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## A Parent Involvement Model for Increasing High School Graduation Rates in Tennessee

Lamarcus Desmond Calvin

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A parent involvement model for increasing high school graduation rates in Tennessee

By

Lamarcus Desmond Calvin

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Administration  
in the Department of Leadership and Foundation

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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2017

A parent involvement model for increasing high school graduation rates in Tennessee

By

Lamarcus Desmond Calvin

Approved:

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Jack Blendinger  
(Major Professor)

---

Angela Farmer  
(Committee Member)

---

Leigh Ann Hailey  
(Committee Member)

---

Susan Johnson  
(Committee Member)

---

James E. Davis  
(Graduate Coordinator)

---

Richard L. Blackbourn  
Dean  
College of Education

Name: Lamarcus Desmond Calvin

Date of Degree: May 5, 2017

Institution: Mississippi State University

Major Field: Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education Administration

Major Professor: Jack Blendinger

Title of Study: A parent involvement model for increasing high school graduation rates in Tennessee

Pages in Study 59

Candidate for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Low graduation rates in many Tennessee high schools present a significant problem. Many students are not prepared to graduate. Parent involvement advocates contend that the more involved parents are in their children's education, from preschool through the secondary schooling levels, the better the probability their children will graduate from high school (Blendinger and Jones, 2003). The purpose of this investigation focusing on "best practices" literature in the area of parent involvement was to develop a strategic parent involvement model having potential for improving graduate rates among Tennessee's high schools.

The study explored the published works of Joyce Epstein, Jack Blendinger, and Linda T. Jones in the field of parental involvement for the purpose of developing a parent involvement model for implementation in Tennessee high schools confronted with low graduation rates. The model produced holds significant potential for increasing graduation rates.

A qualitative research design, referred to as archival research, was used in this investigation. Data were collected for more than a 25-year period (1987-2015).

Textual criticism provided an analytical method for determining practical applications regarding what educational researchers attempted to communicate in their published works.

Blendinger and Adams (2015) developed a technique for data analysis involving published works that they called the majority text method. The technique employs close (critical) reading strategies for the purpose of examining similarities and differences occurring in the content provided in research reports, books, journal articles, and so forth produced by the same author or authors over a substantial period of time.

Insight gained from examining the documents were transcribed in the form of notes. The notes were then carefully reviewed and analyzed. Reoccurring themes, patterns, and phrases that emerged were recorded. Themes and patterns were separated into categories to make connections between the archival data and the research question driving the study.

Findings based on the published works of Epstein, Blendinger, and Jones led to the development of a strategic parental involvement model known as The Nifty Nine. The Nifty Nine consists of 9 parent involvement strategies designed to improve the partnership between home and high school.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation research to God, my family, and my friends. An enormous amount of gratitude goes out to my amazing wife, Kenya whose endless words of encouragement are embedded in my mind forever. A never-ending amount of respect goes out to my parents, Annette and Levi, Jr for raising me and teaching me the true value of a good education. My sisters and brothers, Lakimbie, Latasha, Laterrence and Latorrence have always been by my side. The unwavering support of my siblings really meant a lot. An uncanny feeling of determination goes out to my grandparents, Margaret, Rosetta, and Levi, Sr. Thank you for showing me how proud you were of me. I was determined to never let them down.

I also dedicate this dissertation to many fraternity members and friends who have journeyed with me along the way. I will always remember the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. that encouraged me with a constant reminder of the poem, *See It Through*. Those words were exactly what I needed at the most opportune times. Thank you to those friends that were there during my times of need. I will always be thankful to my friends from work and school who listened when I just needed someone to hear me.

Finally, I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For anything is possible through him. I would not have made it without prayer and the word of God. Jesus truly is the answer.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the development of a strategic parental involvement model for improving graduation rates in Tennessee high schools. For students to maximize their potential during their secondary education years, they need significant support from their parents.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, holds schools and parents accountable for student achievement. High school graduation rates constitute an important facet of NCLB.

Federal legislation requires states and school districts to involve parents in the planning process regarding governmental funds. Federal legislation also requires providing parents information and choices relative to their children's education (Drakes, 2000).

Students who do not complete high school face serious difficulties and tend to be unsuccessful in life. High school dropouts experience difficulty in obtaining employment and face limited future financial independence. Opportunities to continue education after high school also become limited when students do not complete the requirements for a high school diploma (Knesting & Waldron, 2006).

Blendinger and Jones (2003) contend that student achievement; attitudes, and behavior are positively affected when parents become involved in their children's education. The more involved the parents, the more successful the students at both the elementary and secondary levels.

In addition to Blendinger and Jones, Epstein (2004, 2005, 2008) extensively researched the effects of parent involvement and found that when families stay informed and involved in the schooling process, their children experience success regardless of ability levels. In brief, students who succeed in school are normally supported by their families, while other students have a more difficult time in school without the support from home.

### **Statement of the Problem, Purpose, and Research Question**

According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2015), the average high school graduation rate for 2013 in the state of Tennessee was 87.2 percent. The average graduation rate for the lowest 10 Tennessee high schools was 55 percent. Based on these statistics, the low high school graduation rate involving many of the state's high schools presents a problem.

Parent involvement advocates contend that the more involved parents are in their children's education, from preschool through the secondary schooling levels, the better the probability their children will graduate from high school (Blendinger and Jones, 2003). The purpose of this investigation focusing on "best practices" literature in the area of parent involvement was to develop a strategic parent involvement model having potential for improving graduate rates among Tennessee's high schools.

The primary research question that guided the investigation was: Can analyses of the published works of some of the nation's leading authorities in the field of parent involvement yield information that will lead to the development of a practical model holding potential for improving graduation rates for Tennessee high schools?

### **Significance of the Study**

Although abundant information exists on the benefits of parental involvement at the elementary and middle school levels, information appears scarce at the high school level. Suggested parent involvement models for high schools designed to provide a positive impact on the graduation rates appear to be nonexistent.

The study explored the published works of Joyce Epstein, Jack Blendinger, and Linda T. Jones in the field of parental involvement for the purpose of developing a parent involvement model for implementation in Tennessee high schools confronted with low graduation rates. The model produced holds significant potential increasing graduation rates.

The study holds additional significance because if the parent involvement model produced works successfully in Tennessee, it could work elsewhere. Exemplary parent involvement strategies could be replicated and employed in high schools across the country.

### **Method**

A qualitative research design, referred to as archival research, was used in this investigation. The design called for focusing on data collection and analysis of publically accessible archival information in the form of published books, chapters in published

books, journal articles, and scholarly papers presented at learned societies and associations. Archival research involves seeking out and extracting information from public and/or private documents and records (Blendinger & Adams, 2015).

Data were collected for more than a 25-year period (1987-2015) from the published works of three recognized authorities in the area of parent involvement: Jack Blendinger (Mississippi State University professor), Joyce Epstein (Johns Hopkins University professor), and Linda T. Jones (Mississippi State University professor). The published works investigated were in the form of documents readily accessible to the public: none of the works were confidential or inaccessible to the public.

Textual criticism provided an analytical method for determining practical applications regarding what educational researchers attempted to communicate in their published works.

Blendinger and Adams (2015) developed a technique for data analysis involving published works that they called the *majority text method*. The technique employs close (critical) reading strategies for the purpose of examining similarities and differences occurring in the content provided in research reports, books, journal articles, and so forth produced by the same author or authors over a substantial period of time.

Insight gained from examining the documents were transcribed in the form of notes. The notes were then carefully reviewed and analyzed. Reoccurring themes, patterns, and phrases that emerged were recorded. Themes and patterns were separated into categories to make connections between the archival data and the research question driving the study.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

The major limitation of the study was that the parent involvement model produced has not been tested to demonstrate whether it will have a positive impact on graduation rates in Tennessee high schools. It is hoped, however, that the state department will encourage high schools with low graduation rates to test the model.

The study's second limitation was that the model involved the published work of only three—Blendinger, Epstein, and Jones—authorities in the field of parent involvement research. Other researchers may differ on what should be done to encourage parents to become involved in their children's education.

Restricting the investigation to the development of a model which focuses on strategies for parents of high school students constituted the third limitation. The model may not be suitable at the elementary or middle school levels.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The purpose of this investigation was to critically analyze the work of some of the nation's leading authorities on the topic of involving parents in their children's education in the quest of developing a practical model for improving graduation rates for Tennessee high schools. The review of literature is comprised of four major sections: (1) parent involvement in their children's education, (2) parent involvement and high school graduation, (3) contribution of Epstein, and (4) contribution of Blendinger and Jones.

#### **Parent Involvement in Their Children's Education**

The American educational system was developed and shaped by middle-class European-American values. Early in the America educational fabric, parents served as teachers: teaching children basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic; proper behavior conduct; and work skills. As children progressed from the elementary to the secondary school levels, they typically acquired trade apprenticeships arranged by the parents rather than school officials.

Hiatt (1994) suggested that as public education developed in America, parental involvement in education changed. To the detriment of the family, parents lost control over their children's education.

According to Hiatt, government officials found parents to be derelict in the duties of educating their children in reading, religion, and trade. This led to local towns of 50 or more citizens hiring teachers who would be paid out of local tax revenue.

Hiatt further suggested that after the Revolutionary War, in the nineteenth century, government officials advocated for universal public education regardless of ability to pay for it. The educational egalitarian model, developed by Thomas Jefferson, provided schooling to all children, regardless of whether they were poor or rich.

Universal public education led to more and more parents leaving the education of their children in the hands of professionals. Over the years, handing over formal schooling to educational professionals appears to have worked well for some students and their parents, but not for others.

### **Parent Involvement and High School Graduation**

According to Berger and Riojas-Cortez (2012), the importance of parent involvement in their children's education for the purpose of assisting them to become high school graduates is widely recognized. Simply put, if students are to maximize their potential during their secondary schooling years, they need support from their parents. While communities, states, and government agencies have taken larger roles in supervising and maintaining academic progress over the past 30 years, parents have continued to be an important factor in their children's education, especially in regard to high school graduation.

Drake (2000) contends that the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, made schools and parents more accountable than ever concerning student

achievement in relation to high school graduation. The act requires schools and school districts to report graduation rates as a component of a high school's adequate yearly progress.

Moreover, due to federal legislation, strong involvement by the family and partnerships with the home and community became an increasingly important theme over the last two decades. Federal policy requires states and school districts to involve parents in the planning process as to how federal funds are spent while giving them additional information and choices about their children's education (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010).

Nelson, Gibson, and Bauer (2010) contend that students who enroll in school as young children, but do not complete their secondary schooling put themselves at serious disadvantage as adults. Students who do not gain a high school diploma begin adulthood with a negative outlook from American society. They often do not have the minimum level of education necessary for entry-level jobs or entrance into college programs.

Knesting and Waldron (2006) further contend that high school dropouts face enormous consequences and tend to be unsuccessful in life. They limit their ability to gain sufficient employment and future financial independence.

Tyler and Lofstrom (2009) studied the economic consequences of dropping out of high school and found that the most obvious penalty was lower expected lifetime earnings. High school dropouts earn much less than graduates. For example, in 2006, the median annual earnings of females in Tyler and Lofstrom's investigation who did not complete high school were \$13,255. The median annual earnings of female high school graduates were \$20,650. Males who did not complete high school had median annual earnings of \$22,151. Males with a high school diploma had median annual earnings of

\$31,715. In brief, females who did not complete high school earned 35 percent less money than female high school graduates. Males who did not complete high school earned 30 percent less money than male high school graduates.

Furthermore, Tyler and Lofstrom found that failing to graduate from high school not only affects the lives of the individuals involved, but causes numerous problems for society, as well. Social costs include lower tax revenue due to the lower income earnings. Consequently, lower tax revenue directly affects local and federal government. In addition, Tyler and Lofstrom discovered that high school dropouts usually need public financial assistance at one or more times in their lives. Higher public spending on assistance, such as welfare and health care, puts more of a financial burden on other government services. Not completing high school also inflates the crime rate of communities. Over 70 percent of the people who are incarcerated in America did not complete high school.

Obviously graduating from high school represents an important milestone in a young person's life. But as previously stated, graduating from high school presents a daunting task for many high school students due to the lack of parent interest and support.

According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2015) as stated in Chapter I, the average high school graduation rate for 2013 in the state of Tennessee was 87.2 percent. The average graduation rate for the top 10 Tennessee high schools was 98.9 percent, while the average graduation rate for the lowest 10 Tennessee high schools was 55 percent. The graduate gap between the top and bottom high schools was approximately 45 percent; the graduate gap between the top high schools and the state

average was approximately 13 percent; and the graduate gap between the bottom high schools and the state average was approximately 32 percent.

Do the Tennessee graduate rate gaps need to persist? Most likely, no! Certainly not: applying the work of some of the nation's top authorities in the area of parent involvement (e.g., Blendinger, Epstein, and Jones) to the Tennessee situation, may produce a produce a prescription for success.

### **Parent Involvement: Contribution of Epstein**

Epstein (1987) became involved in researching and writing about involving parents in the children's education in the 1980s. In her early work, she focused attention on four types of parent involvement: (1) the school's basic obligation in developing a partnership with the home, (2) the importance of communication between the home and the school, (3) the participation of parents in school events and activities, and (4) the parents' role in their children's learning in the home. In brief, Epstein envisioned the school and the parents closely collaborating in educating the students, rather than doing so in isolation.

Epstein continued her pace setting efforts in parent involvement by developing a model for home-school collaboration comprised of six categories:

Type 1 *Parenting*: educating the family in child development and setting up parameters in the home that supports the student.

Type 2 *Communicating*: encouraging the participation of parents in regular two-way communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.

Type 3 *Volunteering*: inviting parents to volunteer and organize activities at school and home for the betterment of all.

Type 4 *Learning at home*: assisting in and supporting the learning of students at home.

Type 5 *Decision making*: encouraging parents to share in the decision making process in relation to their children's education.

Type 6 *Collaborating with the community*: seeking the support of all stakeholders in the community in order to enrich the lives of students.

Essentially, the purpose of Epstein's model is to benefit students through encouraging and supporting close collaboration among the home, the school, and the community.

Continuing her efforts, Epstein (2011) developed a more advanced theory of parent involvement referred to as the *overlapping spheres of influence*: a concept involving the school, family, and community working together in close harmony. Epstein contended that school leaders needed to take a prominent role in working with families and community stakeholders in regard to developing shared goals, improving the curriculum and instruction, and tapping community resources for the purpose of advancing student achievement. Simply put, the influences of the three entities—school, family, and community—are not mutually exclusive: they overlap.

## **Parent Involvement: Contribution of Blendinger and Jones**

Near the beginning of the 21st century, Blendinger and Jones (2003) summarized over a decade of their research on the topic of involving parents in their children's education. They contended that developing a successful school-home partnership can best be accomplished by increasing communication with parents, helping parents to assist their children to learn at home, and encouraging parent participation at school.

Blendinger and Jones believe these three crucial and mutually interdependent areas form the framework for effective collaboration between the school and the home.

Frequent communication with parents is necessary for building strong, positive school-home partnerships. Parents want to know us as much as possible about their children's educational programs at school and teachers need to know as much about the child as possible.

There are three basic methods of communication between the school and the home—written, telephone, and face-to-face. Each method provides an opportunity to strengthen school-home relations. Written communications should be brief, respectful and free from educational jargon. Telephone communication should be characterized by tactfulness, courtesy and friendliness. Face-to-face communication should be used as often as possible since it is the most effective means.

The more personal the communication, the greater its effectiveness becomes. Every communication, whether written or oral, provides an opportunity to strengthen relations between the school and the home. Ideas for successfully communicating with parents include: back-to-school nights and open houses, letters and notes, good news calls, success messages, special occasion cards, sending home student work, school and

classroom newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, telephone conferences, homework, home visits, and parent surveys and interviews.

Helping parents to assist their children in learning at home is another important component of a school-home partnership. What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than any other factor. Ideas for enhancing learning at home include tips for parents, learning letters and calendars, family math, school-home reading programs, take-home book bags, and summer reading.

Encouraging parent participation in school events, a third component, requires actively involving parents in the life of the classroom and school. When parents attend events such as concerts, plays, exhibitions, and other schoolwide activities, they acquire a more direct, personal knowledge of the school. When parents are involved at school, children see that they value education and that school is an important place to be. Ideas for involving parents in the life of the classroom and school include parent visits to the classroom, grandparents' day, successful meetings, special projects that involve the whole family, using volunteers, establishing a family center, parent-teacher organizations, and school advisory committees.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

III presents the methodology utilized for this investigation systematically analyzing the work of three of the nation's leading authorities on the topic of involving parents in their children's education in the quest of developing a practical model for improving graduation rates for Tennessee high schools. The chapter is subdivided into three sections. The sections address (1) research design, (2) data collection, and (3) data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design, referred to as archival research, was used in this investigation focusing on data collection and analysis of publically accessible archival information in the form of published books, chapters in published books, journal articles, and scholarly papers presented at learned societies and association. Archival research involves seeking out and extracting information from public and/or private documents and records (Blendinger & Adams, 2015).

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) state that documents may be consider written communications prepared for either publication, personal, or official purposes. Records, on the other hand, are usually written communications primarily intended for an official purpose.

In addition to books and articles, other examples of documents and records used in archival research include business and personal letters, diary entries, legal contracts, commission reports, meeting minutes, and newspaper articles.

Practically speaking, documents and records may be held personally, or in institutional archive repositories, or in the custody of the organization (e.g., government body, business, family, or other agency) that originally generated or accumulated them. Official documents and records (e.g., school board meeting minutes) ordinarily constitute excellent sources of information because of the care which official bodies must exercise to make certain that such materials are accurate, complete, and carefully preserved.

Newspaper accounts, although not always accurate in detail because factual material may be interpreted and presented in more than one way, also provide excellent sources of information. News articles often present essential facts and serve as a more or less permanent record of day-to-day happenings in a particular community.

Archival research is often complex and time-consuming. Also, archival research can present challenges in identifying, locating and interpreting documents. Archival documents and records are often unique, necessitating travel to access them. Although some archival documents and records are electronically available, many are not. The researcher may have to hunt through large quantities of documents in search of material relevant to his or her particular study. In addition, some records may be closed to public access for reasons of confidentiality (Wikipedia, 2015).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

For the purpose of this investigation, data were collected for more than a 25-year period (1987-2015) from the published works of three recognized authorities in the area

of parent involvement: Jack G. Blendinger (Mississippi State University professor), Joyce L. Epstein (Johns Hopkins University professor), and Linda T. Jones (Mississippi State University professor). The written works investigated were in the form of “documents” readily accessible to the public: none of the works were confidential or inaccessible to the public.

Works (2015-1990) produced by Joyce L. Epstein (and others) that were used for data collection purposes follow:

Blendinger, J. & Jones, L. T. (1992, November). *Preparing preservice teachers and administrators to conduct parent-teacher conferences*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators, Jackson, MS.

Blendinger, J. & Jones, L. T. (1992, November). *Teaching wanna be principals to take the lead in parent-teacher conferences*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration, Atlanta, GA.

Blendinger, J. & Jones, L.T. (1992). *Putting parent involvement to work*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Blendinger, J. (1990, November). *Strategically planned parent involvement and education programs can improve intergenerational literacy*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

- Blendinger, J. (1993). *In search of a theory of parent involvement for school administrators*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service Publication No. ED 374525).
- Blendinger, J. (1996). *QLM: Quality leading and managing*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
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- Blendinger, J. (2011, November). *Creating a community of writers and readers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration, Saint Louis, MO.
- Blendinger, J. and Jones, L. T. (1993, February). *Addressing family diversity in putting parent involvement to work*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators, Los Angeles, CA.
- Blendinger, J. and Jones, L. T. (1993, March). *Putting parent involvement to work*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, DC.
- Blendinger, J., & Jones, L. (2000, April). *Assessing parent involvement practices through action research teams*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

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- Blendinger, J., Snipes, G., & McGee, G. (1994, November). *Improving teacher-parent communication through interdisciplinary teaching teams*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Nashville, TN.

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Works (2011-1990) produced by Jack G. Blendinger and Linda T. Jones (and others) that were used for data collection purposes follow:

It should be noted that a format provided in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* was utilized for the published works of Blendinger, Epstein, and Jones.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Used extensively in archaeology, textual criticism provides a method for determining the practical applications of what educational researchers and writers are communicating in their works. In the realm of professional education, the question appears to be: What are researchers and scholars saying that possesses practical value for school administrators and teachers?

Blendinger and Adams (2015) believe a technique they call the “majority text method” provides an answer to the aforementioned question. Essentially, the *majority text method* uses close (critical) reading strategies for the purpose of examining the content provided in numerous publications (e.g., research reports, books, chapters in books, journal articles, etc.) by the same author or authors over a substantial (e.g., 10 or more years) period of time.

Close reading requires systematically analyzing words, sentences, and paragraphs that when taken as a whole form the fundamental narratives essential to any piece of writing. Content consistency versus inconsistency, differences and similarities, and idea practicality compared to impracticality are carefully noted throughout the analysis.

Significant attention is also given to the question: *Does the written talk walk?* In order *to walk*, according to Blending and Adams (2015), the findings, conclusions, and recommendations put forth in a research report; or the ideas and concepts advanced in a scholarly piece of writing (e.g., journal article) must be amenable to implementation for the purpose of solving a specific problem or providing a course of action leading to improvement (e.g., student achievement).

Insight gained from examining the documents were transcribed in the form of notes to be used later in describing the findings. Themes, patterns, and phrases that emerged were recorded. Notes were carefully reviewed; themes and patterns were organized into categories to make connection between the archival data and the research question.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter IV presents the findings and discussion of the findings for this investigation that focusing on utilizing “best practices” literature to develop a strategic parent involvement model demonstrating potential for improving graduate rates among Tennessee’s high schools. As stated in Chapter I, parent involvement advocates contend that the more involved families are in their children’s education, from preschool through the secondary schooling levels, the better the probability their children will graduate from high school.

Findings are based on data provided through archival research. According to Blendinger and Adams (2015), archival research involves seeking out and extracting information from public and/or private documents and records.

Data were collected from publically accessible archival information in the form of published books, chapters in published books, journal articles, and scholarly papers presented at learned societies and associations. The published works of three recognized authorities in the area of parent involvement—Jack Blendinger (Mississippi State University professor), Joyce Epstein (Johns Hopkins University professor), and Linda T. Jones (Mississippi State University professor)—covering more than a 25-year period (1987-2015) provided data.

A data analysis technique for carefully combing through published works called the *majority text method* was used to answer the primary research question that guided the investigation: Will analyses of the published works of some of the nation's leading authorities in the field of parent involvement yield information leading to the development of a practical model holding potential for improving graduation rates for Tennessee high schools?

Developed by Blending and Adams (2015), the *majority text method* employs close (critical) reading strategies for the purpose of examining similarities and differences occurring in the content provided in research reports, books, journal articles, and so forth produced by the same author or authors over a substantial period of time. Insight gained from examining the documents was transcribed in the form of notes. The notes were then carefully reviewed and used to produce the findings that follow.

### **Findings Based on Works Published by Epstein**

An analysis of Joyce Epstein's published works yielded the following findings in regards to what school administrators could and should be doing to build strong, positive school-home partnerships.

Communicate with parents and make presentations to parent groups and community organizations about the importance of establishing school-home partnerships.

Distribute information on adolescent development to families. This type of information can help parents understand how their children are developing physically and psychologically.

Organize and schedule volunteers, arrange career days, supervise a family room or parent center, and coordinate other aspects of a strong partnership program. Parents and community members can be very valuable in assisting with these types of tasks.

Join the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) which provides benefits and services to schools, district and states to support the development and maintenance of comprehensive school, family and community partnership programs. There are four requirements for membership in NNPS: (1) each school agrees to create a school-based Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP); (2) each school agrees to use a framework of six types of parental involvement to develop a comprehensive program of partnerships that reaches out to the families of all students; (3) each school agrees to allocate an annual budget for activities planned and implemented by the ATP; and (4) each school agrees to allocate time for initial training of the ATP and at least one hour per month for ATP meetings to review, evaluate, and continue planning partnership program activities.

Help the ATP conduct annual evaluations of quality and progress of their programs, and help the ATP focus on continuous improvement in each year's action plan for partnerships.

Require that school counselor reserve one day per week to work with the school's ATPs to ensure that prevention interventions will strengthen the school's program of family and community involvement, increase the number of different families involved at school and at home, and increase student success.

Working with ATP to plan and implement workshops for parents and related messages on topics of interest to parents at various grade levels; conduct parent-to-parent

forums to help diverse families meet other parents and discuss common questions and interests.

Work with the ATP to produce a directory of community resources, programs and services.

Schedule parents to make presentations on career day to share their occupations with students; help ATP create a computerized talent pool of parent volunteers; welcome parent audiences as volunteers.

Request that parents and community members volunteer to tutor students in high schools. For volunteers to work in this capacity, a background check is usually required.

Invite parents and community members to assemblies and school programs for student recognition/awards as they move towards graduation.

Issue certificates to students to take home that recognize mastery or completion at different levels throughout high school.

Provide families with information on how to contact guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators.

Inform parents of students' progress and problems in all classes.

Employ effective school-home communication practices that reach non-English speaking families include: translating materials into languages that parents understand, organizing interpreters, and developing creative and welcoming approaches to engage non-English speaking parents.

Establish regular communication with parents via email, weekly folders, or technologies for their ideas, suggestions, and questions for teachers, principal, and school counselors.

Promote teacher support of the concept of parental involvement by encouraging teachers in guiding parents to participate in their children's educational process.

Conduct workshops and prepare printed materials or website information to help all parents understand report card grading systems and graduation requirements; help teachers organize responsive parent-teacher conference schedule; work with teachers and principals on helping parents understand achievement test score reports.

Ensure that more activities are written into the school's one-year action plan for partnerships for informing and engaging all parents about high school course choices, required credits for graduation, scheduled tests, college and career planning, and other information on schoolwork and future plans.

Organize presentations for students and families on how high school graduation will impact their future in regards to business, government, and industry.

Conduct workshops during school hours for parents on expectations for meeting graduation requirements. Conduct similar workshops for parents in the evening.

Offer parents or students college and trade school admission packets to complete at home or help may be provided at the high school.

Offer students and families classes or activities on Saturdays.

Work with teachers to create culturally responsive learning activities for students in class and for interactive homework; guide students and families on improving study skills, grades, homework completion, and makeup work following absences.

Encourage school counselors to invest their time and talents to improve the quality of outreach and involvement activities. Counselors can assist with activities that purposely, lead to a welcoming school climate to include all families. School counselors

need to be more active in helping their schools organize, conduct, and sustain programs of school, family partnerships. There are important roles for school counselors on school's ATPs as a member, team leader, committee or activity leader, or district representative.

Require that counselors, teachers, and administrators take a course on partnership program development.

### **Findings Based on Works Published by Blending and Jones**

An analysis of the published works of Blending and Jones yielded the following findings in regard to what school administrators could be doing to build strong, positive school-home relationships.

Continually updating the school website (e.g., current parent information regarding curriculum, grading procedures, discipline rules, homework procedures, extracurricular activities, etc.).

Importance given to three basic methods of communication between the school and the home: written, voice-to-voice, and face-to-face. Each method provides an opportunity to strengthen school-home relations.

Written communication (e.g., text messages, email, letters, and notes) should be clear, brief, respectful and free from educational jargon.

Telephone (voice-to-voice) communication should stress tactfulness, courtesy and friendliness. In telephone conversations, the listener cannot see friendly facial expressions and must rely upon what is said and how it is said.

Face-to-face communication should be used as often as possible since it is more effective than other means. Some of the best opportunities for honest, open two-way

communication take place in informal face-to-face contacts between school staff and parents.

Three ways to initiate early school-home communication during the start of the school year is through teachers calling parents on the telephone to say hello and introduce themselves, sending personal messages (e.g., text messages) home and encouraging parents to communicate back, and by visiting the home.

Effective school-home communication practices include: parent-teacher conferences, principal-parent coffees, school newsletters, principal/teacher-parent breakfasts and lunches, parent comment blogs, back-to-school nights, student success (electronic) grams and special occasion text messages, parent visitation days, grandparent visitation days, parent surveys and email messages. Every communication, whether written or oral, provides an opportunity to strengthen relations between the school and the home.

School administrators must communicate to parents that they are welcome and wanted in the school environment. This begins with a welcome sign at the entrance to the school, an inviting reception area, and orientation program for parents of new students.

Throughout the school year there should be frequent opportunities for teacher-parent and principal-parent interaction.

It is essential to encourage parent participation at school. Achieving the goal of encouraging parent participation in school activities and events requires actively involving parents in the life of the classroom and school. When parents attend events such as back-to-school nights, open houses, concerts, potlucks, plays, exhibitions, and other schoolwide activities, they acquire a more direct, personal knowledge of the school.

When parents assist teachers in volunteer activities which make good use of their skills, resources and time, mutual appreciation and satisfaction flourish. When parents are involved at school, their adolescent children see that they value education and that school is an important place to be.

Events and activities which encourage parent participation include: assisting teachers with special classroom activities and projects such as science projects; attending band, orchestra, choral, and drama performances; establishing a program that identifies and utilizes parents as resource persons and guest teachers in the classroom; planning back-to-school nights and open house programs that involve parents in the process; encouraging parents to serve as volunteers in the school library; and tutoring students in area of special needs.

School-home liaison aide: some schools have found it very beneficial to employ a school-home liaison staff (classified) member to work with parents, make home visits, and plan parent activities. The liaison person should be bilingual if needed and sensitive to the needs of parents and community in general. Collaboration may also need to extend beyond the school and the home to include community agencies that can provide services to the family.

### **Putting the Findings into Action**

In summary, the published works of Blendinger (Mississippi State University professor), Epstein (Johns Hopkins University professor), and Jones (Mississippi State University professor) were critically studied and reflected upon. The publications investigated were in the form of “documents” readily accessible to the public.

The *majority text method*—a method, developed by Blendinger and Adams (2015), that employs close (critical) reading strategies to published literature for the purpose of examining similarities and differences occurring in the content provided in research reports, books, journal articles, and so forth produced by the same author or authors over a substantial period of time—was used to produce “findings” that could be put into practice in the development of a model to increase graduate rates in Tennessee high schools.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for this investigation that focused on utilizing “best practices” literature to develop a strategic family involvement model possessing potential for improving graduate rates among Tennessee’s high schools. As stated in Chapter I, parent involvement advocates contend that the more involved families are in their children’s education, from preschool through the secondary schooling levels, the better the probability their children will graduate from high school.

The investigation focused on archival data (documents and records) readily accessible to the public, specifically information in the form of published books, chapters in published books, journal articles, and scholarly papers presented at learned societies and associations. The published works of three recognized authorities in the area of parent involvement—Jack Blendinger (Mississippi State University professor), Joyce Epstein (Johns Hopkins University professor), and Linda T. Jones (Mississippi State University professor)—covering more than a 25-year period (1987-2015) provided the majority of the information.

#### **Chapter Summary**

The investigation titled *A Family Involvement Model for Raising High School Graduation Rates in Tennessee* was presented in five chapters: (1) introduction; (2)

literature review; (3) method; (4) findings and discussion; and (5) summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The study also included a bibliography and appendixes providing resource references and specific materials relative to the investigation.

Chapter I presented content in four sections. After a brief lead in, the introductory chapter addressed (1) problem statement, purpose, and research question; (2) significance of the study; (3) method; and (4) limitations and delimitations.

Chapter II reviewed pertinent literature. The chapter provided an analysis of the works of the nation's leading authorities on the topic of involving parents in their children's education. The reviewed literature was offered in four major sections: (1) parent involvement; (2) parent involvement and graduation rate; (3) contributions of Joyce Epstein; and (4) contributions of Jack Blendinger and Linda T. Jones.

Chapter III covered the methods used in the investigation. Chapter content focused on the research design, data collection, and data analysis. Utilization of archival data, readily available to the public, was featured.

Chapter IV presented the findings and discussion. Findings were presented and discussed in relation to the ten research questions that guided the investigation. The findings were presented in the form of written and graphic visualization in the form of charts.

The present chapter, Chapter V, summarizes the investigation, presents the model that was developed based on the findings, and makes recommendations for future action.

### **Conclusion: Model Development**

The purpose of this study focusing on "best practices" literature in the area of parent involvement was to develop, if feasible, a practical family-oriented model,

possessing potential for improving graduate rates among Tennessee's high schools through involving families in their students' secondary-level education

The conclusion for this particular investigation focuses on providing an answer to the primary research question that guided the study. This question asked: Will analyses of the published works of some of the nation's leading authorities in the field of parent involvement yield information leading to the development of a practical family-oriented model possessing potential for improving graduation rates for Tennessee high schools? The answer to the question is "yes," it is possible to develop a model that has potential for improving graduation rates.

The model is comprised of nine strategies (referred to as the *nifty-nine*) that if implemented hold potential for improving graduation rates in Tennessee's high schools.

The nine strategies are:

Strategy 1: School-family involvement assessment

Strategy 2: Resolution of commitment

Strategy 3: School-home partnership team

Strategy 4: Planning for action

Strategy 5: Communicate, communicate, and communicate (The 3 Cs)

Strategy 6: Parent awareness success system (PASS)

Strategy 7: Developing a robust parent-teacher organization

Strategy 8: Family-oriented calendar for activities and events

Strategy 9: school-home liaison aide for non-English speaking families

The following subsections provide more detailed information for each of the nine strategies that comprised the model.

### **Strategy 1: School-Family Involvement Assessment Instrument**

Strategy 1 calls for the high school administration to assess the degree of family involvement in the school in general and to assess, in particular, the effort demonstrated by administrators, teachers, and support staff to involve families in their students' education. To carry out the assessment, the principal needs to develop an instrument in the form of a questionnaire, utilizing the 30 questions listed below. Then the questionnaire should be administered to the school's professional community: administrators, teachers, and staff.

Each of the 30 questions should be answered either "yes", "no", or "don't know" by placing a check mark in the appropriate space. Responses are compiled and developed into a report that is presented at a school faculty meeting. The 30 questions follow:

1. Are there signs at the high school welcoming parents and visitors and providing directions to the school office?
2. Do the high school's administrators, faculty, and staff greet parents (and other family members) in person and on the phone in a friendly, helpful, and courteous way?
3. Is there an orientation program for incoming students and their families at the beginning of the school year?
4. Is there an orientation program during the year for transfer students and their families?

5. Do we regularly schedule social occasions or events where families and school staff can informally get to know each other?
6. Are back-to-school nights and open houses successful in terms of attendance by students' family members?
7. Does the school administration in partnership with the parent-teacher organization develop and publish a newsletter with up-to-date information on holidays, special events, tips for parents, and parent-teacher organization meetings?
8. Does the high school's administration provide materials to help teachers communicate and collaborate with families?
9. Are parent-teacher conferences scheduled to allow for maximum participation by all parents (e.g., working parents)?
10. Do teachers consult with parents promptly if their student is experiencing difficulties?
11. Does the high school's administrative staff inform parents immediately if a student doesn't show up for school?
12. Are parents consulted if there is a pattern of unexcused absences for their student?
13. Does the high school's administrative staff publish handbooks for parents and students that include goals for student learning and other helpful information?
14. Is there an outreach program for uninvolved families where teachers, staff members (e.g., community liaison aide), or volunteers are willing to make

home visits and attend community meetings to explain to families the importance of being involved in their children's education?

15. Is time at faculty meetings devoted to discussing family involvement efforts?
16. Does the high school's administration in partnership with the parent-teacher organization develop, publish, and send home brief summaries of what students are learning in class?
17. Do teachers communicate regularly with each family either in person, on the phone, or through electronic messaging?
18. Are families given specific ideas and materials for helping their students at home on a continuing and systematic basic?
19. Are families provided opportunities to participate in workshops and parenting classes?
20. Are families invited to visit the school and observe their students' classes?
21. Are teachers encouraged to make a home visit if that is the best way to communicate with and meet "hard to reach" families?
22. Does the school offer assistance to help parents, lacking supportive services from other family members, with babysitting, transportation, or other logistical difficulties so that they may attend school events?
23. Are families encouraged to assume a variety of volunteer roles in the school (e.g., from helping in the classroom to serving on a school advisory committees)?
24. Does the school have an active parent-teacher organization that is involved in efforts to support the school and its programs?

25. Does a high percentage of parents, as well as teachers and staff, become members of the high school's parent-teacher organization?
26. Are the high school's parent-teacher organization meetings and events well attended?
27. Are teachers encouraged to send home positive messages concerning students' accomplishments in school?
28. Are teachers encouraged to make positive telephone calls to parents concerning students' accomplishments in school?
29. Do high school administrators conduct annual surveys to determine parents' interests and concerns?
30. Are families encouraged to become involved in their students' learning through school-home special projects?

The report will most probably generate a list of concerns. Once they have been identified, the concerns should be prioritized and addressed.

### **Strategy 2: Resolution of Commitment**

The second recommended strategy calls for the high school principal to take the lead in developing a "resolution of commitment" that clearly conveys the interest of the school's professional community (administrators, teachers, and staff) in wanting to reach out to and collaborate with families. An example of such a resolution follows:

**(Name) High School: School-Family Resolution** The administration, faculty, and staff of (Name) High School recognizes that a student's education is a responsibility

shared by the school and the family. To support the goal of shared responsibility, the high school's administration, faculty, and staff resolves to work in close collaboration with families as knowledgeable partners.

(Name) High School, in collaboration with families, shall establish programs and practices that enhance school-home involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

To this end, the high school's administration supports the development and implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated school-home involvement program which will involve families in a variety of roles. The program will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Regular, two-way and meaningful communication between the school and the home.
2. Ongoing effort to seek the support and assistance of families in educating students.
3. Encourage families to play an integral role in assisting student learning.
4. Involve families as full partners in the decisions that affect students.
5. Make resources available to strengthen family practices and parenting skills.

In summary, the high school's administration, faculty, and staff recognize the importance of the school-home partnership in setting expectations and creating a culture conducive to student success through family involvement and participation.

Resolution adopted August 15, xxxx

The report will most probably generate a list of concerns. Once they have been identified, the concerns should be prioritized and addressed.

It should be noted that the total professional community—administrators, teachers, and support staff—need to be involved in developing the resolution and making the commitment.

### **Strategy 3: School-Home Partnership Team**

The third recommended strategy calls for the high school principal to take the lead to establish and develop a school-home partnership team. The team's major charge is to provide the leadership necessary to develop and oversee a strategic action plan designed to encourage family involvement in their students' education.

For best results, the team should be comprised of the principal (or assistant principal), 2-3 teachers, 1-2 support staff, and 2-3 parents (or grandparents/guardians) representing the parent-teacher organization.

The team's major tasks are to assess the state of parent (grandparents and other guardian caregivers) involvement in the school, plan activities that engage families in the life of the school, and put the plan into action. The team can serve a significant role in

improving the high school from within by addressing important issues and taking on responsibilities that will benefit the school such as the following:

1. Strengthening communication between the high school and families.
2. Advising on schoolwide activities and projects intended to encourage all parents (grandparents and guardian caregivers), especially those who are the most difficult to reach, to become involved in their students' education and improvement efforts related to school goals.
3. Soliciting opinions of parents and other citizens on significant issues such as remedial assistance, counseling services, school safety, student health needs, drug education, standards of student behavior and other issues, and so on.
4. Interpreting school needs and programs to families and the community.
5. Establishing a liaison between the high school and the community it serves.

To function effectively, the team needs to meet regularly. Also, the team needs training in goal setting, shared decision making, conflict resolution, consensus building, and other areas related to leadership. The principal's support and guidance is crucial to the success of the team.

#### **Strategy 4: Planning for Action**

The fourth recommended strategy addresses strategic action planning. Involving families in their students' high school education requires action planning. In the context of this strategy, the word "action" refers to the high school principal taking the lead to

involve families in their students' education. Action planning is the process which focuses attention on specific steps that need to be taken to achieve particular goals. Simply put, the plan constitutes a statement of what the school-home partnership team wants to achieve in a given period of time, such as one school year (August-June).

The action plan visualized for this strategy consists of five steps: (1) assessing the current state of family involvement, (2) establishing one-year goals, (3) selecting specific activities that will lead to goal accomplishment, (4) implementing the activities, and (5) monitoring progress and evaluating results.

Assessment is the "*first step*" in the planning process. Assessment helps the team identify what currently exists and any needs or concerns. Effective assessment is dependent on input from those who know the school and should involve an assessment instrument designed for schoolwide use. After assessing the present status of family involvement at the high school, priorities need to be identified to guide planning.

*Step two* in the planning process requires identifying specific one-year goals. Goals are general statements worded in positive terms of what needs to be accomplished to involve families in their students' education. Goals give purpose and a sense of direction to efforts. For best results, goals should be established for a one-year time period, prioritized, and limited to a manageable number of 3-5. In brief, one-year goals should be specific, realistic, and measurable. An example of a schoolwide goal might be: *To improve attendance at back-to-school night through the school's administration, faculty, and staff working collaboratively with the PTO to encourage 80% or more of students' family representatives to attend the school's back-to-school program this fall.*

*Step three* calls for selecting specific activities that will help accomplish each objective. For example, activities to get more family representatives to come to back-to-school night might include having students make creative invitations and sending them out early, involving students in the program, providing refreshments furnished by the PTO, and resolving past problems such as lack of child care or transportation.

In selecting activities to achieve schoolwide objectives, it is important to clarify timelines, responsibility, and availability of resources. Timelines determine when the activity will be carried out (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly). Responsibility refers to the person or persons responsible for implementing the activities according to the timeline. Activities require resources. If resources are not available in sufficient quality and quantity, goals will not be achieved.

Implementing the activities selected, *step four*, is the crucial step in the planning process for involving families in their students' education. All too often, nicely written plans gather dust on a shelf. Nothing happens.

*Step five*, the final step in planning process, calls for monitoring progress and evaluating results. It is important to ask: Was the goal accomplished? If not, why? What can be done better next time? Data collected should be analyzed, interpreted, and used in developing the plan for the coming school year.

### **Strategy 5: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate (The 3 C's)**

The fifth recommended strategy focuses on communication or what can be referred to as the 3 Cs: communicate, communicate, and communicate.

Frequent communication with families is necessary for building strong, positive school-home partnerships. Families want to know as much as possible about their

students' educational programs at the high school and teachers need to know as much about their students' families as possible.

It's essential that the principal take the lead to insure excellence concerning the three most basic methods of communication between the school and the home: (1) written, both hardcopy and electronic messages; (2) telephone; and face-to-face. Each method provides an opportunity to strengthen school-home relations.

Written communications should be brief, respectful and free from educational jargon. Telephone communication should be characterized by tactfulness, courtesy and friendliness. Face-to-face communication should be used as often as possible since it represents the most effective means.

The more personal the communication, the greater its effectiveness. Every communication, whether written or oral, provides an opportunity to strengthen relations between the school and the home. Ideas for successfully communicating with families include: back-to-school nights and open houses, personally crafted letters, handwritten notes, email, text messages, good news calls, electronic generated success-grams, school newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, telephone conferences, *parent visitation days*, *grandparent visitation days*, home visits, parent surveys, and interviews.

Continually updating the school website (e.g., current parent information regarding curriculum, grading procedures, discipline rules, homework procedures, extracurricular activities, etc.) is a must and should be one the principal's top communication priorities.

## **Strategy 6: Parent Awareness Success System (PASS)**

The sixth recommended strategy titled Parent Awareness Success System (PASS) is of significant importance because the better that parents are kept informed about the progress of their students' academic achievement, the better the probability their students will graduate from high school.

Many parents of high school students want and need more information regarding their students' progress in school than the typical nine-week progress reports used by many schools. This is especially true of parents whose students are experiencing difficulty. When given the opportunity, parents want to work with teachers to help their students to be successful in school.

PASS, developed on the basis of lecture notes made from a lecture given by Mississippi State University professor, Dr. Jack Blendinger, presents a means for helping the parents of high school students to become better informed and involved concerning their students' educational progress. PASS is a three-step communication system designed to encourage a partnership between teachers and parents.

The system's major purpose is forming a communication network between teachers and parents to encourage students to achieve in school. When provided with accurate information, parents are better able to monitor their student's progress.

PASS calls for teachers to periodically identify students in their classes every 4-5 weeks who are failing or heading toward failure. Once students are identified, teachers, using readily available forms (either set up as a template form on their computers or provided by the administration as hardcopy paper-forms) to notify parents by letter or email. The three-step PASS process operates as follows:

Step 1: Teacher Informs the student that his/her work is or becoming unsatisfactory and that the student's parents (or primary care givers) will be contacted.

Step 2: Teacher sends a predesigned form letter or email message to the home informing the parents that the student is having difficulty in the areas indicated.

Step 3: Teacher sends a predesigned follow-up letter or email message requesting that the parent either comes to school for a face-to-face conference or schedules a telephone conference during the teacher's planning/conference period.

If the parent does not respond within three days of the follow-up communication, the teacher telephones the parent to discuss the matter. Once contact is made, the teacher and the parent explore solutions to solve the problem. If the parent is uncooperative, the teacher turns the matter over to the principal.

### **Strategy 7: Developing a Robust Parent-Teacher Organization**

Developing a robust parent-teacher organization at the high school constitutes the seventh strategy.

Encouraging family membership (parents, grandparents, and/or caregivers) and participation in the local parent-teacher organization provides a positive way to foster staff-family interaction. The parent-teacher organization provides many opportunities for families and high school teaching and support staff to work together on projects that benefit students.

The high school's parent-teacher organization can be locally independent or nationally affiliated. The local organization is identified by the acronym PTO when it's locally independent and the acronym PTA when it's affiliated with the National Parent-Teacher Association.

Affirming the significance of family involvement has been a priority of the National PTA since its founding. This organization has consistently demonstrated that effectively involving parents in support of their children and education produces meaningful results.

The high school's parent-teacher organization will be most effective if it:

1. Elects officers and establishes a steering committee.
2. Identifies annual goals specifying what the organization wants to accomplish.
3. Develops meeting programs for the total school year.
4. Sponsors events such as open house, back-to-school night, or teacher appreciation night.

The parent-teacher organization serves an important function in helping families to become informed and actively participate in school activities. It is important that the principal, other administrators, teachers, and staff provide strong support to the organization by being members themselves and encouraging families, especially parents, to be members.

### **Strategy 8: Family-oriented Calendar for Activities and Events**

Providing and distributing a family-oriented calendar for activities and events represents the eighth strategy.

In addition to sports related activities, many families need to know what is going on at their students' high school. Developing a calendar of activities and events for a high school represents a task that seems complicated at first but, with a systematic approach can be fairly straightforward. When families are able to see opportunities to become more actively involved in their students' education scheduled on a calendar often makes things seem more important and more manageable.

A family involvement calendar redefines communication between the school and community. The calendar is an opportunity to share the actual dates and times of parent events and activities that take place at the high school on a monthly basis throughout the entire school year.

As a framework for scheduling activities, the calendar should include activities that support a wide range types of involvement. The calendar should be specific in nature, visible throughout the school year: an easily accessible and regularly updated fixture on the high school's website. Possible parental involvement activities and events include the following:

- Information sessions for families

- Report card/progress report pickup information

- Family (parenting) workshops

- Seminars for the family as a whole

- Standardized (student) testing dates

- Student awards ceremonies

- Parent-Teacher Organization scheduled meetings

- Parent-teacher conference days

Reminders regarding activities and events on the calendar are sent to parents through an automated phone calling system or via email and text messaging.

(Special note: A parental involvement calendar can be developed using Calendar Wizard in Microsoft Publisher 2010. Calendar Wizard can be used to create a monthly calendar with special emphasis on family involvement activities only.)

### **Strategy 9: School-Home Liason Aide for non-English speaking families**

Due to the changing demographics in the state of Tennessee that are especially affecting high schools experiencing low student graduation rates, the ninth recommended strategy involves establishing the “school-home liaison aide for non-English speaking families” position in schools with rapidly growing non-English speaking family populations.

It is recommended that the high school principal, working in close collaboration with the school-home partnership team (see the third strategy), take action to develop and establish the liaison aide position. To accomplish this goal, the principal must work to secure superintendent and school board support for creating a job description and funding for this position.

Once the hiring task is accomplished, the high school administration should employ the school-home liaison staff (classified) member to make home visits and to work with families in a consulting role in regard to how they can extend learning (e.g., helping with homework or special projects) from the classroom to the home. The liaison aide should be bilingual and knowledgeable the needs of the families targeted and the community in general. Collaboration efforts should extend beyond the school and the home to include community agencies that can provide services to the family.

Families who do not speak English fluently are less likely than other parents to attend a general school meeting or school event, or to volunteer or serve on a committee. Families of English Language Learners (ELLs) face daunting barriers as they try to become informed or involved in their students' education. These barriers, which include the family's inability to understand English, unfamiliarity with the school system, and differences in cultural norms, can affect students' academic achievement and graduation success.

In summary, it should be noted that the nine strategies comprising the model are interrelated (for the most part) and interactive. Successful implementation of one of the strategies may be highly dependent on the deployment of another (e.g., depending an action plan may require having a successfully function school-home partnership team).

### **Recommendations**

This study utilizes specific strategies for Tennessee high schools to implement in an attempt to increase their high school's graduation rate. However, opportunities for further research do exist. Future research should identify the effectiveness of the model in Tennessee high schools. After implementation of the model over a 3-5 year period, an analysis of graduation rates should show a correlation between the graduations rate prior and after implementation.

After implementation, future research may incorporate the investigation of more strategies. The model may be strengthened with more strategies through intense research to continue to help families become more effectively involved in their children's high school education.

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