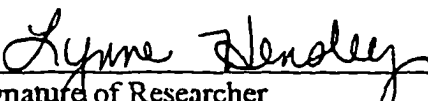
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have read and fully understand the explanation of the study described.

- \* I voluntarily consent to participate in this project.
- \* I understand that I may withdraw at any time.
- \* I understand my identity will not be revealed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

I certify that I have explained fully to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participating in this study.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher