

The Actions of Headmasters and Headmistresses in Fostering Parent & Family Involvement in
Low-Income Schools in Tamil Nadu, India

By
Anupama Shekar

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis)

at the
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
2013

Date of final oral examination: 04/16/2013

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:
Carolyn J. Kelley, Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
Clifton F. Conrad, Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
Peter M. Miller, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
Richard D. Halverson, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
Catherine F. Compton-Lilly, Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction
Kent D. Peterson, Professor Emeritus, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

© Copyright by Anupama Shekar 2013
All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I still remember one of the compelling reasons why I decided to abandon journalism and pursue a PhD program in Education in the U.S. It was the initial encounter with several children from low-income communities that awakened my interest in improving the government school system in India. Even today, seven years later, the quote from the first story on education that I wrote for The New Indian Express in India in 2006 remains on my desk and continues to inspire me. The 14-year-old girl told me: “I have to feed my mother and brothers. I cannot go to school.” Although education is a Fundamental Right of a child under the Indian Constitution, thousands of under-privileged children have no real access to a school or quality education.

I have several people to thank in my journey, just like the 14-year-old girl who inspired me to study and find solutions to become a more effective advocate for educational reform. To begin with, I have been fortunate to receive support at every stage from my advisors Dr. Kent Peterson and Dr. Carolyn Kelley. They helped me focus on the issues that matter and motivated me to complete this work. I am grateful for their guidance.

I would also like to thank Dr. Clifton Conrad and Dr. Michael Thomas who inspired me through my interactions with them to use research to find meanings in voices and thereby craft stories that are worthy. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Halverson who supported me and pushed me to find deeper meanings in the issues around school leadership. My interaction with Dr. Peter Miller helped me recognize the important role of communities in my research and I am thankful for those insights. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Allen Phelps, Dr. Eric Camburn and Dr. Cathy Compton Lilly who also supported me right through this dissertation process and gave me important feedback.

This entire dissertation process was enhanced through interactions with several people. Paul Baker, WCER, senior public relations specialist and a good friend, read through every single draft of my work and offered valuable suggestions. I have learned a lot from his suggestions and value his support. I am thankful to other graduate students Chia Chee, Shree Durga and Wan Lin for enriching conversations over the years.

The study would not have been possible without the participation of the administrators, teachers and parents at various schools in Tamil Nadu, India. Their work inspires me and helps me tell the stories which I hope would be meaningful to practitioners and researchers around the world. I am thankful to SS Rajagopalan, an educationist, who wanted me to bring back my research experiences to Tamil Nadu.

The research work that I am doing for the WIDA Consortium at the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research (WCER) provided me an opportunity to work with educators in schools in the United States for the last few years. I am grateful to my current and former WIDA colleagues Tim Boals, Merideth Trahan, Amanda Spalter, Christy Reveles, John Daly and Steve Kailin for my professional growth as a researcher.

This journey would not have been possible without the support of my family. Dinesh, my husband, was my biggest strength. I would not have reached the finish line without his support. My mother, Jaya, was there to answer my calls in India even in the middle of the night and cheered me on. My grandmothers, sister and brother-in-law motivated me right through. Annapurna, my aunt, and a professor in early childhood education provided me great advice as I completed my dissertation. I also want to thank my friends Melissa, Rajesh, Nilanjana and their families for supporting me. I hope this dissertation and my future work will help me continue this journey and make some meaningful contribution to education in India and the U.S.

THE ACTIONS OF HEADMASTERS AND HEADMISTRESSES IN FOSTERING PARENT
& FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS IN TAMIL NADU, INDIA

Anupama Shekar

Under the supervision of Professor Carolyn J. Kelley

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison

ABSTRACT

Decades of research has examined the contribution of parent involvement to children's educational outcomes. Research has also attempted to identify meaningful involvement practices, taking place at home or in school and, as a result, measuring its effects on school, school staff and parents themselves. Despite the extensive research base, very little has focused on the role of the school principal in fostering parent and family involvement practices in the U.S. and India.

In this context, a qualitative cross-case design approach was used to identify the parent and family involvement practices initiated and supported by the school heads. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) How do government (public) school headmasters or headmistresses in the state of Tamil Nadu, India foster parent and family involvement? 2) How do they initiate and support parent and family involvement practices in the school? and 3) What are the similarities and differences across schools?

The major findings of the study are as follows. The school heads fostered parent involvement at their schools by initiating and supporting a practice of their own. Using various actions, they shaped these practices to achieve certain goals around fostering parent involvement at the schools like promoting their visibility as a leader, building personal relationships, promoting student achievement, bolstering the importance of parent participation, reinforcing parent connections to teachers and also creating opportunities for networking.

The leaders also created structures, provided support and identified resources for the common parent involvement practices. They took actions to support goals like empowering parents, raising the importance of parent involvement among teachers, improving student achievement and school developments and ultimately building a strong school family relationship.

The practices of the four school heads' over time created a continuum of overlapping actions that helped foster parent involvement. All the leaders exhibited strong beliefs in parent involvement; initiated unique practices to find new meanings around parent relations; used the practices initiated to strengthen other practices existing at the school; promoted existing practices through specific structures and support and also encouraged other leaders and teachers to create new practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	5
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	6
LIMITATIONS.....	9
DEFINITION OF TERMS	10
RESEARCH CONTEXT.....	12
SYSTEM AND STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA.....	14
STATE OF TAMIL NADU AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.....	15
UNIQUENESS OF THE RESEARCH CONTEXT.....	16
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
THE MOTIVATIONS FOR PARENTS TO BECOME INVOLVED.....	21
Parental Role Construction	23
Parental Efficacy.....	24
Invitations from School, Teachers and Child to be Involved	25
Parental Life Context and Personal Experiences.....	30
THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT.....	31
School-based Parent Involvement.....	32
Home-based Parent Involvement.....	33
THE OUTCOMES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT.....	34
BROAD APPROACHES FOR SCHOOLS TO BOOST PARENT INVOLVEMENT	37
PRINCIPAL’S ROLE IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT.....	39
Principal behaviors.....	40
Principal perceptions and attitudes	41
Principal involvement.....	45
Principal support.....	47
LITERATURE LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY	49
Limitations of principal support studies	50
Limitations of principal involvement studies	50
Connecting to the broader discourse.....	51
Education research in India and Tamil Nadu.....	52
Implications for proposed research study	56

CHAPTER 3	57
METHODOLOGY	57
QUALITATIVE MULTI-CASE STUDY DESIGN	57
STUDY PARTICIPANTS	58
SAMPLING PROCEDURES	59
DATA COLLECTION	62
DATA SOURCES AND STRATEGIES.....	62
FRAMEWORK.....	65
HEADMASTER OR HEADMISTRESS INTERVIEWS	69
TEACHER INTERVIEWS.....	73
PARENT OR FAMILY INTERVIEWS.....	74
DOCUMENTS.....	74
STUDY CONTEXT INFORMATION.....	75
FIELD NOTES	76
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AND PERMISSIONS	77
RESEARCHER’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE TOPIC.....	78
DATA ANALYSIS.....	81
DIRECT INTERPRETATION AND CODING.....	81
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS SOFTWARE	81
TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY	82
TRIANGULATION.....	83
MEMBER CHECKS	84
CHAPTER 4: KAVERI SCHOOL	85
CHAPTER 5: PALANI SCHOOL	121
CHAPTER 6: NILGIRI SCHOOL	163
CHAPTER 7: VAIGAI SCHOOL	200
CHAPTER 8: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS	229
CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	271
APPENDICES	285
Appendix A: Political Map of India.....	286

Appendix B: District Map of Tamil Nadu	287
Appendix C: Researcher Interview Description Form.....	288
Appendix D: Researcher Field Notes Form.....	289
Appendix E: Background and Beliefs about Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters or Headmistresses.....	290
Appendix F: School Demographics Oral Survey for Headmasters and Headmistresses.....	292
Appendix G: School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Survey for Headmasters and Headmistresses.....	295
Appendix H: Actions Supporting Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters and Headmistresses.....	299
Appendix I: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Teachers	302
Appendix J: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Parents or Guardians	304
Appendix K: Sample Consent Form Headmaster or Headmistress Oral Consent Form	306
Appendix L: Notice of Action from IRB	309
Appendix M: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Survey Permission Letter	310
Appendix N: Projected Research Timeline.....	311
Appendix O: Projected Research Expenditure	313
REFERENCES	314

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: EXTANT KNOWLEDGE AND STUDY CONTRIBUTIONS.....	7
TABLE 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS	10
TABLE 3: SIGNIFICANT BROAD APPROACHES FOR SCHOOLS TO INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT	38
TABLE 4: INDIAN JOURNALS REVIEWED FOR STUDIES RELATED TO HEADMASTER LEADERSHIP AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT	53
TABLE 5: CASE SELECTION CHARACTERISTICS	60
TABLE 6: SAMPLE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE.....	79
TABLE 7: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND THEIR UNIQUE PRACTICES AND SIMILARITIES ACROSS THEMES	238
TABLE 8: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA)	243
TABLE 9: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS' MEET	248
TABLE 10: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND OPEN DAY OR REPORT CARD DAY	252
TABLE 11: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS VOLUNTEERING AND ATTENDING NATIONAL FUNCTIONS AT SCHOOL	255
TABLE 12: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: SCHOOL HEADS ACTIONS AROUND COMMUNICATION.....	260
TABLE 13: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS: EXAMPLES OF DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIONS ACROSS COMMON PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES	267

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN TAMIL NADU	20
FIGURE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING PARENT & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES	65
FIGURE 3: FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING HEADMASTER OR HEADMISTRESS ACTIONS IN SUPPORTING PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES	68
FIGURE 4: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND MORNING WELCOME	97
FIGURE 5: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA)..	103
FIGURE 6: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND AROUND PARENTS’ MEET.....	106
FIGURE 7: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND OPEN DAY OR REPORT CARD DAY	108
FIGURE 8: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENT BIO DATA BOOKS.....	111
FIGURE 9: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS VOLUNTEERING AND ATTENDING NATIONAL FUNCTIONS AT SCHOOL	113
FIGURE 10: JAYA’S ACTIONS AROUND COMMUNICATION.....	119
FIGURE 11: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND STUDENT ID CARDS.....	137
FIGURE 12: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.....	141
FIGURE 13: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND THE PARENTS’ MEET.....	146
FIGURE 14: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND TEACHER-PARENT CONTACTS	151
FIGURE 15: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND OPEN DAY OR REPORT CARD DAY	154
FIGURE 16: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS VOLUNTEERING AND ATTENDING NATIONAL FUNCTIONS AT SCHOOL	156
FIGURE 17: LATHA’S ACTIONS AROUND COMMUNICATION.....	161
FIGURE 18: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND VISITS TO STUDENTS’ HOMES	180
FIGURE 19: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION	184
FIGURE 20: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS’ MEET.....	188
FIGURE 21: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND REPORT CARD DAY	191
FIGURE 22: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS ATTENDING NATIONAL FUNCTIONS AT SCHOOL	194
FIGURE 23: RAMU’S ACTIONS AROUND COMMUNICATION	198
FIGURE 24: VASU’S ACTIONS AROUND THE PARENT CONTACT DIARY & JOURNAL	216
FIGURE 25: VASU’S ACTIONS WITH PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.....	220
FIGURE 26: VASU’S ACTIONS AROUND PARENTS’ MEET	224

FIGURE 27: VASU’S ACTIONS AROUND REPORT CARD DAY 226

FIGURE 28: VASU’S ACTIONS AROUND INCLUDING PARENTS IN SCHOOL
FUNCTIONS 228

FIGURE 29: CONTINUUM OF OVERLAPPING ACTIONS IN FOSTERING PARENT
INVOLVEMENT 270

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parents' involvement in their children's education has numerous beneficial outcomes (see reviews by Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2007). The outcomes for students as recognized in the literature are visible in traditional measures of higher achievement, improved school attendance, behavior and discipline (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002) and in less traditional measures including increased aspirations for post-secondary education, enhanced motivation, better preparedness for class, stronger perceptions of academic competence, and work orientation (Sanders, 1998; Simon, 2001; Trusty, 1999). Partnerships with parents also have a variety of outcomes for the schools and parents themselves. They include improved school climate (Haynes et al., 1989; Sanders, 1996), school safety (Sanders, 1996), parents' sense of accomplishment in being involved in the classroom (Smith, 2006), and increase in parents' knowledge and skills for being involved (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

The wealth of research on parent involvement in the U.S. to date also suggests that most parents, regardless of their background and education, are deeply invested in their child's education (Mapp, 2002). Scholarly knowledge of parent and family involvement in more industrialized settings like the U.S. is years ahead of that in emerging nations like India.

In the U.S., the immense amount of research on parent involvement has prompted large numbers of policy makers and educators, at the national and local levels, to examine a range of meaningful practices to engage parents and families to boost their child's learning and schooling experiences.

Based on the convincing evidence that links parent involvement to student success, the No Child Left Behind Act (Section 1118) requires schools and districts receiving Title I funds to have a written parent involvement policy. The most recent proposal for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) released by the Obama administration challenges various features of the No Child Left Behind Act that need further reform. The proposal includes several parent and community engagement policies that would be designed around empowering families and providing more avenues to build capacity among teachers and school leaders to effectively involve parents in their child's education (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Equally important is also the work carried out around families and schools by various organizations across the U.S. The nonprofit National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is one of the largest parent groups in the country which mobilizes millions of volunteers across local units to get involved in their children's education each year.

Notwithstanding all the work and research linking school and parent involvement and proliferating evidence of its varied positive benefits to children, only a handful of studies have examined the vital relationship of the principal's role in parent involvement practices at schools. Further, the few empirical studies in the U.S. to date have only examined certain aspects of principals in fostering parent involvement practices like studies on principal behaviors, principal perceptions and attitudes, principal involvement and principal support in relation to parent involvement (Auerbach, 2009; Auerbach, 2010; Brian, 1994; Catsambis, 2001; Chrispeels, 1996; Esther Sui-Chu Ho, 2009; Gareau & Sawatzky, 1995; Giles, 2006; Goldring & Shapira, 1996; Goldring, 1993; Good, 2008; Griffith, 2001; Hands, 2010; Peterson & Ladky, 2007; Richardson, 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Simon, 2004; Thornburg, 1981; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Also, the numerous studies that have

examined approaches for schools to foster effective parent involvement have underscored the importance of the role of the school principal in supporting and sustaining parent involvement partnerships.

Despite these calls, for decades, studies have merely focused on teachers leading parent involvement practices, and have been rather passive in examining or reporting out evidence of successful principal-led initiatives. Clearly, the dearth of studies around principals' actions and initiations in fostering parent and family involvement reiterates the need for more work in that area. In addition, we can also extrapolate these three important broad findings from studies to further strengthen the need for studies around principals' role in parent involvement. First, studies at hand point to strong and stable leadership within the school as a critical indicator in involving parents in their child's education and thereby influencing children's success and well-being in various ways (Giles, 2006; Griffith, 2001; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Second, literature also shows that strong principal leadership contributes to successful schools. Third, the research linking school leadership to parent involvement is essential because more schools seek to strengthen these connections as a means to improve outcomes for students (Griffith, 2001).

Evidently, more research around principals' spearheading parent and family involvement practices is needed and will help fill the vital gap in literature. Accordingly, the field would also benefit from new research into the complex layers shaping the principal-initiated or principal-supported parent involvement practices. To achieve this, this research study was sensitive towards examining the nature of principals who shaped, and supported parent involvement practices by also being cognizant of the parent and family roles, life contexts and past experiences as emphasized in the parent involvement discourse. In doing so, this exploratory

qualitative research study, in a small way, attempted to bridge the gap in discourse between principal leadership and parent involvement.

Further, this study through the cases and cross-cases analysis also highlighted work across schools and principals', and in that way, made an effort to help practitioners see beyond rubrics or manuals to foster parent involvement - and take a step forward to nurture meaningful relationships.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to gain an understanding of principal actions towards fostering parent and family involvement in schools. This is because of the dearth of studies that clearly examine principal's actions, initiations and support in fostering parent or family involvement. Accordingly, this research study used a qualitative multi-case design approach to examine the nature of the secondary school headmasters' or headmistresses' leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement among low-income schools.

Specifically, this research study examined headmasters or headmistresses actions on fostering parent and family involvement by ways in which they create or support practices within the schools. Further, themes across cases have been documented to compare variations and similarities.

The following three research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. How do government (public) school headmasters or headmistresses in the state of Tamil Nadu, India foster parent and family¹ involvement?
2. How do they initiate and support parent and family involvement practices² in the school?
3. What are the similarities and differences across schools?

¹ The exploratory research study is situated within the cultural context of families in India and draws from research on the importance of looking at involvement beyond parents to families. Therefore, this study was sensitive to the involvement of guardians of students who don't have parents and also considered the involvement of siblings, grandparents, aunt, uncle and cousins.

² Family involvement practices could assume any form. State-mandated family involvement practices include Parent Teacher Association (PTAs); Traditional or the research-based family involvement practices include Joyce Epstein's (1995) six types of family involvement practices and other research frameworks; Non-traditional family involvement practices include "organic," "context-based" or other "emergent" forms of family involvement, e.g., reaching out to families after school hours, family nights in communities, student and family evening socials at low-income neighborhoods, celebrating festivals to keep the school and family relationship successful, and theatre and song festivals in the fields, among other emergent practices .

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important for several reasons (see Table 1). First, the dearth of studies that deeply explore the leadership of principals in fostering parent and family involvement in the U.S. and in India warrants this study. A detailed investigation of principals' actions and practices in the area of parent involvement could provide critical possibilities for advancing research. This is central, as studies in the broader parent involvement discourse attribute the success of parent involvement programs in the school to effective principal supports.

Second, studies that have examined principals' actions and parent involvement have been rather superficial in their examination by abandoning the intricacies that actually give shape and meaning to a practice. These include: understanding parents' life contexts, their own role, beliefs and their past experiences. It is clear a precursor to effective involvement of parents and families include knowledge of these attributes. Therefore, this research study proposed to be sensitive to the aforementioned elements in principals' initiatives and support of effective practices, and also to draw closer together the worlds of principal leadership and parent involvement. This perspective will prove more fruitful than simply viewing the two topics in isolation.

Third, most studies have used surveys to examine principals' perceptions of, attitudes toward, and supports of school-based parent involvement practices. For this reason, the study used a qualitative approach which will provide rich, deep insights into the issue of examining principals in context and their roles in parent and family involvement practices. Further, the study provides a holistic perspective on the principal's leadership by embracing narratives from parents and families and teachers. Finally, it is my hope that this study has transcended beyond merely filling a gap in research to being useful to the practitioner in the field.

TABLE 1

Extant knowledge and study contributions

Extant knowledge	Study contributions
<p>Dearth of studies that deeply examine the principal's leadership in creating and/or supporting parent involvement practices.</p>	<p>The proposed study examined the leadership practices of headmasters and headmistresses in fostering parent involvement practices as they create and/or support practices that unfold within the school.</p>
<p>The perception, attitudinal and support studies linking principals and parent involvement show that principals are receptive to parent involvement, show positive attitudes towards involvement and have been involved in some ways to foster partnerships.</p>	<p>Now that we have some evidence, the proposed study probed deeper. As described above, the study explored what this receptiveness to parent involvement looks like and how it translates into actual practice (created and/or supported) by the principal.</p>
<p>Studies of principal leadership and parent involvement inform us about the complexity of parent involvement initiatives in the schools. Studies also show that the practices are not static, but dynamic processes unique to each school. Current studies of principals in the parent involvement literature neglects some of the underlying complexities that have been persistently studied elsewhere (role construction, parents' efficacy, life contexts and experiences). These intricacies give shape to the practices and meaningful involvement and, therefore, should not be overlooked. As a result, we still do not know the complex factors shaping various practices that are created or supported by principals.</p>	<p>Therefore, it is important to examine the dynamic nature of practices created or supported by principals in different environments. The proposed study explored four individual cases (headmasters and headmistresses) and how they create or support parent involvement practices. The proposed study was sensitive to some of these underlying complexities in practices that are created or supported by principals as part of the qualitative case studies.</p>

Extant knowledge

Study contributions

There is also a dearth of empirical evidence to show how principal-created or -supported parent involvement initiatives are received by parents and teachers.

Evidently, very little literature has studied the principal's role in fostering meaningful parent involvement initiatives. Also, most studies have only superficially explored the principal's role, even in the broad parent involvement discourse.

The proposed study examined how principal-created initiatives are received by parents and teachers. While the research does not seek to measure the effects of involvement practices on parental outcomes, it does seek to gather narratives from parents and teachers to illuminate the leadership behind these cases.

The proposed study attempted to fill an important gap in the leadership literature and add to the research base on parent involvement by exploring the principals' role further. Also, the enormity of the government (public) school system in Tamil Nadu, India, made for an interesting platform to conduct this research. The lessons gleaned could be useful to other administrators serving children in the state of TN and India, and by extension, to other countries. More importantly, the lack of concrete research in areas of principal leadership and parent involvement in the U.S. warranted the need for this study.

LIMITATIONS

First, this study conducted had a limitation of sample size. The study was conducted in four higher secondary schools and examined practices of four headmasters and headmistresses. Given the number of schools across the state of Tamil Nadu, India, generalizations cannot be drawn from the findings of this study. Further, the study was conducted among higher secondary schools and the findings may or may not pertain to primary and middle schools. Despite this, the small sample size was deliberate as this qualitative study needed to be in-depth and sought to probe the actions of leaders deeply. Further, to present a holistic approach and avoid bias to the leaders' views on his or her practices, the teachers and parents were also interviewed at these schools.

Second, this study was conducted among schools serving children from low-income communities. The findings from this study may or may not be pertinent to private schools in the state.

Third, the study was conducted in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. Some parent involvement practices are only relevant to the context of India. While not all leadership actions and practices may be relevant to the U.S. context, some have important ramifications for research and practice in U.S. schools since the dearth of research in this area is evident.

Fourth, the study did not examine schools in the rural context. Only urban and suburban schools were examined. In the context of Tamil Nadu, India, rural schools could have more traditional parent involvement practices like community gatherings in the fields and celebrations in the villages. Readers cannot generalize the findings from this study to all rural schools.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms (see Table 2) either pertain exclusively to the public (government) education system in India and Tamil Nadu, India or refer to certain concepts from the parent and family involvement literature that pertains specifically to this research study. The terms are listed as they appear in the succeeding chapters of this dissertation.

TABLE 2

Definition of terms

Terms from the Indian education system	Corresponding terms in the U.S. education context or term definition
Government or State-run School	Public School
Private School (includes various boards of education like Matriculation, Anglo-Indian, Central Board of Secondary Education)	Private School
Class 1- 12	Grade 1 – 12
Mark	Grade
Quarterly, Half yearly or Final Examinations	Summative tests for measuring student progress
Higher secondary examination or Board examination	Standardized test at class 12 which determines ones entry into post-secondary education along with other college or university-based entry exams
Higher education or college or university	Post-secondary education or college
Primary School (classes 1 – 5)	Elementary School
Middle School or Upper Primary School (classes 6 – 8)	Middle School
High School or Secondary School (classes 9 – 10)	High School

Higher Secondary School (classes 11-12)	High School
State Minister of School Education	The person holding the school education portfolio in the ruling government at the state
Directors and Joint-Directors	Senior state education administrators
Chief education officer (DEO)	Every district in the state of Tamil Nadu has a CEO
District education officer (CEO)	Every district in the state of Tamil Nadu has a DEO
BRC – Block resource coordinator	Every block within districts in the state of Tamil Nadu has a BRC
BRTE – Block resource teacher educator	Every block within districts in the state of Tamil Nadu has a BRTE
Headmaster or Headmistress	School principal
Assistant Headmaster or Headmistress	Assistant school principal
PT Master	Physical training or physical education teacher
Peon	The headmaster's or headmistress's helper
Secretary	The headmaster's or headmistress's office assistant
Ayyah	A custodian, the person who cleans the school
Watchman	School security guard
Parent teacher association (PTA)	Parent Teachers Organization (PTO)
Parent	The child's mother or father
Family/Guardian	The child's siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other extended family

RESEARCH CONTEXT

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world today, but faces considerable challenges in providing access and quality education to millions of its poor. The United Nations (UN) projections of world population suggest that India, which has one billion people today, will overtake China between years 2025–2050 to become the world’s most populous nation (United Nations, 2004).

Even with the enforcement of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) act, thousands of children still remain out of school. Anandakrishnan (2008) notes that only some states are moving towards the goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE), while other states still lag behind. Josephine (2003) further concedes that India, like most other developing countries, has not achieved universal primary education. Quoting World Bank studies, she notes that many students who completed education from developing countries fail to reach national or international standards of achievement in math, science and reading, and most of those who do reach those standards studied in private schools (p. 49).

The World Bank’s Economic update on India’s long-term prospects discusses education of its young and growing population. The update suggests that the mean years of schooling for the population ages 15 and above increased from around 3.5 in 1990 to 5.1 in 2010. Despite this trend in progress, the report notes that “overall schooling has been relatively low, especially compared with some fast growing Asian countries. In addition to relatively low levels of schooling, India has high educational inequality between the sexes” (World Bank, 2010).

Further, Kingdon (2007) also notes that India has 22 per cent of the world’s population but 46 per cent of the world’s illiterates, and high numbers of out of school children and youth. A total of 26.19 % and 24.82 % of boys and girls, respectively, drop out of classes 1 to 5 (ages 6-

11); 44.29 % and 41.43% boys and girls drop out of classes 1 to 8 (ages 6-14) and 56.43% and 57.29% boys and girls drop out of classes 1 to 10 (ages 6-16) (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2008).

The high dropout rates led to the launch of the Government of India's well-known national programme for meeting universal primary education called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). Further, the Government of India's 11th Five Year Plan notes, "in view of the demands of rapidly changing technology and the growth of knowledge economy, a mere eight years of elementary education would be grossly inadequate for our young children to acquire necessary skills to compete in the job market. Therefore, a Mission for Secondary Education is essential to consolidate the gains of SSA and to move forward in establishing a knowledge society" (Planning Commission, 2011). For this purpose, the national programme for universal secondary education was launched (*Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan*).

The national SSA and RMSA programmes work in conjunction with state governments to address issues related to school access, retention, dropout prevention, infrastructure, personnel, training, teaching and learning, among other areas. The Government of India's RMSA framework also notes that since universalization of elementary education is a Constitutional mandate, it's necessary to push forward to universalization of secondary education.

Clearly, the sense of urgency among leaders in improving India's educational system is rooted in the notion that no country can meet the social and economic challenges of the 21st century without improving the quality of its educational system. Besides, historically, it is well known that countries that have invested in education have benefitted in terms of better economic growth and reduced poverty levels (Govinda, 2003).

SYSTEM AND STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The states across India (see Appendix A) have typically four types of schools: state funded, central government funded, aided non-government schools (mainly local body schools), and un-aided non-government schools (Josephine 2003). The pattern of education in India (see Figure 1) is divided into elementary education (grades 1- 8). This includes the primary stages (classes 1-5) and upper primary or middle stages (classes 6-8). The secondary education includes high (classes 9-10) and higher secondary stages (classes 11-12) or as defined by the individual states (NUEPA, 2008). With regard to this, Mukhopadhyay (2007) notes that in many states primary education comprises of the first four years. In certain other states, primary and upper primary classes are not differentiated and comprise seven years of schooling followed by three years of secondary education (p. 121). Further, the secondary stage consists of classes 9 & 10 in 19 states and classes 8 to 10 in 13 states. In most states, higher secondary would include classes 11 & 12, but some states have classes 9-12 combined as higher secondary. The framework for RMSA also notes the importance of all states and union territories to align to a similar system to better facilitate inter-state mobility of students and improve the quality of secondary and higher secondary education administration (RMSA, 2008).

The government schools charge no fee from students as free education is a constitutional right up to the age of 14 years. Private schools, on the other hand, charge a tuition fee and the quality of education delivered is considered much better. Kingdon (2007) also highlights various problems across government schools including primary and secondary enrollment rates, school quality, attendance, and learning achievement levels in primary and secondary levels, thereby providing a national perspective. “Available evidence suggests not only that private schools are

more effective than public schools in imparting cognitive skills in India but also that they have much lower unit costs than publicly funded government and aided schools” (p.23).

STATE OF TAMIL NADU AND ITS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Tamil Nadu (TN) is considered one of the educationally progressive states in India. The overall literacy rate in this southern State for both males and females was 73.47 as against the national average of 65.38 percent (2001 Census). It is one of the top three states in literacy, next only to Kerala and Maharashtra (Josephine 2003).

TN has 32 districts and population of approximately 66.4 million (Census of India, 2001). The total number of schools, covering all Boards of Education, is approximately 52,000. Approximately 13 million children are currently enrolled in schools (all Boards) across TN. Of this, about half, or 6.7 million children, mostly from low-income families in TN, attend state-run schools (government, municipal corporation and panchayat union schools) (TN Department of School Education, Government of the State of Tamil Nadu, India). The structure of the Tamil Nadu educational system is quite similar to the rest of the country (see Figure 1 below). The terminologies vary only across private and government schools, but the higher education system remains the same from a Bachelor’s degree to a Doctoral or a Post-Doctoral degree. In the state, the literacy rate is the highest in Kanyakumari district (87.60%) followed by the Chennai district (85.30%). The literacy rate is the lowest in Dharmapuri district (61.40) (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2010).

The size of the government school system in TN has caused a variety of challenges including substantial inter-district variations in student performance and increased dropout rates (Govinda 2003). There is also a growing realization that primary education alone is not enough and that secondary school education in particular is critical in improving the quality of people’s

lives in the country and its states. This has led the government to launch the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (a national secondary education program) with an objective of increasing quality in secondary education and providing universal access to secondary level education by the end of 2017.

Despite national efforts to improve public education, getting children to come to school remains a challenge. Research shows that low participation rates are caused by the struggle for survival, a perceived lack of immediate benefits of education among the disadvantaged, and the requirement for non-enrolled children to work and support families (Govinda 2003).

Notwithstanding this, TN has made considerable progress by offering social welfare initiatives including the Noon Meal programs, distribution of free bus passes, uniforms, and textbooks, with a goal of increasing retention and benefiting elementary school children. In addition, the nationally funded SSA programme helped the state increase the quality and access to primary education and to mobilize community in these efforts.

In addition to this, the state also aligns itself to the national mandate of universalization of secondary education through RMSA. The state's goals are to get all secondary school age children (classes 9 & 10) in schools by 2017 and to provide all those children access to higher secondary classes by 2020. The government also plans to strengthen facilities at existing secondary and higher secondary schools through various strategies (Tamil Nadu School Education Department Policy Note, 2010). Further, social welfare programs such as free textbooks, bicycles and bus passes are provided to secondary school students.

UNIQUENESS OF THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Several factors made the research context of India and, in particular, Tamil Nadu, unique for this study. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world today, but sadly faces a

huge divide between the rich and the poor. Yerroju (2003) emphasizes this conflict saying that the massive poverty of millions on one hand, and the concentration of economic power in the few rich people on the other, leaves a gaping hole (p. 576 & 577). There is no doubt that the Government of India, in the last decade, has provided several new directions through various policies to address critical issues to bridge this gap in quality between public and private education. Kingdon (2007) also places India's educational achievements in international perspective and notes that India does well compared to Bangladesh and Pakistan, but lags behind other BRIC (Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China) economies like China.

Given this, the push from the Government of India to the states towards universalization of primary and secondary education is evident, through respective SSA and RMSA programmes. This particular backdrop of India's current condition is interesting as both the SSA and RMSA programmes specifically target public (government or state-run) schools. Further, the RMSA programme framework recommends certain guidelines for parent and community involvement in the states. The framework notes the importance of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and requires all public schools to have PTAs that meet at least once a month. In addition, it also requires teachers and principals to maintain and review PTA registers and action notes.

The RMSA framework also offers guidelines for states to actively involve parents in school management and development committees, through school building committees and an academic committee. This would encourage parent participation in the committee around infrastructure and teaching and learning issues. Further, the framework also emphasizes involving parents of the minority students to bridge socio-economic and cultural barriers, especially in places where the parents are not inclined to continue their children's education.

Although the recommendations may all not be implemented immediately, the framework does push towards involving parents more actively.

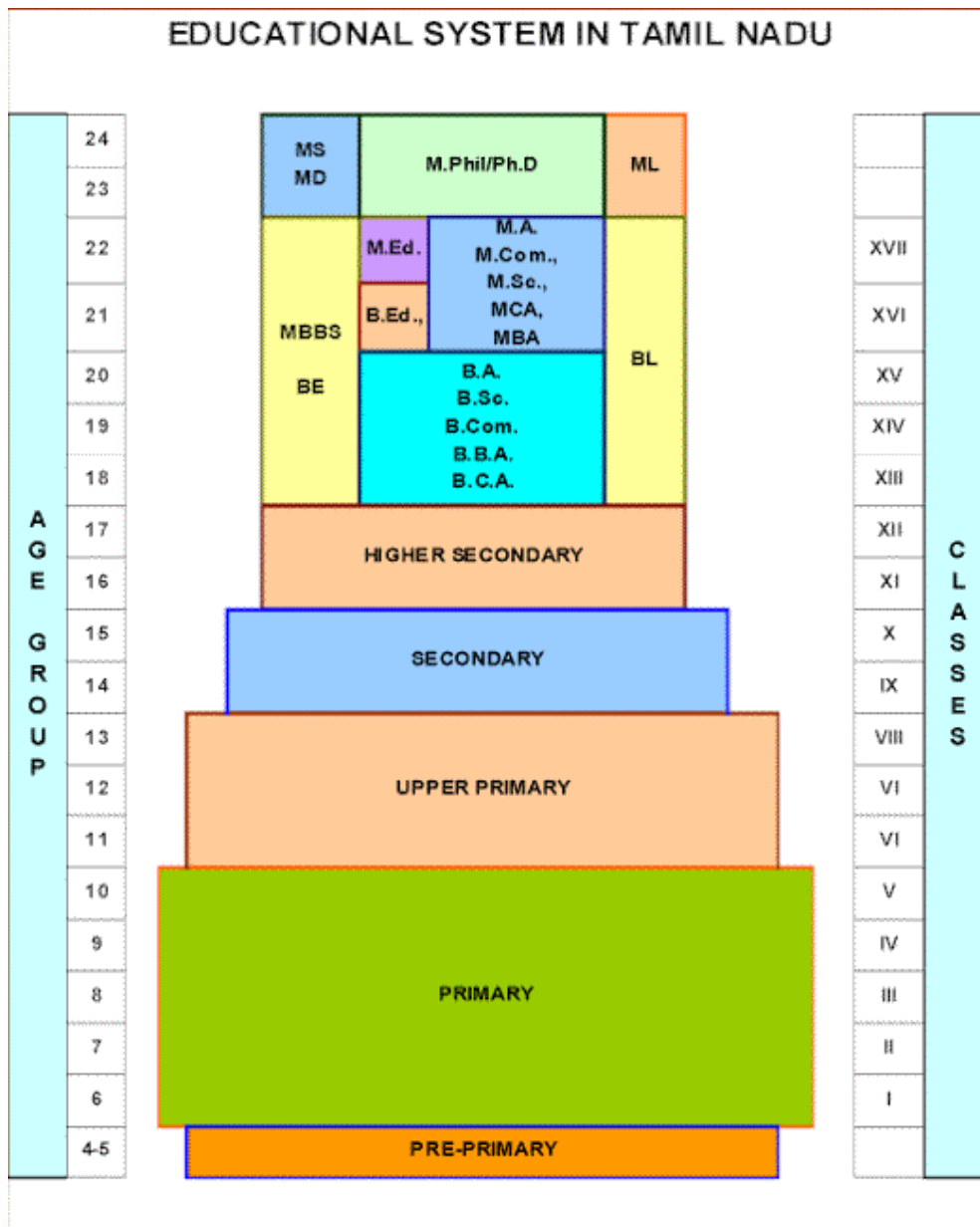
The context and culture of India also made for an interesting platform to conduct this study. Cheng (2003) notes that Asian countries including India, China, Japan and Korea have a long history of building up their cultural traditions. They are making efforts to maintain their cultural assets and local identities. This cultural backdrop enhanced the study as most states or districts have their own local cultural practices. For example, some government schools in Tamil Nadu use festivals like *Pongal* (local harvest festival in Tamil Nadu) as a way to reach out to parents, and thus, fostering parent involvement.

In addition to the cultural backdrop, the study primarily sought to investigate the actions of headmasters and headmistresses to foster parent involvement in government schools in Tamil Nadu. Although the state does not have a list of parents' educational background and occupation, the mosaic can be interpreted from various articles and government documents. Most parents of the children who are enrolled in government schools in Tamil Nadu belong to low-socio economic backgrounds. Parental occupations can range anywhere from clerical personnel to drivers, laborers, street vendors, and farmers, among others.

The educational level of these parents is said to be low, meaning that some parents have a basic school education while others may have never enrolled in formal schooling. Further, the parents who do have some level of education may be able to read or write English, while the majority may only be able to speak the regional Tamil language. In addition to this, some parents who live in rural areas may have sent their child to an urban area to receive quality public education as they were deprived of the same. In these cases, those children are cared for by their grandmother, aunt, or uncle, who may or may not be educated, but who act as local guardians. In

addition to all this, the existing family structure within India also made for an interesting platform to conduct the study. Nair (2009) discusses living in a household where parents, grandparents, and sometimes great grand parents live together. Nair says that this provides the child ample opportunity to get informal education. Although some parents of children from government schools live in really poor neighborhoods or even huts, the sense of a joint family system is ingrained even within poor communities. This also provided for a unique context for this study.

Figure 1: Educational System in Tamil Nadu



Department of School Education, Govt of Tamil Nadu (2011). *Educational System in Tamil Nadu*. Retrieved June 13, 2011. <http://www.tn.gov.in/schooleducation/statistics/picture1-edn.htm>

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research linking school and parent involvement proliferates with evidence of its varied positive benefits to children, schools, school personnel and parents. And yet, in the burgeoning literature of school and parent involvement, only a handful of studies have examined the vital relationship of the principal as the creator of meaningful parent involvement practices. Given this, I begin the review of literature for this study by addressing three questions: 1) What does the current literature say about school-parent involvement?, 2) What are the major studies that link principal leadership and parent involvement?, and 3) What are implications for future research?

I outline my findings by first contextualizing parents' motivation for getting involved in their child's education, the multiple facets of parent involvement, and the varying effects of such involvement on students, schools, school staff and parents themselves. Further, broad approaches for schools to boost parent involvement are extrapolated from the literature. Finally, the few empirical studies pertaining to the principal's role in parent involvement is analyzed, situating it within the larger realm of parent involvement literature. Here, I also provide a brief summary of research on parent involvement in India and Tamil Nadu. In summary, gaps and implications for this study are presented.

THE MOTIVATIONS FOR PARENTS TO BECOME INVOLVED

Students' learning experiences are immensely shaped and nurtured at home, in school and the community. The discourse around Joyce Epstein's theoretical model of the Overlapping Spheres of Influence of Family, School, and Community on Children's Learning examines this notion (Epstein, 2001). The external structure of the model represents dynamic overlapping and

nonoverlapping spheres depicting the family, school, and community. Each of those three contexts, in a multitude of ways, plays a powerful role in the child's learning and progress.

The persuasive extensive evidence for the benefits of involving parents in their child's education has pushed researchers for decades to better understand what motivates parents to involve themselves and continue to remain involved. Numerous researchers have examined why some parents are more involved than others, and why some remain uninvolved (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Mapp, 2002; Pena, 2000; Sheldon, 2002; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of parent involvement proposes three predictors that influence parent's involvement decision: a) parent's construction of the parental role; b) parent's sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school; and c) general opportunities and demands made by the child and the children's school. The original model of the parent involvement process was revised to include constructs for parent's life context that include important aspects of parent's own knowledge and skills, their time and energy for involvement, and family culture (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2005).

Accordingly, the constructs as shown in level 1 of the new model of parent involvement define the involvement predictors around: a) an active role construction for involvement and a positive sense of efficacy for helping the children learn; b) perception of invitations to involvement from the school, teacher, and student; and c) important elements of parents' life context that allow or encourage involvement. This model, grounded in psychological literature, has provided useful insights into the parents' motivation and ability to involve themselves in their children's education. An extensive body of research has been conducted around the major constructs for

parent's motivation to be involved, as indicated in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (2005).

Parental Role Construction

Parent's role construction as indicated in the first level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model includes a sense of personal or shared responsibility for the child's educational outcomes and concurrent beliefs about whether one should be engaged in supporting the child's learning and schooling success (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Shumow & Lomax, 2002; Walker et al., 2005).

The findings of the studies examining the effects of parent's beliefs, their evolving role, aspirations and expectations, and experiences across time are consistent with the constructs of role construction as defined in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (2005). In a study conducted among low-income African-American, Caucasian, and Latino parents, Drummond & Stipek (2004) found that parents believe it is their responsibility to be involved in their children's schooling. Further, parents who participated in the study lived in very diverse contexts (urban and rural areas) and Drummond & Stipek (2004) assert that parents "strongly value involvement in their children's learning and believe they should facilitate their children's success in school" (p. 206 -207).

Chrispeels & Rivero (2001) assessed Latino parents' perceptions of their role and place in their children's education before and after their participation in a program intervention called the Parent Institute for Quality Education. The researchers concluded that parents will shift their parenting styles and their engagement with the school, especially with the teacher, when given information and an opportunity to explore how their attitudes and practices affect their children. Chrispeels' model indicates five variables that motivate parents to become involved: a) actual

and perceived school invitations and opportunities to be involved, b) parent's sense of place in their child's education, c) parent's knowledge and skills about how to be involved, d) parent's concept of parenting, and e) parent's aspirations and love for their child.

Fan & Chen (2001) in a meta-analysis of parental involvement and students' academic achievement concluded that parent involvement, especially parents' aspirations for their children, has a significant impact on student achievement. On grouping studies' findings using statistical techniques, they found that parents' aspirations and expectations were most strongly correlated with student achievement.

Mapp (2002) in a descriptive case study, sought to gain an understanding of low-income parents' perceptions about their involvement and the factors that influenced their participation in their children's education. The study concluded that parents clearly understood that their involvement helped their child's academic development. Further, the study found that the parents, regardless of the race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, want their child to succeed in school. The study also found that parents' involvement was driven by their own experiences in school and that their beliefs about family involvement were shaped by cultural norms and values. Therefore, parents' background and life experiences had a significant impact and influenced their involvement.

Parental Efficacy

Parental sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school includes a belief that their personal actions will help the child learn (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker et al., 2005).

Bandura and colleagues did extensive research on self-efficacy and beliefs, the role of self-motivation and personal goal setting. They found that self-efficacy affects the level of

challenges people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

In assessing efficacy beliefs, Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli (2001) also emphasized that parents who believe that they can affect their children's development are more proactive and successful in cultivating their children's competencies than parents who doubt they can do much to influence their children's developmental course. Numerous studies around parental efficacy are consistent with this notion that high levels of parental efficacy are consistent with better involvement in the child's education.

One such study on parental self-efficacy was carried out by Shumow & Lomax (2002), involving a national random sample of parents' feelings of efficacy and students' academic success. The researchers based their study on the social theory that parents' beliefs and feelings about their own ability to accomplish things shapes certain behaviors that in fact lead to success. Shumow & Lomax noted that family background, income, and quality of neighborhoods affect feelings of efficacy.

Invitations from School, Teachers and Child to be Involved

The literature in particular also examines the various forms of invitations or offers to be involved that are extended to parents by multiple stakeholders. A school invitation could be extended in the form of a telephone call, a personal visit to a child's home, a letter, web site, or newsletter, for example. The research literature also specifies school invitations as including creating a welcoming environment, holding special events, and soliciting feedback. Teachers invite parents to attend a parent meeting, a workshop at school, or to volunteer at school events. And invitations from children include asking for help with homework and project work, talking about school events, discussing course choices, and discussing the child's future education.

While the invitations to participate in their child's education at school and at home are several, how parents respond to them vary in intensity based on from the source. Accordingly, the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model identifies invitations for parental involvement from the school, teachers and child as one of the most influential motivators behind their involvement. To a large extent, the acceptance or rejection of an invitation to participate is also shaped by the complexities of parental role construction and parental efficacy. As a result, attributes of these constructs (role construction, efficacy and invites by school, teachers and child) are mutually reinforcing to augment parent involvement.

The research on parental efficacy also echoes the importance for schools to find ways to reach out to parents to boost their parental self-efficacy. Numerous studies have examined the concept of a welcoming environment at the school as a means of invitation to increase parental involvement (Auerbach, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; McGrath, 2007; Stewart, 2008). Since research shows strong relationship between high self-efficacy and positive involvement through various practices (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992), fostering a welcoming environment at the school could increase parental beliefs further. The variety of invitations not only makes parents feel welcome, but also positively shape their personal sense of contribution towards their child's education.

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) review studies around their model and suggest a number of ways schools (principals and teachers) can invite parents to engage. They emphasize the importance of creating a sense of welcome at the school by building principals' leadership skills and empowering teachers to reach out to parents. They also underscore the importance of learning about parents' goals, beliefs, values and knowledge as a way of informing outreach by school staff. Similarly, Griffith (2001) also reported the importance of principal practices leading

to creating a welcoming school climate. He noted that meeting the needs of school staff, parents and students and visiting classrooms regularly are ways to induce a positive school climate. Consistent with other research is Griffith's point about serving diverse, low-income families where a positive climate makes a difference.

Interestingly, researchers have also pointed to the importance of reaching out to low-income families in multiple ways. The Resto & Alston (2006) study of schools serving low-income diverse families concluded that using "multiple avenues" of involvement is crucial. The researchers describe strategies for reaching out to diverse families based on the schools they investigated, including creating welcome packets, holding special events, soliciting family feedback and providing explicit invitations to parents to participate.

The study by Mapp (2002) was significant as it explored how school factors determined involvement. The qualitative descriptive case study sought to understand why parents from low-income families are involved in their child's education. While the study revealed the nature of parent's past experiences as an important determinant of shaping their involvement, school factors also played an important role. Staff at the school investigated had a shared set of beliefs that shaped involvement. Mapp found that the school reached out to parents and created links of trust, thereby planting a desire to be involved continually.

Likewise, providing timely information on various ways parents can be involved and creating opportunities for involvement was reinforced in the study by Simon (2001). The NELS:88 data was used to examine the relationship between outreach efforts of high schools on families and the impact on student achievement. Findings concluded that the school's outreach to families (information on course selection, attendance and behavior, and how to help their child at

home) impacted involvement in a range of activities at school and home. The role of schools in extending invitations was reiterated.

Just as studies have focused on the role of schools in extending invitations for parents to be involved, studies have also explored the many dimensions of the role of teacher invitations to increase parent involvement. The parent involvement literature has focused on the teacher as a powerful invitation agent by which parents readily involve themselves in various activities at the school and at home (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1986; Van Voorhis, 2001). Literature emphasizes practices like parents talking to teachers, attending a parent meeting, assistance with homework and class projects, workshops at school, volunteering at school events, and attending career talks.

Equally important motivators for parent involvement are the invitations from children. Just as invitations are extended by schools and teachers, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, (1995) assert that children's demands create powerful opportunities for involvement. Receiving children's invitations are enhanced tremendously by parent's high aspirations and expectations for their children (Fan & Chen, 2001) and parents' own beliefs that they can affect their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

Children extend invitations to parents in numerous ways: asking for homework help, talking about school events, discussing course choices and creating dialogue around one's future education. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) write that general invitations from school and the child influence parent's decisions to be involved. Specific invitations from them create specific practices they choose to be involved in. Children who demand homework help will get help at home while children who solicit a field visit, will receive support and involvement from parents

in that area. Teachers' and schools' invitations also shape parental involvement in a similar manner.

While there is general consensus about parents' motivations for participating in their child's education, other viewpoints enrich this perspective. For example, a study by Lopez (2001) focused on immigrant families in Texas. The study found that parents perceived themselves as highly involved in their children's educational lives, but not in traditional ways. These laborers who toiled in the fields involved themselves in their children's education not by attending PTA meetings, but by emphasizing the "value of education through the medium of hard work" (Lopez, 2001). By locating his definition of parental motivation outside the realm of the traditional discourse, he challenges us to think beyond scripted ways of involvement and to accept a definition that includes more "organic ways" (Lopez, 2001).

While research continues to seek the underlying motivations for parental involvement, the existing evidence is clear. We know factors around parents' role construction (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; HooverDempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker et al., 2005), their sense of efficacy and beliefs in ways to be involved (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hooverdempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Mapp, 2002; Shumow & Lomax, 2002), invitations from school through a positive school climate (Griffith, 2001; M. G. Sanders & Harvey, 2002), invitations from teachers (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; Simon, 2001a), invitations from the child (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Auerbach, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995), and life context and personal background (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Mapp, 2002; Shumow & Lomax, 2002).

Given this breadth of literature, we know that parental involvement is inextricably defined and shaped by multiple personal contexts and by numerous external factors. Irrespective of their complex motivations, most parents are driven basically by an innate belief that they can contribute positively towards their child's education and well-being.

Parental Life Context and Personal Experiences

Life contexts and personal experiences also shape how parents are involved in numerous ways. A model by Walker et al. (2005) introduces constructs of parent's life context. These include: knowledge and skill, time and energy, and family culture. Many studies have explored different facets of the parental life context with respect to parental knowledge and skill: these include the ability to contribute effectively towards child's academic progress (homework, class projects, and discussions about college). Studies examining how parents spent their time (or parental time, as the literature defines it) examined the relationship between working parents' socioeconomic class and their involvement. Studies on family culture revolve around parents' culture, values, beliefs and norms that shape decisions to be involved.

The Mapp study examined the importance of low-income parents' perceptions about their involvement and the factors that influenced their participation in their children's education (2002). Mapp concluded that parents clearly understood that their involvement helped their child's academic development. Further, the study found that the parents, regardless of the race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, want their child to succeed in school. Parents' involvement was driven by their own experiences in school and their beliefs about family involvement were shaped by cultural norms and values. Parents' background and life experiences had a significant impact and influenced their involvement.

Similarly, the study by Shumow & Lomax (2002) across a national random sample of parents concluded that family background, income, and neighborhood affect feelings of efficacy and the extent of parents' involvement, which ultimately leads to student achievement and overall well-being. The researchers based the study on the social theory that parents' beliefs and feelings about their own ability to accomplish things shapes the probability of certain behaviors that in fact lead to success. At the same time, studies have also found that parents of all backgrounds can promote high achievement (Birch & Ferrin, 2002; Chavkin, 1993).

While one would conclude that there is general consensus in the field about the parents' life context and experiences as motivations for participating in their child's education, other viewpoints enrich this perspective. A study by Lopez (2001) focused on immigrant families in Texas. The study found that parents perceived themselves as highly involved in their children's educational lives, but not in traditional ways as defined in the literature. These laborers, as highlighted in his study, who toiled in the fields involved themselves in their children's education not by attending PTA meetings, but by emphasizing the "value of education through the medium of hard work." By locating his definition of parental motivation outside the realm of the traditional discourse, Lopez challenges us to think beyond scripted ways of involvement and to accept a definition that includes more "organic ways." This study recommends that practitioners keep parental life context at the forefront, before labeling them as involved or uninvolved. Most literature does not speak to these variations, but this study shows that these are important attributes around which we continue to build practices.

THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The literature today points to effective parent-driven and parent-engaged practices at home and school and affirm them as positive influences towards their child's academic success.

These various forms of involvement are motivated by an intrinsic need to contribute towards their child's education. While the studies were quite unclear even a decade ago about differentiating and measuring the success of various involvement practices that unfolds within the home and school on student success, today many studies show another picture.

School-based Parent Involvement

Joyce Epstein's (1995, 2008) framework of six types of family involvement practices examines school-parent linkages. Her framework is frequently cited in literature and has been implemented by districts and schools that are part of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). It also has been tested widely by numerous researchers. The framework's six dimensions of involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. Each of these involvement dimensions includes a range of sample practices that schools have implemented (Sanders, 1999; Simon, 2004).

Using a NELS:88 database, Catsambis (2001) examined Epstein's framework of the six types of involvement and its effects on high school student success. The findings suggested that only certain types of involvement practices (like creating opportunities for learning at home) had an effect on student achievement, while some had no effects. Some parent practices (e.g., supervising behavior) in fact had a negative effect on student achievement.

Sui-Chu & Willms' (1996) in an analysis of NELS: 88 data found variations in intensity of school-based involvement among different ethnic populations. Significantly, they found that the Asian, Hispanic, and African-American parents involved themselves in their child's education as much as white parents. However, African-American parents had slightly higher involvement than whites in all types of involvement except school participation. Hispanics had

slightly higher levels of home supervision than whites and Asian parents tended to provide more supervision at home, while spending less time discussing schools with their children, communicating with school staff, volunteering, and attending PTO meetings. Sui-Chu also argues that parental involvement tends to have a positive impact, regardless of income, and that all families, regardless of background, can have a positive impact on their child's learning.

Home-based Parent Involvement

Numerous studies document various home-based parent involvement practices that include: helping children with their homework (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Patall et al., 2008; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996b; Van Voorhis, 2001; Xu, 2004); reading books to their child (Birch & Ferrin, 2002; Chavkin, 1993); helping with schoolwork and having discussions about school (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000); making sure that their children complete their assignments (Chavkin, 1993); provide support and encouragement (Catsambis, 2001; Mapp, 2002) and other family practices (Catsambis, 2001).

It is also important to know the variety of various parental behaviors. Literature documents the following behaviors: expressing their educational expectations (Chavkin, 1993; Trusty, 1999); holding aspirations for their child (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lopez, 2001); and shaping expectations around the child's post-secondary path and success (Yonezawa & Oakes, 1999).

Accordingly, a large body of research points to the parent's home-based involvement in their child's homework as beneficial. In a review of research on parental involvement in student homework Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) concluded that "parents involve themselves in student homework because they believe that they should be involved, believe that their involvement will

make a positive difference, and perceive that their children or children's teachers want their involvement" (p. 195). They note that parents involve themselves in an array of activities, "ranging from the establishment of home structures supportive of learning to complex patterns of interactive behavior intended to enhance the child's understanding of homework in particular and learning processes in general" (p. 206).

Emergent through these empirical studies are patterns that demonstrate parental involvement in numerous ways, at home, in school and in other ways shaped by parents' life contexts and culture. As the studies have also shown, the intensity of involvement may differ but parents do wish to be engaged, are in fact engaged meaningfully, and can contribute positively to their child's education.

THE OUTCOMES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A body of evidence supports the increasing positive effects of involving parents in their child's education. Strong school-family partnerships benefit students, schools, school staff and parents themselves (Epstein, 1995, 2007, 2008; Sanders, 1996; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Simon, 2001; Goldring & Hausman, 1997; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hong, 2006).

These benefits are manifested in many ways. These include traditional measures such as: improved student achievement (Baker & Soden, 1997; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann et al., 1987; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Houtenville & Conway, 2008; Jeynes, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Jeynes, 2007; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Simon, 2001; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Voorhis, 2001); improved school performance (Stevenson & Baker, 1987); reduced absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004); reduced dropout (Trusty, 1999; Yonezawa & Oakes, 1999); improved attendance (Epstein

& Sheldon, 2002); improved student behavior (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Simon, 2001); and improved school discipline (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Accordingly, a large body of research has been done to understand the outcomes of parent involvement. Notably, studies have been conducted around Epstein's (1995) framework and various practices in elementary, middle and high schools (Simon, 2001) and within the National Network of Partnership Schools (Sanders, 1999). Epstein (2001) outlines a range of different practices, their challenges and outcomes for students, parents, teaching practice and school climate (p. 408 – 415): "The six types of involvement can guide the development of a balanced, comprehensive program of partnerships, including opportunities for family involvement at school and at home, with potentially important results for students, parents, and teachers. The results for students, parents, and teachers will depend on the particular types of involvement that are implemented, as well as on the quality of the implementation" (Epstein, 1995).

Simon (2001) conducted a study using NELSL:88 data to examine relationships between parent and community involvement and student achievement. The findings across Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement suggested that families participated in various activities and this was enhanced by outreach from schools. In other words, when schools and school staff reached out to parents, involvement activities (attending workshops, working on homework and volunteering) escalated. Simon (2001) found that, regardless of earlier grades or their family background, when parents attended college planning workshops and when parents and teenagers discussed college planning, teenagers earned better grades in English and math and completed more course credits in English and math. The study also found that when parents participated in various school activities with teenagers, they attended school more regularly. Teenagers also

reported better behavior as a result of talking with their parents about school or college. This study points out that high schools can partner effectively with parents and that makes a positive difference in grades, course credits, attendance, behavior and school preparedness.

While the research shows the importance of parent involvement on various traditional outcomes for students, it also links the benefits of involvement to non-traditional measures. They include: student feelings about school (Dearing, Kreider, & Weiss, 2008); enhanced student motivation (Sanders, 1998); aspirations for post-secondary education (Trusty, 1999); enrollment in challenging high school curriculum and higher-level placements (Yonezawa & Oakes, 1999); increased preparedness for class (Simon, 2001); successful transitions from special education to regular class (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999); homework completion and learning activities at home (Baker & Soden, 1997); high school completion (Anguiano, 2004) and learning the value of hard work (Lopez, 2001).

Partnerships with parents also have a variety of outcomes for the schools and parents themselves, including improved school climate (Haynes et al., 1989; Sanders, 1996) and school safety (Sanders, 1996). The study conducted by Smith (2006) found interesting insights into how parents benefitted from being involved in their child's education. Among low-income families, Smith (2006) found that parent participants profited from involvement as much as their children did. A parent shared a sense of accomplishment on assisting in the classroom and another found an opportunity to feel part of the community. Although the single case cannot be representative of all low-income communities and families, it suggests that the outcomes of parent involvement should be measured on a broader spectrum. As Smith asserts, it's crucial for schools and educators to acknowledge and encourage even the smallest of parents' efforts to support their children's education.

The literature in hand points to the numerous benefits from involvement. From all these studies, the positive evidence surrounding the effects of parent involvement on students, school, school staff and parents is evident. This only further reiterates the need in forging and sustaining strong partnerships with parents and families.

BROAD APPROACHES FOR SCHOOLS TO BOOST PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The three bodies of parent involvement literature critical to understanding the broader nature of school-parent partnerships yields a broad theme that transcends the complex factors that give shape to it: in particular, that most parents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, want their children to do well in school and succeed. They care deeply about their child's success in school and as their child progresses through different levels, they continue to care (Birch & Ferrin, 2002; Chavkin, 1993; Lopez, 2001; Mapp, 2002). Within this theme lie grounded approaches that can be extrapolated for schools to foster effective parent involvement. These approaches (see Table 3) appear repeatedly in the literature and apply to schools across levels and to parents across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

TABLE 3

Significant broad approaches for schools to increase parent involvement

Theme	Approaches
Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement is a reciprocal mission between schools and families, with the progress of the child as the stimulus of the mission • Deepening understanding of the varied ways parents construct their role, beliefs, experiences and life contexts is critical towards building meaningful relationships • Respecting and embracing the uniqueness of parents' culture that shapes and guides involvement practices
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting parents and families know that they can make a positive difference in their child's education and that their contribution is valuable towards the progress of the child • Include parents in the school's mission statement • Explore multiple communication avenues to reach out to parents (e.g., use different languages) • Provide parents specific details on how to help and create networks of support for communicating more information
Creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create structured involvement practices, but be open and sensitive to organic forms of involvement that tap into parent's culture and life experiences • Constantly solicit ideas from parents and families in creating practices • Have clear guidelines on implementing practices and develop plans to help parents who are in need through parent and school support groups
Connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to build meaningful connections between school staff and parents and administrators and parents
Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant feedback and outcomes on how parents' involvement helped their children and assess progress of practices along with parents • Clear misconceptions to work on building relationships around trust and mutual interest
Revisiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit involvement practices every year and create new approaches to involve parents • Share successes of involvement approaches towards building lasting partnerships

PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The research linking school and parent involvement proliferates with evidence of varied positive benefits to children. And yet, in the burgeoning parent involvement literature elucidated in this review, only a handful of studies have examined the vital relationship of the principal and parent involvement practices and partnerships that unfold within the school. These include: (Auerbach, 2009; Auerbach, 2010; Brian, 1994; Catsambis, 2001; Chrispeels, 1996; Esther Sui-Chu Ho, 2009; Gareau & Sawatzky, 1995; Giles, 2006; Goldring & Shapira, 1996; Goldring, 1993; Good, 2008; Griffith, 2001; Hands, 2010; Peterson & Ladky, 2007; Richardson, 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Simon, 2004; Thornburg, 1981; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Behind the numerous studies from which broad approaches were extrapolated for schools (see Table 3) underscore the necessity for school principals to promote parent involvement practices. For decades, studies have focused on teachers leading parent involvement practices, and have been rather passive in examining or reporting out evidence of successful principal-led initiatives.

Despite this, studies at hand point to strong and stable leadership within the school as a critical indicator in involving parents in their child's education and thereby influencing success and well-being of the child in various ways (Giles, 2006; Griffith, 2001; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Literature also shows that strong principal leadership contributes to effective schools. And research linking school leadership to parent involvement is essential because more schools seek to strengthen these connections as a means to improve outcomes for students (Griffith, 2001).

Having examined the broad domains of parent involvement literature and being aware of the school leadership research, we can draw two broad conclusions: 1) involving parents has

positive benefits on a child's education, success and overall well-being; and 2) strong principal leadership within a school is a significant driving force to increase parent involvement and thereby can contribute positively to a number of outcomes for the students and schools. The following analysis of the few empirical studies pertaining to the principals within the parent involvement literature points to future research needs.

Principal behaviors

In a study using survey data, Griffith (2001) examined behaviors of principals and their relationship to involvement of parents in their child's education. The study uses terminologies (behaviors) that describe effective principals including: the master teacher, who visits classrooms frequently; the missionary, who is mainly concerned with the social and school climate and meeting needs of all stakeholders; and the gamesman, who negotiates between the internal and external environments of school. The study also compares the roles of effective principals on many dimensions (for example, master teachers have content expert roles and the missionary takes on interpersonal roles). In this study, two-thirds of all elementary schools in a suburban school district with diverse populations participated. Parents responded to surveys which questioned their involvement in the following: volunteering at school, attending PTAs, attending open houses and helping children with homework and projects. Parents' perceptions were gathered on school climate, school staff connections on child's progress, and meetings and demographic background.

The principal survey had questions on roles associated with effective principals: master teacher, administrative agent, gamesman, school manager, maintenance manager and missionary.

The study found positive effects of the master teacher and missionary roles on parent involvement among schools having more disadvantaged populations like the students in the Free and Reduced Meals program (FARMS) and students participating in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). One explanation raised in the study is the strong linkages between the principal roles of master teacher (effective teaching) and missionary (reaching out), as roles that more effectively reach minority families. The role of gamesman (negotiator) was associated with lower levels of parent involvement among schools having more FARMS and ESOL students.

For the broad population, the study found that any managerial and administrative roles of principals had a negative effect on parent involvement and attendance at PTA meetings. Parents held more positive perceptions of the school climate and felt more empowered when principals were gamesmen. This study reinforces the nature of altering principal behaviors within the needs of the student populations and their life contexts. Clearly, principal behaviors do exert some positive influence on parent involvement as seen from this study.

Principal perceptions and attitudes

Richardson (2009) examined principals' perceptions of parent involvement at various levels in terms of their own role in facilitation and involvement of parents in school processes. Findings indicated varying levels of receptivity to their role in facilitation and the involvement of parents in school processes.

For this study, surveys were administered among elementary, middle and high school principals across the "Big 8 Districts" in Ohio. Principals were mostly female, had a master's degree, had less than five years of experience and were aged 46-55. Data was collected on modified instruments of the Parent Involvement Inventory (PII) constructed by Brittle (1994) and Small (1984). Parental involvement in school decision and policy-making and methods of citizen

participation in education were examined. Twenty-eight of the original items of the scale included attitudinal items like school decision-making and policy making with facilitation items like hiring decisions and budget planning. Twenty-four items also reflected positive attitudes like providing direction and some items with negative attitudes.

Research findings indicated principals were receptive to parent involvement and their role in facilitation like leadership to increase parent involvement. On the other hand, they were not as receptive to parent involvement in school processes like hiring and evaluation of teachers and other decision making processes. Interestingly, this study also cleared the misconception in literature that high school principals do not welcome parent involvement. In fact it was the high school principals in this study who had higher role and process scores. Prior experiences of principals also did not influence their attitudes in the current school setting.

In another study, Flynn & Nolan (2008) examined principal's perceptions and support towards parent involvement. The research questions on principal perceptions was part of a larger study on the nature of teacher-parent relations conducted across elementary, middle and high school levels in public, private and parochial schools. Two of the four research questions that sought to explore principals' perceptions and principals' support were: 1) Are there significant differences between elementary, middle and high school principals' perceptions of parents' involvement with their children's education? and 2) What supports are principals providing teachers and parents to facilitate stronger parent-teacher involvement?

Findings focused on principal support to teachers dealt with technology provided by the school or district, rather than direct supports created by the principal. Findings around principal perceptions suggested that elementary and middle school principals believe that approximately 59% and 53% of their parents, respectively, are actively involved, while high school principals

believe that approximately 39% of their parents are actively involved. Principals cite parents' day-to-day responsibilities as the main reason for their lack of involvement, followed by a lack of understanding of their role and preexisting negative feelings. Principals felt that parents' contributions can be heightened by establishing routines at home, setting high expectations, and monitoring their child's progress. Principals also regarded many teachers at the middle and high school levels as ineffective in fostering school family communications. The study points to the need to increase parent involvement and teacher-parent communications, but more importantly, points to the principal's responsibility as the guiding player in the process – promoting a positive school climate and making parents feel welcome.

While the two studies above focused on the importance of principal's perceptions, the Thornburg (1981) study investigated attitudes of secondary school principals, teachers, parents and students towards parent involvement. Respondents were from a metropolitan school district and two adjoining counties. The 30-item questionnaire was based on perception of "actual" parent involvement and "preferred" amount of involvement. Involvement types included: 1) parents as supporters and learners 2) parents as volunteers and 3) parents as decision makers.

Findings of the Thornburg (1981) study revealed that the school principals reported significantly more parent volunteering and decision making than teachers, parents or students. Principals also preferred parents to be involved as decision makers in schools, and teachers preferred them to volunteer and support. Principals and teachers also preferred significantly more parent volunteering than parents did and principals preferred more decision making than parents and students. Interestingly, teachers felt the need for more change from the actual involvement they perceived as happening, followed by the principals.

Although the study findings may imply that parents don't care, the researchers flip the question around by pointing to the important role of principals and schools to make parents feel more welcome which is also consistent with Flynn & Nolan (2008). These studies highlight that educators need to take forward their positive attitudes and explore successful models in keeping parents involved.

Similarly, a detailed qualitative case study in an elementary school by Gareau & Sawatzky (1995) found certain elements of principal's attitudes in relation to partnerships with parents. In their study which examined parents and schools working together, perceptual data was collected from the principal, counselor, teacher and two parents. The study found that the principal emphasized the importance of equality and the need to share roles with parents and families. Further, principals also talked about forging informal connections with parents by making phone calls and the need to reach a basic level of agreement on conflicts before collaboration can take place between parents and the school. Most parents also felt that administrators play a critical role in building a school wide commitment towards collaborative relationships (p. 470). The study in particular underlines the need to draw the worlds of home and school closer together through pointing out several other themes around characteristics of parent-school collaboration including communication, trust, positive attitudes, personal connections, being equals, power and roles and school wide commitment.

In contrast to the other studies, Brian (1994) reported school administrator attitudes on parent involvement and their views on barriers to involvement. The case studies were conducted across three high schools: a large school with a working class student body; an inner city magnet school and a suburban school. In all schools, data was gathered from principals, parents, teachers and students. Epstein's (1987) typology was used to analyze findings on the different roles of

parent involvement. The survey included questions on the following: basic obligations of parents, basic obligations of schools, parental involvement at the school, parental involvement in learning activities at home and parental involvement in governance and advocacy.

Findings were reported out by schools and also combined across schools. Administrators across the three sites felt parent involvement is important and necessary at the high school level. Contrary to other studies, principal's here suggested that parents fail to be involved for reasons including the school environment and students' level of maturity and independence. They collectively also voiced that parents are needed, but for a different kind of supervision with high school students. All principals felt that parent education is lacking, as many parents do not know how to help their teenagers. All administrators also talked about welcoming parents into buildings.

Principal involvement

In Israel, Goldring & Shapira (1996) explored dynamics of purposeful leadership and parent involvement, two central components of effective schools. Detailed case studies of four principals highlight the principal's work with parents in schools that have a shared and consistent mission. They observed practices including parent-teacher meetings and principal-parent interactions. Findings of the case studies were organized into two models of interaction between principals and parents in light of parents' place in the schools' community. The outcomes were principals' survival (continued employment) and principals' dismissal. In two schools, parents were supporters and partners of the school community and in the two other schools parents were leaders in the school community.

The case studies highlight elements about schools which affect how principals manage school- parent interactions. The study brings to light that principal-parent interactions cannot be

characterized as static situations, but as dynamic processes unique to each school (Goldring & Shapira, 1996). Further, the study concludes that the nature of principal-parent relations seems to be affected by the extent to which parents form the school's community (defined in terms of the school's ideology and value system). This study brings to the fore how principals need to gather support from all stakeholders and embrace a communal partnership.

In addition, Esther Sui-Chu Ho (2009) examined principal leadership and parent involvement in Hong Kong. The study is grounded in Bourdieu's (1991) theory which speaks to the overlapping fields within the social world and how that drives any kind of practice. The theory was used to understand the three case study schools as follows: "how beliefs (*habitus*) of principals define their zone of acceptance (*field*) for parent involvement (*practice*) and how many types of family or school resources (*capital*) are being created" (p. 104).

Findings from the three schools suggested that principal ideologies and beliefs define how parent involvement is shaped. The study categorized principal's leadership or *habitus* in three ways: bureaucratic, utilitarian and communitarian. Principals who held bureaucratic approaches tended to alienate parents and schools and felt that school governance is the responsibility of professionals. The leaders with utilitarian approaches have PTAs and saw more parent involvement. Leaders with communitarian approaches felt that everyone should be united in working towards student progress.

The study also found that working class parents are equally, if not more involved, than affluent or middle-class families. Although the study was conducted in the Asian context, the findings remain consistent with studies of principals' beliefs in the U.S. where some reported parents as partners while some felt that they should not be involved in school governance issues. In this study, principals also collectively conceded that parents are useful and need to be tapped

into. Overall, Esther Sui-Chu Ho (2009) study unearths the importance of principal beliefs and how that shapes parent involvement practices differently.

Auerbach (2009) examined the roles of four Title I elementary school leaders in school-community connections. The study was conducted by drawing from models of role construction, opportunities to lead for school community connections and social justice leadership. Research questions examined how committed urban school administrators “walk the walk” towards meaningful family engagement and what beliefs and strategies aid their process. Findings from the cases suggested that the four principals engage families in meaningful ways including: empowering parents, making connections, fostering parent-teacher connections and advocating for parents. The cases highlighted principals own beliefs and role construction towards these practices. Auerbach (2009) suggested the need to probe further into how parents and staff viewed these leaders, how leaders interacted with individual families to resolve conflicts, and how this was part of the school culture.

Principal support

Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) in a longitudinal study of 320 schools across 27 U.S. states explored the importance of the principal to the development of programs of school, family and community partnerships. The sample was drawn from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The study was guided by Epstein’s (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence and framework of involvement activities. Given the research evidence of the principal’s role in school reform, this study hypothesized that principals would have an influence on the quality of specific reform components, for example, a partnership program.

The study addressed the following research questions: How do principals’ support and turnover relate to the quality of U.S. school partnership programs? How do these variables relate

to other essential program elements of school, family and community partnerships? Five types of variables were hypothesized to have an influence on partnership program quality: background characteristics of schools, principal factors, teamwork variables, external support, funding, and evaluation. Principal support was measured by a single variable which inquired after cooperation the principal provided to the partnership team. Principal turnover referred to the number of principals that led the school over the past 3 years.

Findings suggested that schools rated their principals as providing some, or a lot, of support for partnerships, with a mean rating of 3.8. The action teams at the schools (82%) also indicated that principals supported partnerships. These findings clearly demonstrate that there is a significant and positive effect of principal support on partnership program quality. The study also found that schools experiencing more changes in principals over 3 years were significantly less likely to report support from the principal for partnerships. Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) conclude that principals should be actively included in actions and progress while creating partnership programs.

Simon (2001) conducted a study to explore school, family and community partnerships based on reports from parents of 11,000 high school students and 1,000 high school principals in the NELS:88 database. This study conceptualized partnerships broadly using Epstein's (1995) framework of six types of family and community involvement. The study found that high school outreach programs positively related to family support of teenagers as learners. It was clear that, despite race, socioeconomic status, family structure, gender, or teenager's achievement, when school staff contacted parents, the more likely they are to get involved.

Simon (2001) study also found that principals reported on the positive influence of high school practices regardless of school sector, location and percentage of teenagers receiving free

and reduced lunch or living in single-parent homes. High school principals reported when schools have a formal program to recruit and train volunteers, more parents were likely to volunteer. Although this study did not state explicitly that principals were involved in creating outreach practices and provide that breakdown, we know that they are receptive and agree about the positive benefits of the variety of practices that unfold in their schools. Taken together with the findings from the Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) study, principal support seems to be a key attribute to successful partnerships and creation of outreach efforts to involve parents.

LITERATURE LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

The existing literature on parent involvement provides some insights on how principals support, and involve themselves in practices within schools, but still remains inconsistent. The few studies at hand in this vital sphere have dealt with perceptions, attitudes, behavior, support and some level of involvement. Interpreting meanings from a few existing studies outlined above and placing them within the broader realm of school-family connections, has implications for my study.

From existing studies, there is no doubt that principals believe that parent involvement is an essential component for schools (Brian, 1994; Esther Sui-Chu Ho, 2009). They are receptive to parent involvement and their role in facilitation and leadership of parent involvement in school processes (Richardson, 2009). Studies also show that principals' behavior exerts certain amount of positive influence on parent involvement (Griffith, 2001).

However, the two bodies of literature on principals' support and principals' involvement in parent and family involvement practices have not just been limited, but also evidently passive in probing questions more deeply.

Limitations of principal support studies

Studies show that principals' support is important in creating successful partnership practices. Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) found across 320 U.S. schools belonging to NNPS that principal support had a positive effect on partnership program quality. (Simon, 2004) also found that principal support is a key attribute to high school practices, regardless of school sector, location and percentage of teenagers receiving free and reduced lunch, or living in single-parent homes. One thing that is unclear from the existing literature is the level of support provided by principals. One question probed in the study by Flynn & Nolan (2008) was what kinds of supports principals are providing teachers and parents to facilitate stronger parent-teacher involvement. Findings mostly dealt with technology provided by the school or the district. Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) found across the NNPS schools that principals "hold the key to initiating programs and processes. When principals fail to support partnership efforts, teachers may abandon their focus on partnerships and shift their energies elsewhere" (p. 66). They suggested ways in which principals provide support for partnerships, including setting aside funds and providing time for teachers and parents to meet.

Strand limitation: Research needs to further examine the different types of support provided by principals to every parent and family involvement practice that unfolds within the school. What are the actions taken by the principal to support a practice?

Limitations of principal involvement studies

Studies also show the ways in which principals construct their roles and its impact on the parents and families. Griffith (2001) found that certain roles assumed by principals had an impact on parent involvement. On one hand, he found that the role of reaching out mattered more

to minority populations, making them feel more welcome. In contrast, he also found a negative effect of an administrative role on the broader population who in turn attended more PTAs. Gareau & Sawatzky (1995) also found that principal beliefs shaped the way they viewed involvement. In this study a strong equality-minded principal wanted to share roles with parents. The study found that the principal made informal phone calls and wanted to reach agreements on conflicts. Esther Sui-Chu Ho (2009) also found that principals' ideologies and beliefs define involvement practices. Auerbach (2009) also found that principals' role construction and beliefs define the way they look at parent involvement practices. Findings suggested that principals' engagement with families were shaped by their beliefs. Interestingly, the study highlighted how this looks in practice: by taking on proactive roles; having strong beliefs around involvement or knowing the community. They principals also draw from existing models of parent involvement and remain open to stakeholder needs. But as Auerbach (2009) point out, "once administrators reach out and show their interest in and commitment to helping families, parents can be your greatest allies" (p. 28).

Strand limitation: Research needs to be sensitive to how principals engage in a range of practices to foster parent and family involvement based on their own beliefs and experiences and thereby, provide support.

Connecting to the broader discourse

We can look more broadly at the implications for this study by revisiting certain perspectives from the broad parent involvement literature. The few existing studies that have examined the principals in the parent involvement literature seems rather detached from some of the underlying complexities that have been persistently studied. It is these intricacies that clearly give shape to meaningful involvement and therefore, cannot be put aside.

The literature underscores the importance of parental role construction, efficacy and beliefs, life context, and personal experiences as motivators of parent involvement across various practices (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Mapp, 2002; Shumow & Lomax, 2002; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Also, we know that principals' role construction and beliefs define ways in which they look at and shape the parent involvement practices (Auerbach, 2009).

Strand limitation: Research needs to be at least sensitive to the complex factors shaping various parent involvement practices that are created and supported by principals like beliefs and experiences.

Education research in India and Tamil Nadu

The key organizations and Universities that have engaged in quality education research in India includes: 1) National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT); 2) Educational Research and Innovations Committee (ERIC); 3) The National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA); 4) The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR); 5) State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and the 6) Centre for Advanced Studies in Education (CASE), University of Baroda.

The national journals published by some of these organizations served as my starting point for my literature review in India. The State Department of Education in Tamil Nadu and other private or professional organizations carrying out educational research in Tamil Nadu served as a source for my literature review at the state level.

The three national journals of education that I consulted include: 1) Indian Educational Review (NCERT); 2) Journal of Indian Education (NCERT) and 3) Journal of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). Since these journals are not available online or through the UW library system, I requested the table of contents through the inter-library service and analyzed them using the same keywords utilized for the broader literature review. From the hundreds of article titles reviewed in the table of contents post 1975, I found only three studies on some form of parent involvement. Astonishingly, I did not find a single study on headmasters' or headmistresses' actions in fostering parent and family involvement in government schools in India or Tamil Nadu. The few studies I found are tabulated below (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

Indian journals reviewed for studies related to headmaster leadership and parent involvement

Journal	Period	Studies Found
Indian Educational Review (NCERT)	All journals between 1966 - 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude of Rural Parents towards Certain Aspects of Child-Rearing Practices (July 1974) • Family Environment and Academic Achievement of Adolescent Children of Working and Non-Working Mothers (July 2005)
Journal of Indian Education (NCERT)	All journals between 1975 - 2006	None
Journal of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA)	All journals between 1977 - 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Teacher Associations: An Innovative Methodology for change: Grassroots View from Madhya Pradesh (July 2008)

In addition, I also reviewed the NCERT survey of Research in Education series that covers research abstracts from journals, doctoral dissertations and research projects carried out by professionals in the field of education. The Sixth Survey of Educational Research (1993-2000) covers the abstracts from these areas: Philosophy of Education; Teacher and Teaching; Language Teaching Strategies; Science Education; Physical Education; Health Education; Sports Science Vocational Education; Educational Technology; Distance Education; Open Learning; Inclusive Education; Women's Studies in Education; Guidance and Counseling; Population Education Psychological dimensions of Educational Research in India; Economics of Education: Developments in the Recent Years; Research on Curriculum and Teaching: Mathematics Education of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Minorities; History of Education Management of Elementary Education; Values Education; Sociology of Education

None of these categories touched upon educational administration or, more specifically, any research covering educational administration in secondary schools or parent and family involvement. From the Fifth Survey of Educational Research (1988- 1992), the chapter most relevant to my research was the one on Secondary Education. The only two abstracts that I found which matched secondary school leadership were: a study of the characteristics of effective leadership behavior of secondary school principals (p. 1196) and a study of models of efficient and inefficient administration and management at the secondary school level in Pune district (p.1198).

The above-mentioned studies did not discuss actions of headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent and family involvement in public schools (government schools). Most of the studies dealt with private institutions or a mix of private and public. The only useful information from these abstracts was the methods section, which illuminated how students in India design

their studies. Because these abstracts referenced no prior literature I could not backtrack and take a look at their sources. Having said this, I am aware that most of the research they would have relied on or referenced is NUEPA- and NCERT-led research studies and books, as they are the most well-known.

From the fourth survey of educational research (1983-1988), I examined the abstracts from Research in Teacher Education and Research in Educational Management. Again, there was nothing relevant or directly useful to my work in looking at headmasters in the state of Tamil Nadu, India.

The other problem I ran into while looking at these abstracts in the NCERT volumes was the overlap in studies across themes. Although sub-divisions were clearly articulated, the research abstracts under each do not always apply to that sub-division. For example, a study on the impact of commission reports was placed under the educational history section. But the findings that were revealed suggested a different placement, possibly embedded in the elementary education and secondary education sub-divisions. Given that, I had to sift through most sections to make sure I did not overlook any research relevant to my work. But this gave me a clear indication on the different ways the Indian educational system actually defines terms, including educational administration and sociology of education for example, and the research that encompasses each of them.

Research on educational administration covers subjects including educational planning and financing, educational problems and reforms, educational supervision, organizational climate, educational acts and regulations, and educational infrastructure. Therefore, the research abstracts were not solely based on different aspects of educational administration, but offshoots of effects on educational administration across other educational research areas.

In the State of Tamil Nadu, the only documentation of ongoing research activities appears on the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) website. Therefore, the studies carried out by the research wing of SSA are all evaluation studies of the SSA program and not on other aspects of public education in the state. The Directorate of Teacher Education Research and Training (DTERT) carry out research studies periodically. But abstracts of the same are not available online. I contacted the DTERT and, from those discussions, it is clear that the only research they use are NUEPA and NCERT findings, which may or may not be applicable to the state of Tamil Nadu. All the research abstracts I examined, both the NCERT published abstracts in the research series and local state research abstracts, merely state the obvious, with no interpretation whatsoever. Qualitative studies with a small sample size and huge generalizations were common.

Implications for proposed research study

The dearth of studies that examine the principal's actions by way of initiating and supporting parent and family involvement practices is clear, both from the literature review conducted in the U.S and from journals reviewed in India. New research is needed around the complex layers underlying the principal-initiated and -supported practices. Here, it is not the magnitude of the practice that is important, but how the principal initiates and supports each practice that unfolds within the school, based on factors including parents' need (influenced by factors like parents' beliefs and life experiences) and principals' own beliefs or other unique features driven by the school context. Therefore, this study attempted to fill this gap in research in the U.S. and in India by examining the actions of headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent and family involvement and the ways they create or support practices within the schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative multi-case study design

This study utilized a qualitative multi-case design approach to examine the leadership actions of government secondary school heads' to foster parent involvement. A qualitative design approach was selected to carry out this study as it “permits inquiry into selected issues in great depth, with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance” (Patton 2002, p. 227). In addition, the study presents a problem or issue to be explored; requires a detailed understanding of the problem; requires understanding contexts or settings in which study participants address a problem or issue; and provides a holistic view of a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Extant studies that have examined the support or involvement of the principal in fostering parent involvement have mostly relied on survey data or questionnaires. This methodological approach has limited the studies' ability to deeply explore the complexities that surround actions of principals in fostering parent and family involvement. Yin (2009) notes that surveys can try to account for phenomenon and context, but their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited (p. 18). Given the need to investigate the context and complex factors that shape actions around each parent or family involvement practice, only a detailed qualitative approach is sufficient to capture the phenomenon in its entirety.

For this purpose, a cross-case or multiple-case design is the most appropriate approach as the questions specifically focus on an “in-depth description of some social phenomenon” (Yin 2009, p. 4). Further, Yin (2009) notes: “Even if you can do a two-case case study, your chances of doing a good case study will be better than using a single-case study design. The analytic

benefits from having two or more cases may be substantial” (p. 60 & 61). Given this, the study examined four cases.

The cross-case analysis in this study allowed for examination of themes and patterns. Patton (2002) notes that the core meanings found through content analysis are the themes and patterns and one can use this approach to make sense of the data captured by interview transcripts and other documents (p. 452).

Study participants

The target population in the study was the headmasters or headmistresses from the higher secondary schools across one urban and two sub-urban districts in Tamil Nadu. The total number of higher secondary schools across the three districts is approximately 60 schools. The sample for the research study was drawn from these districts.

The units of analysis for the cross-case research are the actions of the headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent involvement. Patton (2002) notes that the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say at the end of the study (p. 229). In this study, the focus is on documenting the actions of the headmasters and headmistresses in fostering parent and family involvement in the school. Further, Yin (2009) also raises an important point about the choice of the unit of analysis and being flexible. “When you do arrive at a definition of a unit of analysis, do not consider closure permanent. Your choice of the unit of analysis, as with other facets of your research design, can be revisited as a result of discoveries during your data collection” (p. 30).

In this study, four headmasters or headmistresses were drawn from the sample of government secondary schools across the three districts. Further, defining the boundaries of the case will help distinguish the data collection for the case and the context surrounding the case.

Sampling procedures

Strategies for choosing the cases for the study and resulting sampling techniques were informed by ideas from Creswell (2007). The central approach is to “select cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process or event to portray,” an approach referred to as “purposeful maximal sampling.” Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting the information-rich cases whose explanation will illuminate the questions under study. Purposeful sampling is sometimes called purposive or judgment sampling (Patton 2002, p. 230).

Furthermore, Patton (2002) also underlines that cases should be selected because they are illuminative and also offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest (p. 40). For this purpose, snowball sampling will also be used. “This is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases. The process begins by asking well-informed people: “Who knows a lot about...? Whom should I talk to.....? By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases. In most systems, a few names are mentioned repeatedly. Those people recommended as valuable by a number of different informants, take on special importance” (Patton 2002, p. 237)

The mix of purposeful sampling based on certain criteria, along with the use of snowball sampling, allowed for identifying a group of cases for the study. Further, the literature also suggests that few rules govern the size of one’s sample. “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have creditability, and what can be done with the available time and resources” (Patton, 2002).

For this study, the criteria used to choose the four cases were based on some general characteristics of the schools and headmasters and headmistresses (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

Case selection characteristics

Category	Characteristics
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High performing schools (based on the overall pass percentage of class 10 or class 12 board examination results) • Parent and family involvement practices initiated by the school • A working Parent Teachers Association • Overall school reputation • School demographics (urban/suburban or semi-urban)
Headmasters or Headmistresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years of experience • Stability in current position (2-5 years) • Reputation of headmaster or headmistress • Initiatives taken by the headmaster or headmistress in fostering parent and family connections

Based on the above characteristics of schools and headmasters or headmistresses, the criteria that were used for finding the four cases to study in Tamil Nadu, India, also depended on one or a combination of these:

- 1) Documents on the state education department website or procured from state education department officials that list the following: a) overall pass percentage of the government secondary schools across the three sample districts in Tamil Nadu; b) exemplary state headmasters or headmistresses (as based on state awards); c) government secondary schools that have working Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs); d) manuals publicly available on the state education department website that highlight the work of specific

government secondary school headmasters or headmistresses relevant to the selection of cases for this study.

- 2) Informal interviews with state administrators from the three districts in the study to find recommendations about headmaster or headmistresses who engage in involving parents effectively.

The combination of reviewing documents and seeking recommendations from administrators from the education department helped me produce a list of promising cases to investigate. Based on the sorted results, four cases were selected to study in Tamil Nadu. Further, as Patton notes, “the reasons for site selections or the case sampling need to be carefully articulated and made explicit. The sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced. This holds true for sampling strategy and sampling size” (Patton 2002, p. 242).

Data Collection

Stake (1995) emphasizes that “a qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of getting acquainted with things” (p. 49 & 50). Despite this, many qualitative research texts underscore the need to have a detailed plan for data gathering. In this sense, Stake (1995) notes some essential components of a data-gathering plan as: “definition of a case, list of research questions, identification of helpers, data sources, allocation of time, expenses, intended reporting” (p. 51). Although this list is not exhaustive, the researcher needs to adapt and add necessary pieces to this data-gathering plan to carry forward the case study.

For this purpose, I created a sample data collection procedure chart (see Table 6) which documents information about the data source, participants, data content, time to complete data collection and documentation mode. In addition, the projected research timeline (see Appendix N) and projected research expenditure (see Appendix O) were created as many researchers note the importance of having a plan to document nuances in data gathering. More importantly, as the study was conducted internationally and personal funds were being utilized, a timeline and expenditure chart was necessary. Yin (2009) also notes among some major tasks for collecting data are having a clear schedule of data collection activities, plan for calling for any assistance, unanticipated events, mood and motivations of a case study researcher (p. 85).

Data sources and strategies

Yin (2009) mentions a list of common sources of evidence in doing case studies as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. In the discussion, Yin (2009) also brings to the fore that “no single source has

a complete advantage over all the others. The various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” (Yin 2009, p 101).

The study used detailed and focused interviews, oral questionnaires and context observations as the primary data collection sources to answer the research questions and explore the cases.

Certain common strategies were employed throughout the data gathering and analysis phase for collecting, organizing data, storing data and protecting the data. All interviews case studies were digitally recorded and transcribed after obtaining necessary oral consents from study participants.

Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) bring in two different perspectives to be aware of in audio-taping interviews. Yin (2009) notes that audio-taping is a matter of personal preference but also provide an accurate rendition of interviews than any other method. Yin (2009) notes recording devices should not be used when an interviewee refuses permission or appears uncomfortable, when there is no specific plan for transcribing or systematically listening to contents, when the investigator is clumsy enough with taping devices that the recording creates distractions during the interview, and when the investigator thinks that the recording device is a substitute for listening closely throughout the course of the interview (p. 109). On the other hand, Stake (1995) notes that audio-taping is valuable for catching the exact words used, but the cost in making transcripts and the annoyance for both respondent and researcher argue strongly against it (p. 56). Further, Stake (1995) notes that some researchers find they can think better, reflecting, probing, if they have a recorder going on. In this respect, Stake (1995) brings an important point about developing skills in keeping shorthand notes and counting on member checks to get the meanings straight (p. 56).

Stake (1995) notes the need for researchers to have a data storage system. Some of the components of the data storage system are file folders identifying issues, cases, sites, and persons. For the study, I maintained detailed folders for each case study based on the data sources (interviews, questionnaires, field notes). All interview transcripts, questionnaires and other documents gathered were stored in cabinets or on the password protected laptop.

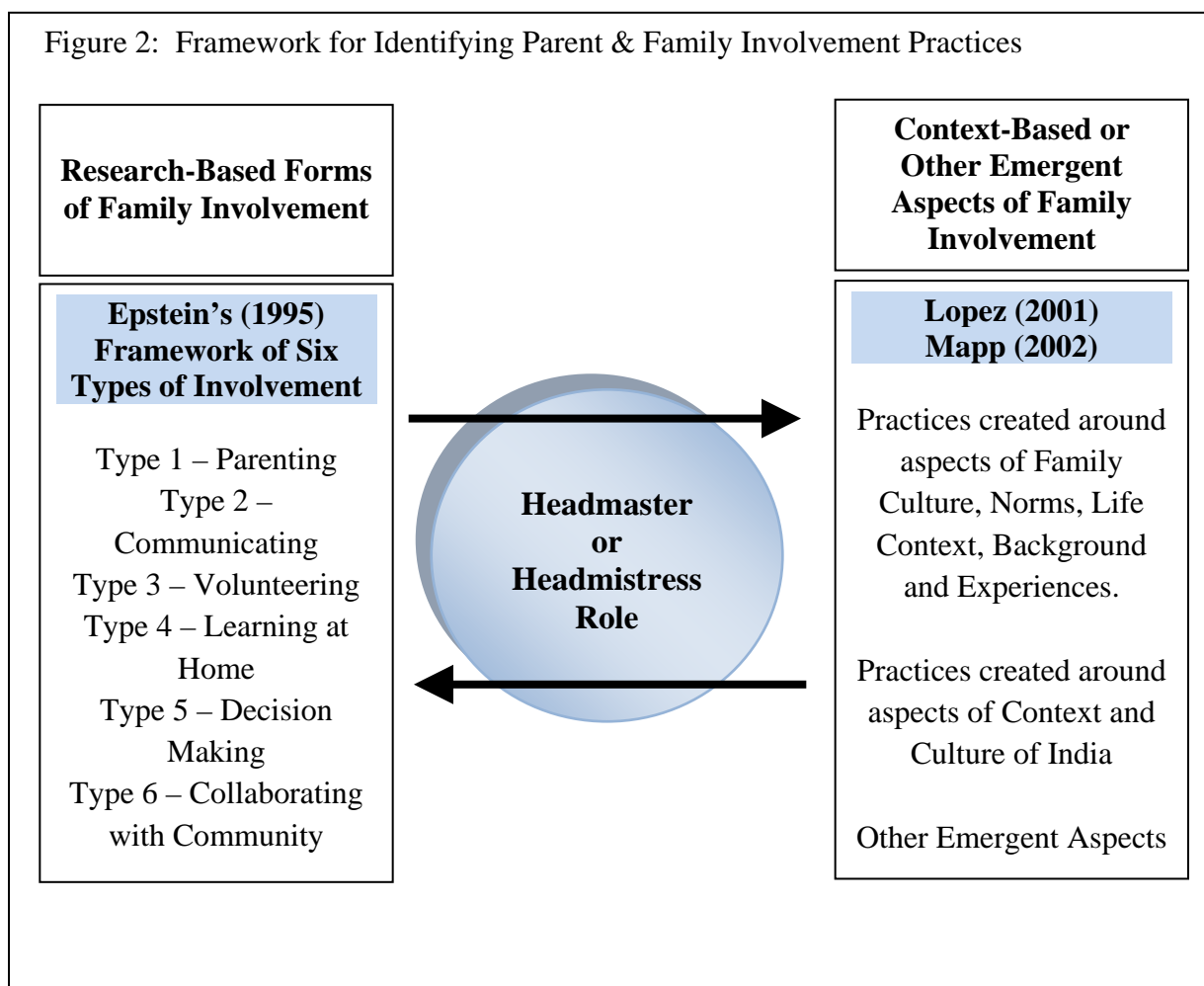
Further, Stake (1995) also notes the use of a personal diary or log as a calendar and to record telephone numbers. For the study, a calendar was maintained to schedule interviews and a dairy was kept to record important telephone numbers and addresses.

Patton (2002) notes about the timing of collecting data and how to prepare oneself to choose a time period that closely matches the criterion for usefulness that one sets for the study (p. 229). For example, collecting data at the beginning of each of the three terms in the school academic calendar in India was not be the best decision as educators will be just be preparing to get started. Again, Indian festival times may not be a typical period when researchers set out for data collection as schools may provide a longer break. In Tamil Nadu, *Diwali* (the festival of lights) and Pongal (the harvest festival) take place in November and January respectively. The breaks schools provide around these festivals are not too long and did not interrupt the data collection.

For some of these aforementioned purposes, the best time for collecting data was between the academic terms. Given the school system in Tamil Nadu, the most ideal time to collect data for this study was after the quarterly term examinations and break (October to early December) or after the half yearly term examinations and break (January to early March). I did not do any follow-up interviews from the U.S.

Framework

The categories from the two frameworks below were sensitizing elements for this study data collection. The text below each figure describes the categories that govern these frameworks.



This qualitative study sought to investigate the practices of government secondary school headmasters in fostering parent and family involvement practices in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. A qualitative multi-case design approach was used to investigate the complex factors that shaped the parent involvement practices that were initiated by the headmasters or

headmistresses. Specifically, the study examined how the headmasters or headmistresses initiated or supported family involvement practices.

Framework 1: Identifying Practices

Using the first framework (Figure 2, above), the study used two lenses as conceptual dividers to identify a range of practices within the study context. Epstein's (1995) framework of the six major types of parent involvement, considered one of the most comprehensive in the field, outlines six dimensions of involvement and a range of sample practices. The inventory of sample practices across the six areas as outlined in Epstein (2002) served as a starting point to focus on some of the practices carried out at the school. I also had the opportunity to speak with Joyce Epstein and learned that the surveys for High School and Family Partnerships published by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) can also be adapted for qualitative interviews. I also sought permission to adapt questions from the NNPS surveys for qualitative interviews (see Appendix M).

The study also sought to identify any practices around non-traditional aspects of family involvement (Lopez, 2001 & Mapp, 2002) and context-based practices situated around the context and culture of Tamil Nadu and India. Further, the study remained open to emergent aspects that could inform parent involvement practices in the school. This included the context of the study, a need for certain types of involvement initiatives, a headmaster's own beliefs, or other emergent categories that shaped the headmaster's practices. An openness to emerging categories honored the "uniqueness and complexity of the case, and its embeddedness and interaction within its contexts" (Stake, 1995).

The two conceptual dividers within this framework allowed for the exploration of several practices initiated and supported by school headmasters and headmistresses, both from the

traditional and widely researched perspective (Epstein, 1995) and from the non-traditional, context-based and emergent aspects of family involvement.

Framework 2: Identifying Actions Supporting Practices

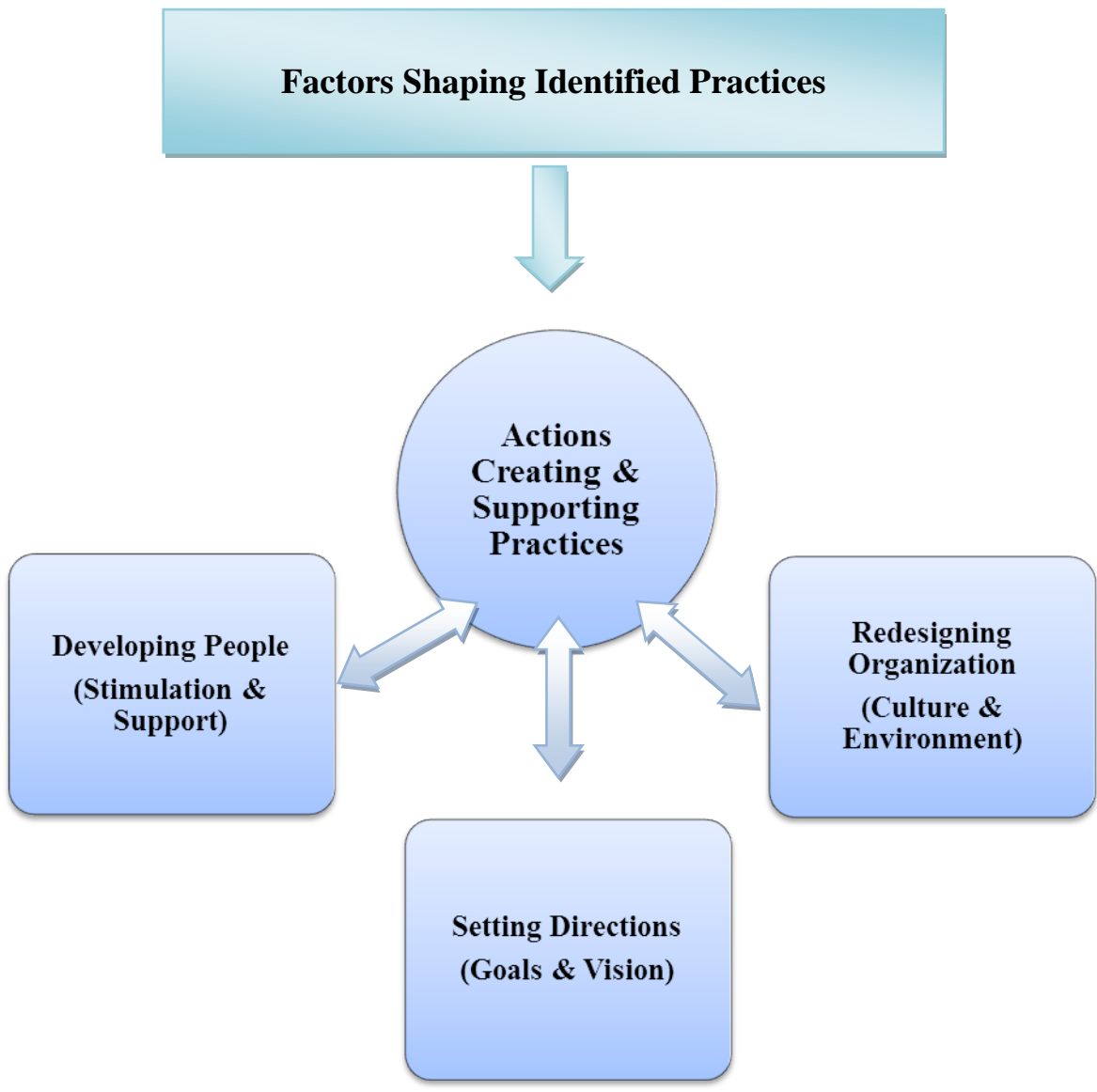
Once the set of practices were identified, the second framework helped towards a deeper understanding about the practice and the actions of school heads in supporting them. First, loose descriptive categories from literature helped clarify why each of the identified practices were initiated in the first place and factors that give shape to it.

Following this, specific actions of the headmaster or headmistress in supporting each parent or family involvement practice were examined. For this, the framework again employed loosely defined descriptive categories (Shields, 1998) drawn from literature (see Figure 3, below) to understand the specific leadership actions that surrounded practices initiated and supported by these heads.

For example, how does the school head support each parent involvement practice as based on Leithwood's (1996) model with three basic categories of leadership practices that include: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning organization. Certain aspects from these categories, including using goals to motivate people, effective communication, and providing support for individual needs, were sensitizing elements and provided a starting point for collecting data around the leadership actions that surrounds each parent involvement practice.

While these frameworks were helpful, it will be clear from the subsequent chapters that the leaders' actions to foster parent involvement in these schools went beyond these sensitizing elements.

Figure 3: Framework for Exploring Headmaster or Headmistress Actions in Supporting Parent Involvement Practices



Categories for principal leadership actions drawn from Leithwood (1996) as cited in Leithwood, K., K.S. Seashore Louis, S. Anderson, and K. Wahlstrom (2004), "Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning", The Wallace Foundation.

Headmaster or Headmistress Interviews

Detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with the school headmasters or headmistresses, the cases in this qualitative research study. The headmasters and headmistresses and the schools were chosen based on the criteria provided in the sampling procedures section above.

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols were approved and the cases were chosen, I contacted and requested the headmasters and headmistresses to participate in the study. The details about IRB protocol submission at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and other access information are also detailed towards the end of this chapter.

Stake (1995) notes that the two principal uses of a case study are to obtain descriptions and interpretations of others. “Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities (p. 64). Also, Yin (2009), in a discussion about in-depth interviews, also says that the interviewer can ask the respondent about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events. “In some situations, you may even ask the interviewee to propose her or his own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. The interview may therefore take place over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting. The interviewee also can suggest other persons for you to interview, as well as other sources of evidence” (p. 107).

In this study, 10 to 12 detailed interviews were conducted with the headmasters and headmistresses from each school. The interviews were conducted in Tamil, the regional language of Tamil Nadu, and in English. In the end, all interviews were transcribed in English. Each interview lasted for at least one hour and were digitally audio recorded.

The very first interview was an introductory interview. The study was described, and initial questions were asked about their job as a school headmaster or headmistress, past experiences, and beliefs about involving parents and families (see Appendix E). Further, an oral school demographics questionnaire was administered to gather information about the school, students, teachers and parents (see Appendix F).

The second interview with the headmaster or headmistress addressed their school and parent involvement practices. For this purpose, an oral questionnaire with a practices inventory across the six types of family involvement was administered (Epstein et al., 2002). This inventory was chosen because it is well known in the field and provides a comprehensive list of practices to probe around (see Appendix G). The required permission to use an adapted version of this inventory was obtained (see Appendix M). For the purposes of this study, questions around the first five involvement types only were asked. They include: 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, and 5) decision making. The questions on collaborating with community will be excluded as it was outside the study focus. Additionally, open-ended questions were asked to identify practices around non-traditional, context-based practices situated around the context and culture of Tamil Nadu, India and the interviews remained open to other emergent practices.

This interview with questions on the widely researched practices of parent involvement (Epstein, 1995) and non-traditional, context-based and emergent aspects of involvement helped identify, for further probing, several practices that take place at the school.

Based on the identified practices at the school, all subsequent in-depth interviews with headmasters and headmistresses probed into their actions in initiating and supporting those practices (see Appendix H). The protocol was developed based on the literature, but allowed for

sufficient space for probes and deep explorations around their individual actions. The questions were based on the broad categories of principal leadership practices drawn from Leithwood et al. (1999). These include: 1) setting directions, 2) developing people, and 3) redesigning the organization. These categories only functioned as sensitizing elements and not as an analytic framework for the study.

I asked questions from each of these categories for every parent and family involvement practice identified as a result of the first and second interview with the headmaster and headmistress. For example, a headmaster identified contacting parents of students with academic difficulties as practice done at the school. In the subsequent interviews, I asked the headmaster how the practice was created, why the practice was created, and about specific actions taken by him to support the practice at school.

Every practice was probed deeply in this manner by conducting several interviews. Stake (1995) notes that the qualitative interviewer should arrive with a short list of issue-oriented questions, possibly handing the respondent a copy, indicating there is concern about completing an agenda. “The purpose for the most part is not to get simple yes and no answers, but description of an episode, a linkage, an explanation. Formulating the questions and anticipating probes that evoke good responses is a special art (Stake 1995, p.65). Further, Stake (1995) also notes, “a qualitative case study seldom proceeds as a survey with the same questions asked of each respondent; rather, each interviewee is expected to have had unique experiences, special stories to tell” (p. 65). As a qualitative researcher, I allowed for the stories and experiences to emerge from each case and, in doing so, was sensitive to all voices relevant to my case.

Other strategies I followed before every interview are trying out questions in initial form, at least in “mental rehearsal” (Stake, 1995). This is done, as Stake (1995) notes, to give full

attention during the interview. “During the actual exchange, the interviewer needs most to listen, maybe take a few or many notes, as fits the occasion, but to stay in control of the data gathering, thinking about what form the account will take in writing. Main questions should be kept in mind, probes carefully created, assuring that what was said was said, or asking if they meant what clearly was not meant (p 65 & 66).

Before and after every interview, I completed a researcher interview description form (see Appendix C). This protocol recorded information about the interview location, time, audio-file numbers and place for other comments. In addition, I also completed a researcher field notes form after every field visit (see Appendix D). This field notes form offered some guiding questions, but was adapted to capture my reflections after every field visit. The questions in this form enabled me to be reflective after each interview, recording challenges, surprises and changes that I would need to make. Stake (1995) notes that keeping the record of the interview is part of artistry. “Within a few hours of the interview, the researcher should prepare a written facsimile; with key ideas and episodes captured. Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important; it is what they mean that is important (p. 66).

For this purpose, I ensured ample time after the interview to record my field notes. Further, I also kept in mind certain challenges in interviewing. Yin (2009) notes that one must cater to the interviewee’s schedule and availability and not one’s own. “The nature of the interview is much more open-ended, and an interviewee may not necessarily cooperate fully in sticking to your line of questions” (Yin 2009, p. 85). Patton (2002) also notes that interview data limitations could possibly include distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness, since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional

state of the interviewee at the time of the interview (p.306). These things were kept in mind while conducting interviews.

Teacher Interviews

Focused semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of teachers from each site. The teacher interviews took place in the school and were digitally audio recorded. The teachers were chosen based on snowball sampling. Patton (2002) notes that this approach is used by researchers for locating information-rich key informants. “The process begins by asking well-informed people: Who knows a lot about...? Whom should I talk to.....? By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information rich cases. In most systems, few names are mentioned repeatedly. Those people recommended as valuable by a number of different informants, take on special importance” (p. 237).

In this study, as the headmasters or headmistresses were describing various parent involvement practices, several teachers’ names came up. These were the teachers who were involved in the practices themselves. The focused interviews with them probed their views on the headmaster’s or headmistress’s actions in fostering and supporting parent involvement practices at the school (see Appendix I). Yin (2009) notes that focused interviews happen for a short period of time and interviews remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner. “A major purpose of such an interview might simply be to corroborate certain facts that you already think have been established, but not to ask about other topics of a broader, open-ended nature” (p. 107). In this study, these interviews were used to gain additional information about the headmaster or headmistresses actions.

Yin (2009) also cautions to give careful consideration to the way questions are worded. “Questions must be carefully worded, so that you appear genuinely naïve about the topic and allow the interviewee to provide a fresh commentary about it. In contrast, if you ask leading questions, the corroboratory purpose of the interview will not have been served” (p. 107). Yin (2009) also notes to be wary of people corroborating in a conspiring way. In this situation, the recommendation is to probe along more. If respondents fail to comment, noting it down and citing in the report that they declined to comment, like all good journalistic accounts, is also done in the case study (p. 108).

Parent or Family Interviews

Focused semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a sample of parents from each site. The parent interviews took place in the school and were digitally audio recorded. The parents were also chosen based on snowball sampling. In the study, the headmaster or headmistresses or the teachers interviewed talked about parents who are in practices at the school. Those parents were asked about the leadership and support provided by the headmaster or headmistress in involving them (see Appendix J).

Documents

Documents relevant to the case study were collected during the study. The documents related to the case study included the school’s plans or admission registers with parent details. These were collected to triangulate the data but are not included in the appendix. Yin (2009) recommends building an annotated bibliography of these documents and cross-referencing it to specific interviews if pertinent (p.120). Although I did not use the documents for cross-referencing to specific interviews, they were useful for understanding practices further.

Yin (2009) also notes the importance of documents in case studies for corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources. Yin (2009) notes documents are useful in these ways: 1) verifying correct spellings and titles or names of organizations that have been mentioned in an interview, 2) providing other specific details to corroborate information from other sources, and 3) making inferences from documents. (p. 103). Some challenges mentioned in the literature about documents and records include incomplete and inaccurate information. Despite this, Patton (2002) also notes that the documents provide a behind-the-scenes look at the program that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents (p. 306 & 307).

Study Context Information

Stake (1995) notes the importance of the physical location and context in a case study. “To develop vicarious experiences for the reader, to give them a sense of being there, the physical situation should be well described. The entryways, the rooms, the landscape, the hallways, its place on the map, its décor. There should be some balance between the uniqueness and the ordinariness of the place. The physical space is fundamental to meanings for most researchers and most readers (p.63).

For this study, there was no formal context observation form. The description of the physical setting was included into the field notes form itself. Yin (2009) notes that less formally direct observations might be made throughout a field visit, including those occasions during which other evidence, such as that from interviews, is being collected (p.109). Some of these could include: conditions of buildings or work spaces that will indicate something about the climate of an organization; similarly, the location or the furnishings of an interviewee’s office

may be one indicator of the status of the interviewee (p. 109). The informal observations were useful in writing up the case studies.

Field Notes

Yin (2009) notes the importance of one's own notes in case study research. "These notes take variety of forms. The notes may be a result of your interviews, observations, or document analysis. The notes maybe handwritten, typed, on audiotapes, or in word-processing or other electronic files, and they may be assembled in the form of a diary, on index cards, or in some less organized fashion" (p. 120).

For this study, a researcher field notes form was developed (see Appendix D). This protocol was used after every field visit to record detailed notes. Patton (2002) notes that field notes should record the researcher's own feelings, reactions to the experiences, and reflections about the personal meaning and significance of what has been observed. For this purpose, the field notes form acts as a self-interview questionnaire, with reflective questions.

As most qualitative inquirers note, creativity and integrity in field work is the pulse of qualitative work. Patton (2002) writes that there is no checklist that can be relied on to guide all aspects of fieldwork. Creative fieldwork means using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening. Creative insights also result from being directly involved in the setting being studied (p. 302).

Further, Glaser and Strauss (1967) write powerfully about the sense of "adventure" in data collection. The researcher should not overlook the significance of any alternative forms of qualitative data. The authors encourage researchers to be creative in the field and to use varying qualitative materials besides interviews and observations. The reference to jokes, deeds and even city plans (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) illustrate the kind of ingenuity in qualitative fieldwork they

promote. Therefore, constantly being alive in data and finding meanings guided fieldwork in this study.

Institutional Review Board and Permissions

The process of obtaining a university IRB approval for conducting research overseas was fairly straightforward. I attended the IRB workshops for international researchers and asked the campus IRB office specific questions pertaining to my own research. This meeting was useful as it provided details on specific letters that needed to be gathered from the School Education Department, Tamil Nadu, India, even before submitting protocols. This helped me begin thinking about the IRB protocols in advance and prepare that for submission after the preliminary examination. See Appendix L for the approved notice of action from IRB.

Yin (2009) discusses the need for care and sensitivity in conducting one's case study. Yin says that care involves gaining informed consent, protecting participants, protecting privacy and taking other special precautions as needed (p. 73). "Case studies present a more challenging situation than when using other research methods because interactions are not necessarily as structured as with other methods" (Yin 2009, p. 74). For this purpose, the meetings with the campus IRB office provided details about the information needed to guarantee that participant privacy will be protected. In addition, interviewees were asked for oral consents, rather than signed consents, because the residents of Tamil Nadu usually feel threatened by demands to sign a piece of paper. See Appendix K for a sample consent form approved by IRB.

Further, Stake (1995) notes that "in requests to districts, school, and teachers, the nature of the case study, the sponsor, the activity intended, the primary issues, the time span, and burden to the parties should be made known explicitly" (p.57). The introductory letters to the School Education Department after the IRB approval and the sites included this information.

Researcher's Relationship to the Topic

Stake (1995) notes that qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studied in depth. Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation. (p. 135). In addition, Stake (1995) also talks about making role choices, including how much to participate personally, and how much to pose as an expert, among others. The important takeaway is that “the role should be an ethical choice, an honest choice” (p.103).

Here, I wish to mention the relevance of my former career as a journalist. Some of my most valuable life lessons resulted from the voices of the underprivileged children during my reporting as a journalist in the Southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. They led to my end as a journalist and to my beginning in studying Education at the graduate level. I constantly reflected on my background, past experiences and perspectives while thinking through the various stages of this study. As Stake (1995) writes, research is not just the domain of scientists; it is the domain of all craftspersons and artists as well, all who would just study and interpret.

Further, “each researcher’s style and curiosity will be unique in some ways. Some of the uniqueness is deliberate. The researcher will choose how personal to be, how qualitative to be, what roles to play” (Stake 1995, p. 135). During the data gathering phase, I needed to be constantly aware of my past as a journalist and not allow for any biases to seep in. In addition, the way the respondents perceive me due to my prior role as a journalist could have had an impact on data collection. Fortunately, this did not happen as the administrators and teachers in the selected case sites had not interacted with me during my career as a journalist.

TABLE 6

Sample data collection procedure (for one site)

Data Source	Participants	Data Content	Time & Mode
Interview (Oral Questionnaire)	Headmaster or headmistress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School demographics • Initial questions about their job as a school head, past experiences, and beliefs about involving parents and families. 	<p>Each interview is at least one hour.</p> <p>Digitally audio recorded</p>
Interview (Oral Questionnaire)	Headmaster or Headmistress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and parent involvement practices inventory. 	<p>Each interview is at least one hour</p> <p>Digitally audio recorded</p>
In-depth Semi- Structured Interviews	Headmaster or Headmistress	<p>Questions regarding the headmaster or headmistresses beliefs about fostering parent and family involvement :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any follow up questions on the first interview about their beliefs in involving parents and families <p>Questions regarding the creation of each parent and family involvement practice at the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why the practice was created? • How was the practice created? <p>Questions regarding actions/support for each parent and family involvement practice at the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing people • Setting directions • Redesigning organization • Other support areas 	<p>Each interview is at least one hour.</p> <p>10-12 in-depth interviews will be conducted, total of 10-12 hours.</p> <p>Digitally audio recorded</p>

Focused Semi-Structured Interviews	Teachers	Questions regarding the headmaster or headmistresses actions/support to parent and family involvement practices at the school.	Each interview is at least 30 minutes. 5 interviews will be conducted, total of 2.5 hours. Digitally audio recorded
Focused Semi-Structured Interviews	Parents or Families	Questions regarding the headmaster or headmistresses actions/support to parent and family involvement practices at the school.	Each interview is at least 30 minutes. 5 interviews will be conducted, total of 2.5 hours. Digitally audio recorded
Documents	Headmaster or Headmistress	Documents supporting parent and family involvement practices	As needed
Field Notes	Researcher	Field notes after every interview. Field notes form will be used. Notes on the interview conducted, any hunches, surprises, challenges will be recorded in detail.	Written or digitally audio recorded field notes after interviews or focus groups
Context Information	Researcher	No formal protocol will be used. The idea is to capture some details about the physical situation (headmaster or headmistresses room, school building among others).	As needed

Data Analysis

Direct Interpretation and Coding

Stake (1995) notes that there is no particular moment when the data analysis begins. “Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (p.71). Further, highlighting that we may set aside a few weeks for analysis, Stake notes that “even for the quantitative researcher, analysis should not be seen as separate from everlasting efforts to make sense of things (p. 72).

For this study, analysis was approached in two ways. First, transcriptions of interviews and memoing was done as the data gathering was in progress. Transcripts were coded line by line. “Qualitative study capitalizes on the ordinary ways of making sense. There is much art and much intuitive processing to the search for meaning” (Stake 1995, p.72).

Also, drawing from Glaser (1998), I wrote several memos as I listened to the interview data and reviewed transcripts. Memoing as a tool helps researchers reflect as the study is in progress. In most of his Grounded Theory texts Glaser (1998) notes that memoing does not follow any rules. It could be a few words to a few paragraphs. This will also help me constantly think about my own data, keeping the case and the key issues in focus (Stake 1995, p. 84).

Qualitative Data Analysis Software

NVivo9 was explored for the initial analysis of transcriptions of interviews and field notes. NVivo9 is a qualitative data analysis software program, developed by QSR International, which allows researchers to code and sort qualitative data to identify patterns and make inferences (Richards, 1999, 2005). Using the software was not beneficial as the actions of headmasters and headmistress in this study could not be understood deeply. Yin states that using computer analysis for case study research is challenging because it requires converting sources

into a specific textual form. Case studies usually involve “complex events and behavior, occurring within a possibly more complex, real-life context...” so that computerized tools “cannot readily handle this diverse array of evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 129). In this situation, the nature of the study, the focus of the research questions, and the curiosities of the researcher pretty well determine what analytic strategies should be followed: categorical aggregation or direct interpretation (Stake, 1995). The researcher can look for patterns immediately while reviewing documents, observing, or interviewing – or the researcher can code the records, aggregate frequencies, and find the patterns that way (Stake, 1995). I followed this approach while analyzing the data gathered from interviews and field notes.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Patton (2002) notes that there are no simple formulas or clear-cut rules about how to conduct credible, high-quality analysis. “The task is to do one’s best to make sense of things. Qualitative analysts return to the data over and over again to see if constructs, categories, explanations and interpretations make sense, if they really reflect the nature of the phenomena” (p. 570). Further, Patton also notes broadly that when the human being is the instrument of data collection, it requires that the investigator carefully reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias and error (p. 51).

Although there is no one way to increase trustworthiness and credibility, I followed these five practices to build trustworthiness: 1) used multiple sources of data like interviews, field notes and documents, 2) used member checks; 3) constantly reflected during the data gathering and analysis process through writing field notes and memos, 4) used systematic data organization procedures, and 5) used thick descriptions in cross-case reporting.

Triangulation

Patton (2002) notes that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. One must try to employ multiple methods, measures, researchers, and perspectives, but do so reasonably and practically (p.247). Patton further notes that a “rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question. Some studies intermix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Others rely more on interviews than observations, and vice versa. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (loaded interview questions, biased or untrue responses) than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-validity checks” (p. 248).

Yin (2009) also notes for data triangulation that one must collect information from multiple sources aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon. For this study, I conducted detailed semi-structured interviews with the headmasters and headmistresses, oral questionnaires with headmasters and headmistresses, focused interviews with teachers and parents, and explored available documents. Further, the field notes and memos written during the data gathering and analysis process linked different pieces of evidence collected. A case study database was also maintained electronically, in the form of multiple case folders, which should increase reliability of the case study. Yin (2009) notes that the lack of a formal database for most case studies is a major shortcoming of case study research and needs to be corrected (p. 119).

It is also important to note that triangulation does not always yield the same result. As Patton (2002) notes, “different data yield different results and is illuminative” (p. 248). This will only offer deeper insights into the phenomenon under study.

Member Checks

“Actors play a major role directing as well as acting in a case study. Although it is they who are studied, they regularly provide critical observations and interpretations, sometimes making suggestions as to sources of data. They also help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations” (Stake 1995, p.115). For this study, I asked headmasters and headmistresses to check rough drafts of few interview transcripts to clarify meanings. This was done as interviews were translated from Tamil to English.

CHAPTER 4

KAVERI SCHOOL

Creating Parental Connections: from Jaya's Morning Welcoming Ritual

Walking through the arched granite entrance of the Kaveri Government Girl's Higher Secondary School at 8 am, exactly one hour before the school day begins, the first sight would be that of the headmistress, Jaya, standing in front of her office, welcoming and interacting with her students, teachers, school staff and parents who come to drop off their children. As she gets in early, she also follows up on things such as making sure the floor is cleaned out, checking on water supply or other issues brought to her notice first thing in the morning on a daily basis. Simultaneously, she walks with her hands folded behind her to supervise and interact with class 10 and 12 students, as they seat themselves in perfectly defined straight rows, beneath the trees on the open grounds, right in front of her office. These students almost have their faces buried into the textbooks they hold, memorizing and repeating passages from assigned lessons, and occasionally only looking up to ask a question. As these students get ready to face the crucial board examination this academic year, they are required to attend extra coaching sessions before and after school hours.

This is not an unusual sight before the start of the school day at Kaveri Higher Secondary School. Jaya is the first one to walk into school and the last one to leave every single day. And although this one-hour morning welcome ritual by her at the school may seem very routine, over time, this has been an instrumental practice created by her in increasing her own visibility as a school headmistress and thereby, forging strong bonds with her community of parents, teachers, school staff and students. Teachers and parents at the school proudly describe her as

“பாதுகாவலர்,” a Tamil word which means “guardian” - a status that she has earned and strongly believes, did not come quite easily, but was given to her after a great amount of effort in forging positive connections with parents and staff during her last three years as a headmistress at this school.

Kaveri’s History

Kaveri has a long history that dates back to 1962, the year when the school’s foundation stone was laid by a well-known person who was hailed as one of the “fathers of education” in the country. The school opened as a government high school, serving just 100 students from classes 6 to 10 in its very first year. In 1980, two years after the higher secondary board was introduced in the state, Kaveri was upgraded to higher secondary, serving students from classes 6 to 12.

Being one of the largest government schools in Urban District A, it is among the top three government higher secondary schools in the district for its overall academic performance based on the overall pass percentage. The school serves over 2,000 students just at the high and higher secondary levels (classes 9-12) and 4000 students overall (classes 6-12). Situated at the heart of an industrial metropolis, the population of the district is over four million. The district also has over 15 percent of its people living in low income neighborhoods. The medium of instruction at the school is both English and the regional language Tamil.

Kaveri was led by three school heads, all women, since the time it was upgraded to higher secondary. The first headmistress led for 16 years from (1980-1996) and the second one led for 12 years (1996-2008). Jaya joined Kaveri in 2008, but often talks about her predecessors’ work in the school’s successful journey within the community and also the need for her to keep carrying the same torch forward.

She built the foundation for the school. She was the one who put the steps here [points to the steps] and laid this strong foundation [Line 46-47, IT 1.1 HM 1, 2011-10-11]. When

we used to keep entrance exam for admission into this school, there used to be a queue outside from 3 am... [Line 220-222, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13] and the rich history of the school in this community makes me continue the good work from the past as the reputation of this school is known all over Tamil Nadu [Line 215-216, 224, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

The school is one of the top schools for academic performance of class 10 and 12 students in Urban District A for more than 16 years. Everyone at Kaveri still talks about the state rank for academics that was earned by a student in 1994. Jaya describes the academic achievement of the school this way:

In the past three years alone, the percentage and marks have been great. Last year, the school first for class 12 was a score of 1177 out of 1200. In class 10, the first mark was 491 out of 500. Both students are from English medium. The range has improved so much. More than 50 percent of our students got more than 400 in 10th and around 150 students got above 1000 in 12th. This is a good achievement. Even then, we have not got a state rank and we need to try more [Line 236-242, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

Kaveri is not just excelling in academic performance, but also has more than 80 percent of their class 12 students getting into higher education which Jaya and other teachers note as a generally rare occurrence in government schools. The students have pursued polytechnic or vocational courses, engineering, arts courses, medical programs or other technical fields. One veteran teacher who has served in this school for the past three decades recalls:

I have seen so many students who have struggled and become doctors and engineers from this school. I can never forget the story of Sumathi [pseudonym] who came from a very poor family. Her father was an auto rickshaw driver, but she completed medical college on her own merit. She came back to donate her first salary to our school. Hundreds of students and parents have given back to the school over the years” [Line 121-125, IT 1, Teacher 3, 2011-10-18].

At this school, despite numerous challenges as with other government schools, the rich history coupled with academic excellence drives the headmistress, teachers, school staff and parents to collectively work together for the overall success of its students. A parent member of

the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) for several years explained that collective synergy this way:

If you talk about government schools, people talk about it in a bad way or are ashamed. That is what people thought. That thought got challenged and was burned by this school. This school is surrounded by private schools, that mostly take away peoples' hard earned money. They have made education a business. This school was in the middle and competed with the schools around by working very hard. That work of the headmistresses, teachers and parents led the school by example and without that, these children would not have come up so well in life [Line 26-37, IT 1, Parent 6, 2011-10-20].

Parental Background and Occupations

Kaveri's parental population is diverse. As the school is situated in an urban area, parents span across various religious backgrounds and communities. Some parents are educated, while the others are not. The school does not have records or a database that documents the parental population and occupational breakdown. However, they record information of parents and their respective occupations in the admission forms, which is hardbound into a large register. The high and higher secondary class teachers also have parental records in their class attendance registers and student bio data books, a practice that is unique to this school. Parent's occupations generally include clerical jobs, house helpers, road sweepers, watchman, day laborers, drivers, vegetable and street vendors, religious workers, government staff or local politicians.

“Only 10 to 20 percent would be graduates. These people would have completed 12th standard at least. Around 30 percent would be parents who have never gone to school. Parents who dropped out of school would be less as this is an urban area. But that does not mean all parents are educated. Compared to the suburban and rural areas, parents are more educated and more aware about the importance of education here at Kaveri” [Line 83-90, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

Headmistress Jaya says that parent migration from rural areas or other neighboring cities and states is a common phenomenon. She mentions numerous cases of students where parents have migrated to the city for better education, work and life and some cases where parents just

send their children to the city to live with a guardian (uncle, aunt, grandparents) for access to better education.

There is one student who came from a village from Kumbakonnam. Her uncle brought her here for good education. He brought her here while her parents are in the village. There are many students like that who come to the city for good education as they don't have that opportunity there [Line 95-99, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

Parents of students in this school live in very poor conditions in small huts or in somewhat better low-income neighborhoods. While Jaya and the teachers are aware and talk about parents' living conditions in light of different parent involvement practices at school, they do say this:

We know most of the families live in really poor conditions while some live in better conditions like better buildings. We don't go so deep into that issue as it is their personal life. We do look at the student's academic performance and if there is something that is affecting that, we talk to the parent. We retain the girls in school as much as possible for that reason as we know the home conditions are a little poor [Line 29-35, IT 6&6.1, HM 1, 2011-10-18].

Jaya's Vision for Kaveri

Jaya's vision for Kaveri is reinforced by several past experiences. She constantly draws from these as she plays the role of the school headmistress and also works to forge connections with her school's parent community. Coming from a family where her parents and grandparents were all teachers, she says that the influence to be an educator was instigated at a very young age through her "family tradition." She has worn several hats as an educator by being a teacher in rural areas for 21 years, serving in the state department as a coordinator for an educational program for 6 years and as a headmistress for 5 years.

As a school headmistress, what I saw and learned as a teacher helped me immensely in teaching and learning and how to support teachers and help them achieve their goals and to build faith in students and help them perform well academically [Line 72-75, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

As she describes the influence of her past experiences on her work, she focuses specifically on one set of experiences around working in rural areas for girls' education, students who either

dropped out of school or never enrolled in school. Traveling across the state and being exposed to this turned her into a strong advocate for girls to complete their education in the educationally backward blocks in Tamil Nadu. This in turn shapes her core vision for Kaveri, a girls' school, around the need for everyone to be educated that would ultimately "empower successors." This was vital to her while serving students from low-income communities where parents were mostly not educated that much. By winning the support of parents and educating the girl students, future generations would benefit.

Being girls, they have to move and lead another life. They have to make themselves suited for life. They have to make their following generations to be successful, their successors to be successful. This education will pave the way for that [Line 51-54, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

Jaya's vision is to "empower successors." She talks about many goals that surround that vision. She uses powerful anecdotes from her travel to highlight the need to be educated for which regular attendance at school is vital. She talks about whole personality for girls and how it's not the marks or degree that makes a man, but the confidence to stand on their own feet that they gain through education. And at the same time, she also stresses raising the bar of Kaveri's academic excellence, by achieving a state rank in her tenure.

I have been trying hard for the past three years. This year, I just missed it. In 10th and 12th, I could have got the rank; by 3 marks I missed it. I will keep motivating people towards that [Line 59-62, IT 7&7.1, HM 1, 2011-10-20].

All these goals highlighted at different occasions, even at the group assembly every morning that is attended by the entire school, students, teachers, school staff and sometimes many parents.

Discipline and regularity is important here. Study for yourself and your future, so that your successors can also benefit [Line 46-47, Memo 7, Kaveri, 2011-10-20].

Jaya's Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Through past experiences, Jaya also found that her vision to provide continued education to students cannot be reached without strong support from parents and families. She brings up two instances of her personal connection with parents, when she was a teacher in a rural school and a novice headmistress thereafter, that shifted and strengthened her beliefs around parent involvement.

When I was a teacher in a small village, I used to be connected to all my students really well. There was this one girl who was brilliant, but stopped coming to school suddenly. I asked around and people labeled her as having some problem. I went to her house, a shanty, and spoke to her parents and her several times individually. After many attempts, she finally came to school and completed class 12 as the school topper [Line 165-180, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

Even when I was a novice school head there was a similar incident. A student who was superb in academics and arts lost her brother and overdosed herself on her mother's tablets. I visited her and her parents every single week. She returned to school after six months, and finished her education. My connection with parents changed me as a headmistress and also helped see that involvement with parents is critical, even if it's just one student at a time [Line 181-190, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

As she recalls her work with various schools in rural, suburban and urban areas over the last three decades, she notes that there has been a significant growth in the awareness and need for education among low-income communities, thereby increasing their level of involvement. While Kaveri is situated in the city and has a parent community who are more aware of the need for education, Jaya still attributes increased parental awareness towards education over the last ten years in general to strong government plans.

The growth in awareness for education among parents is there in both urban and rural areas and is more or less equal. This is because of strong government plans like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)³ and Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)⁴ and also the schools reaching out. The programs have goals set and we make the parents aware of the

³ SSA is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

⁴ RMSA is Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan

importance of education. Like SSA was introduced in 2000 and from there awareness has definitely increased a lot among parents [Line 34-41, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

She also notes that the awareness among parents was more apparent when they began asking for seats in the English medium sections of the school, as it's more desirable for pursuing college and jobs. Since Kaveri has both Tamil and English as their medium of instruction, even parents who are not educated pleaded for seats for their wards in the English medium sections. As a result, Kaveri's has more students in English medium and a number of open seats in Tamil medium. Jaya also underscores this to show that her own beliefs have changed toward her parent community as this shift took place:

Before, those who wanted to get into education, were literates and semi-literates, at least people who used to be able to sign on a piece of paper. But now, education is part and parcel of life. Enlightening parents is not needed much. Most of them here are below poverty line only, but getting their children to finish 12th or getting into college is their aim [Line 18-23, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

As a result of this awareness, she believes more parents, both educated and uneducated, are drawn into school and that educators are able to reach out more to them. This way, teachers' beliefs on the critical role parents play in their child's academics, extra-curricular activities and overall school improvement get emphasized and translated through various avenues. She says,

All teachers and staff believe that parents and families are important. We don't have an emblem or logo and we don't have a written mission but we all collectively believe in just what I described. I want to make that into a written mission, but sometimes I don't know words can describe what I said. Our actions around involving parents and families should speak for themselves [Line 192-195, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

Teachers Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Teachers interviewed for the study also talk about the synergy between parents and the school as important for student success. As one teacher expressed,

It is very important for parents to be involved in a positive way. The energy is more these days and there is a lot of power students have. That needs to be streamlined. That cannot be

done by the teachers or school alone. That needs to be done in cooperation with parents [Line 33-38, IT 1, Teacher 1, Kaveri, 2011-10-12].

Further, teachers note that the importance of that combined effort between parents and school needs to be voiced continually. And compared to other private schools, as parents here come from very poor backgrounds, teachers believe their involvement in their child's academics, extra-curricular activities and overall school improvement is more vital.

Teachers discuss everything with parents and stay connected. This kind of daily care and concern does not exist in private schools as they don't need it. Their background is much better and they know how to connect the dots. Here, the combined effort by the teachers, headmistress (HM) and parents is so crucial. The connection is important to show them the way [Line 65-73, IT 1, Teacher 1, Kaveri, 2011-10-12].

Several teachers also reinforce Jaya's beliefs that parents' education background does not deter their involvement and that parents keep coming back to the school.

Parents have an attachment as we all have worked so hard and their children have come up in life. I am not sure if all government schools have it, but this school does [Line 126-130, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

Parents Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Parents believe that their children will do well academically at Kaveri. They also know that their involvement matters in the success of their child at school and beyond, whether they are educated or not. Parents feel that they raise questions if they don't understand something and get involved as much as possible in school and at home. One parent recalls,

My parents did not go to school and we were very poor. As I remember, the only thing my mother could do was wake up at 5 am with me, give me some hot milk and just be awake as I studied. She lost her sleep so I can come up in life and I would do the same for my daughter [Line 198-200, IT 1, Parent 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

This thought is also reinforced as they understand that one cannot separate the home and school and that the child lives in both spaces equally. One parent notes,

The participation among parents, grandparents and others when compared to other government schools, this is a model school and this school has its own ways. Parents

participate and give their hundred percent involvement [Line 225-228, IT 1, Parent 2, 2011-10-14].

Parent Involvement Practices at Kaveri

Parent involvement practices at Kaveri has assumed various forms over the years. These forms include practices that have been intact and carried forward for several years; old practices that have been redefined and new practices that have been initiated. For example, the school has some practices like the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) that has retained its set of goals, while Kaveri's other practices have been redefined or developed new meaning under Jaya's leadership. The school has used different practices to reach out to parents, one of which was initiated by Jaya herself. In the following pages of this case, each parent involvement practice at Kaveri is described briefly. Further, the specific actions that Jaya takes to foster each practice through the school year is explained.

Jaya's Morning Welcome

Jaya developed this morning welcome practice three years ago at Kaveri. She drew from her past experiences with parents and families while being a teacher, state coordinator for girls' education and an administrator. Through several different stories she describes the power behind personal connections with parents from low-income communities and the need for her to develop a routine which promotes that day after day at school. She also highlights that she began this morning welcome practice to challenge the conventional view of a government school head sitting in the office room and looked at as a person of authority. She says,

If you ask me I really don't like authoritative style. This is a democracy. If I say this in Tamil, it is authoritative or அதிகாரி. We use that word. I am just an office person or அலுவலர். We are all doing just one job, helping these students succeed. So we all need to be approachable [Line 73-77, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

Since she assumed the role of school head at Kaveri, she made many changes with intent to construct a routine for this morning welcome practice. Since the beginning, she has been the first to enter school, almost an hour before school begins, and the last to leave each day. She has made this her daily routine and feels that just by standing in front of her office before the school day begins, she has been able to increase her visibility and connect with a lot more parents.

As this practice gained momentum, she modified the structure for student drop off and pick up. In the past, anyone was permitted to drop off and pick up children before and after school. She turned that around on intention, and now only parents or guardians can drop off and pick up children. She also did this to make the school safer as it's a girl's school, but this change allowed for more parents to walk into school in the morning and interact with her directly. In a number of occasions, she is also able to wave her hand and call parents in as they drop off their child as the place she stands is directly opposite the school gate.

The school reputation is important. Nobody should say it is only a government school. It is my responsibility. Even if the brother or sister comes, I don't allow them. The mother or father or guardian has to come to drop off or pick up the student. This way, parents can come in and talk to me or the teachers anytime about students in the morning or after school. They walk in and are welcome anytime [Line 187-195, IT 3&3.1, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

Jaya also used that time in the morning for interactions with parents of students facing board examinations from class 10 and 12. These students are expected to come before school and stay after school for extra coaching classes. In the morning, Jaya walks around and supervises them and this provides a space to strengthen prior interactions teachers have had with parents around student's academic performance. One parent says,

The HMs support is there hundred percent. She comes before everyone comes and goes only after everyone goes. She goes all out for students who are not performing well or need extra help. HM is now identifying the students' who are weak in specific subjects

and making them study more. Many parents interact with her about their children as she is supervising in the morning [Line 252-255, IT 1, Parent 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-14].

Jaya's interactions with parents in the morning have also helped foster effective parent-to-parent connections. One parent, educated up to college, says,

I then tell them [parents] outside the school that education is very important and their children have to study. Even teachers and the HM tell them repeatedly. When I am sitting outside and inside school, before or after school, I see number of parents talking to the HM and teachers. I also take that opportunity to spread the awareness of education to them. When we sit in a group, they say one thing or the other. Their minds would change if we keep telling them that [Line 156-163, IT 1, Parent 1, 2011-10-14].

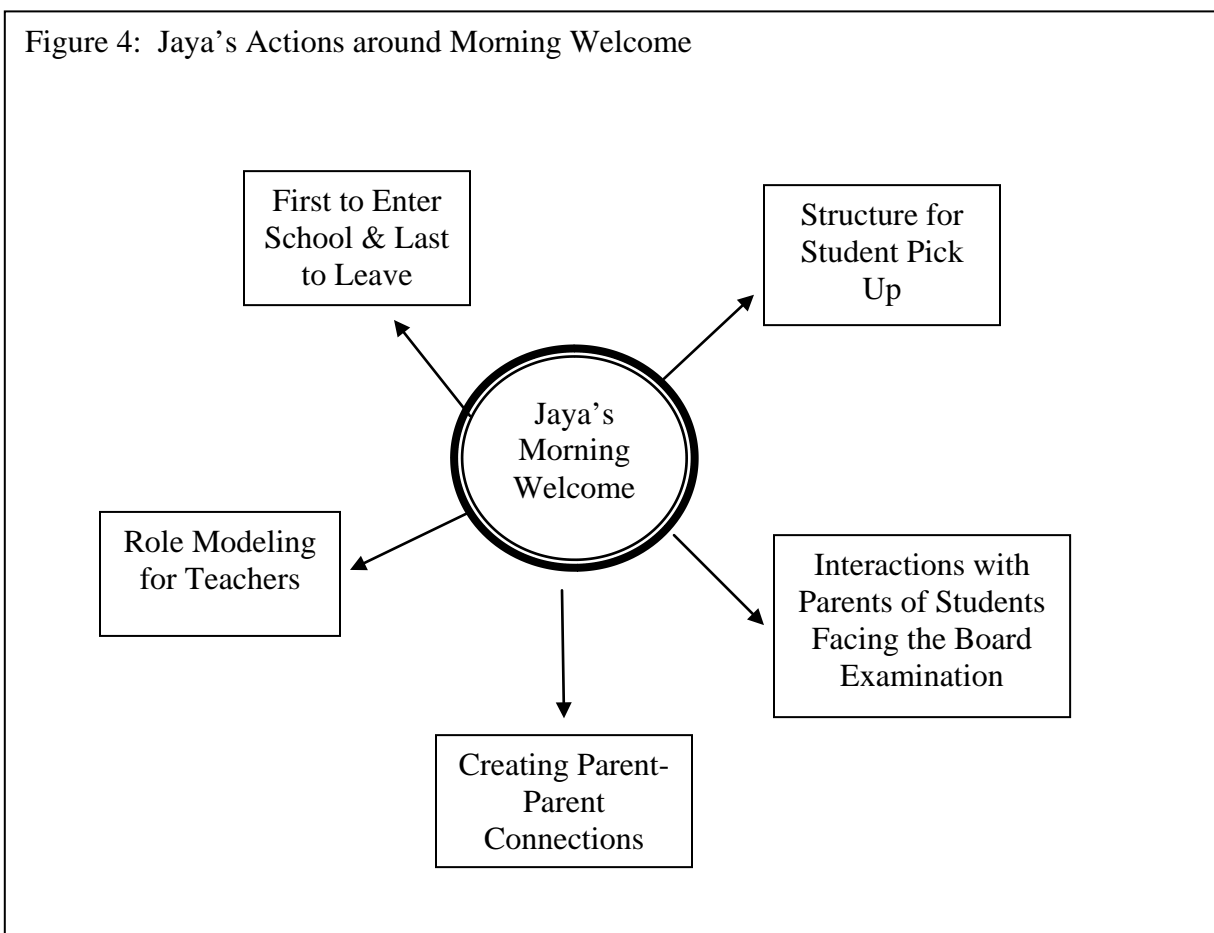
By following this practice, Jaya has also served as a role model to other teachers and school staff about the importance of direct involvement with parents. And although her expectations from the teachers about having direct connections with parents was always clear, her own initiation of this practice have made them see the significance. Teacher talks about the practice this way:

There is so much change. Parents are so willing to come forward and their education and background has nothing to do with it. The HM's support is so crucial and all teachers feel so supported. The parents also see the HM directly involved daily, so that increases involvement definitely [Line 264-267, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

Our ma'am is really the first one to come to school and last one to leave the school. That itself speaks so much about the support we get for this parent involvement practice. The fact that the HM comes so early and leaves late, she knows everything that is going on in the school. Parents also come before, after and during school, she is always available. Her attention is there completely for this. She also stands and catches latecomers. We say 8.30 AM special class. Unless she stands and periodically catches students, we cannot continue this practice. She leads by example. If she does it, all the teachers want to do it. We also come early and stay back to put in all our effort [Line 275-284, IT 1, Teacher 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-13].

Through the actions around the Morning Welcome practice, Jaya was able to stimulate teachers about the significance of direct connections with parents. Further, her actions helped

parents bond with one another on a regular basis. The structure that she created for herself and for student pick up helped promote the practice further.



Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

If the school has to stand, PTA helps the school stand on its feet. It is only service. If we have a PTA meeting here, I come with loss of pay from my job. It is not the money, it is the service mentality [Line 177-179, Parent 4, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

As described this Kaveri parent, the PTA has been attracting other parents and been a strong practice in this school since its inception. Although it is a state mandated practice, people note that not all government schools put PTA into action and use it to bring parents and teachers

together effectively. At Kaveri, the PTA even goes beyond its standard guidelines to initiate new goals for the school that have been embraced as a vision for its PTA. Jaya says,

Other PTAs don't get involved much. Involvement is the unique thing in our PTA. They are all involved. My nature is also this way and I want to give a hundred percent involvement to our PTA. Everyone has a vision for the PTA here. The system is created and we have a strong executive committee [Line 235-238, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

Earlier, the PTA had required all parents to be members by paying a small membership fee in the beginning of the academic year. The funds would go towards the school's infrastructure development and support staff salary (janitors and custodians). Now, government school PTAs cannot collect a membership fee, but Kaveri still uses the PTA to foster connections with parents and advocacy using its already established networks. During a school tour, Jaya talks about the PTA funds generated that were used for constructing buildings, restrooms, laboratory equipment, fans, water, electricity and teacher, support staff and watchman remuneration among others. At the same time, she also describes the role of the PTA in promoting academic success for Kaveri's students. She notes,

The PTA helps bring parents and teachers come closer together. The more we utilize it, the better it is. We cannot do it separately. In government schools, the development is done through PTA. If PTA is strong, we can continue to do well in academics also. If the PTA has the proper utilization of its funds and an executive committee with members with a self service mentality, it will boost up everything. Even from the general members, the parents come forward to help a lot in this school [Line 203-208, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

All these achievements of Kaveri's PTA have made Jaya to not only actively participate in this practice but also take it beyond its normal course to promote her vision of the importance of personal connections with parents. Therefore, from the time the PTA is formed at the beginning of the school year to checking the PTA documents at the close of the school year, she has a role that she is required to play to strengthen connections between parents and the school.

At the time the PTA is formed, Jaya even assembles the executive committee through holding elections or nominations once in three years. According to her Kaveri's PTA is free of any political tinge, thereby making parents' participation a top priority. The 13 member executive committee has parents as the president, vice-president and treasurer, Jaya as the PTA's secretary and the other members are parents and teachers. At Kaveri, parents of former students continue to extend their support in many ways. Jaya says her role in nominating members will be critical in the upcoming elections or general body meeting. She notes,

We want the people in the executive committee to be from different fields. Like if someone is there from the building board, we can raise more funds for buildings. If there is something, we can approach them and they can help us raise funds. This committee is there since 2009 and along with the executive committee, I will play an important role in the next year elections in 2012 [Line 127-130, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

Along with the PTA executive committee, Jaya participates early in the school year in framing annual general body meeting agendas. She highlights the importance of agendas and setting goals for the general body meeting as that is the time when the entire parent and school community gathers together. Leading monthly executive committee meetings in her office after school hours has also helped foster varied discussions around school development and student performance and to problem solve with parents and teachers continuously. At executive meetings, resolutions are written and signed by all members. Jaya says,

Two parents who are part of the PTA executive committee says,

HM calls me straight on my cell phone. If there is a PTA executive committee meeting, they contact me and ask me to come and attend. Even otherwise, the PTA president will call me. These meetings bring us closer to the school and we feel like we are contributing for the school [Line 124-126, IT 1, Parent 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

In the PTA we discuss if the students are attending properly, why they are not performing well, infrastructure needs. What are the measures we have taken? We have kept extra classes, special classes and appointed teachers by subject area. For a PTA, parents, teachers and HM coming together helps us talk face to face. We know we can point out and say this is the problem, this is the drawback and find the solution. Then, we can solve

that way. This is a boon in this school. The PTA meetings are very helpful [Line 155-161, Parent 4, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

The ongoing executive committee meetings help to focus discussions on issues related to school and infrastructure development, student performance and teaching and learning. The annual general body meeting is attended by all parent members and teachers on a semi-annual basis. Further, Kaveri also has additional PTA general body meetings for parents of students who face the board examination (classes 10 and 12). Jaya encourages parents to bring up issues and she considers the general body meeting as a platform for constructive conversations. A parent says,

In the general body meeting, parents can voice their views and the HM encourages that. When they bring up an issue about the toilets or other resources, we tell them we don't have that money. We have to maintain what we have. This is the resource we have, so that's how much we can do. We tell them what we have done and take more suggestions to do better. It is a conversation with the entire parent and school community [Line 162-170, Parent 4, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

Further, she also taps into the PTA and collaborates with the executive committee for student development that includes ongoing discussions on academics through result analysis after the midterms, quarterly, half yearly and final board examinations and solving need-based student issues that arise which requires working with parents. All this ongoing collaboration also contributes to the general body meeting, in which some common issues are highlighted to all the parents. That could range from academics, discipline to school safety. Jaya notes,

The general body meeting is attended by all the parent PTA members. And parents' of 10th and 12th students meet separately also. We put the tent and have the meeting in the field. This year we have had the general body meeting for the entire school and all parents in July. We have separately meetings for 6th to 9th and then for 10th and 12th which are just academic oriented [Line 174-177, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14]

There is a big difference between talking in person and talking on the phone with parents. Some immediate issues have to be resolved over the phone. Other problems for which we

need to go into the depth, we need to go to their houses. PTA staff involve themselves a lot in this and I make sure we utilize them as they are able to reach out to the parents [Line 109-112, IT 3.2&3.3, HM 1, 2011-10-13].

For example, Jaya says,

Some issues take multiple attempts to resolve. One issue that we faced was retaining the student whose parents wanted her to get into soap opera acting when she wanted to study. She was an excellent student. In this case, I worked with one of the PTA executive committee members and he reached out to the parents and talked about the importance of education. We had to talk multiple times, but it finally got resolved and the student finished her 12th [Line 82-87, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

Jaya also collaborates with the executive committee for school development which includes raising funds for infrastructure, support staff and teacher salaries in some cases.

Teachers and the parents note that the government-allocated maintenance funds are barely sufficient for day-to-day maintenance issues like fixing broken pipes, building more bathrooms and cleaning them daily, appointing more custodians among others. For a school this big, Jaya notes that the PTA is a key vehicle for identifying people and organizations to come forward to support various school needs through donations.

For this building, through a contracting company's vice president we mobilized materials. Before this entire area was a big pond. To level the ground we really needed 90 loads of mud. Also, the PTA president is the president of the writers union. He knows a lot of high level people and approaches them. We got money for the library with some of those funds. The new auditorium was from a political fund. The PTA has people from different areas, so it is very helpful. Even individual contacts are useful and I try and tap into them [Line 150-155, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

A PTA executive committee member notes one of Jaya's earlier actions collaborating with him to raise funds:

I am in the PTA executive committee and even if it is 5 in the evening and the headmistress says come for our school and children, one has to come. For the HM, there is no office staff. Government provides only two percent which is insufficient for the watchman's salary alone. For others, the government cannot do. That is something we can help with the PTA [Line 84-88, Parent 6, Kaveri, 2011-10-20].

The HM is known by the 4000 or more in this school and community. The PTA and

executive committee are known by more than 20000 people all around this school. From the common man to the politician, everyone knows us. She taps into that for funds mobilization. And we use that to raise money. Even now, the corporate company general manager is constructing the ramp. We only have one student with special needs. In the future, there could be more [Line 106-110, Parent 6, Kaveri, 2011-10-20].

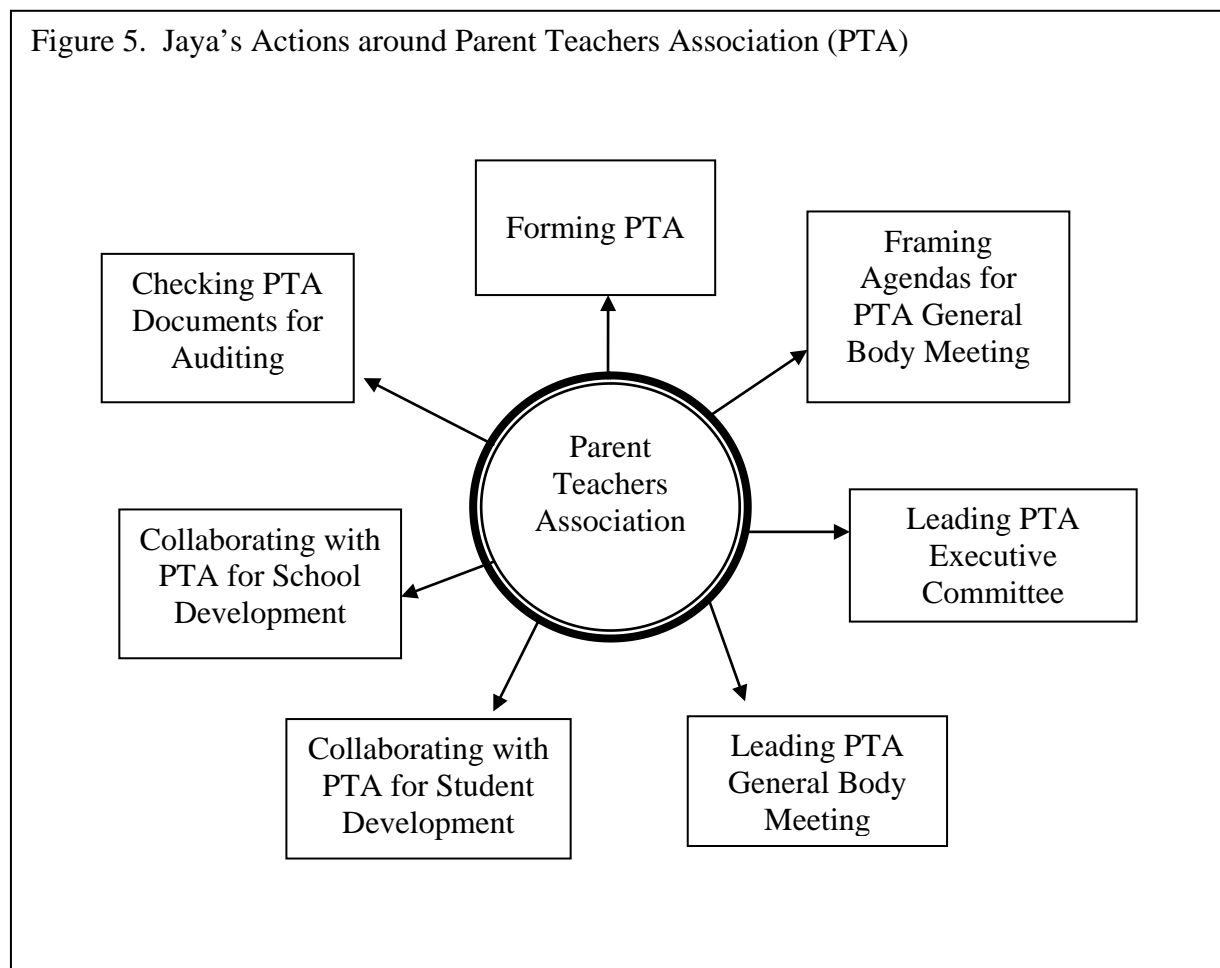
Jaya also reviews the PTA resolutions and registers with the PTA president and treasurer as a way of providing ongoing support to the practice. This also needs to be done as PTA achievements related to infrastructure and academics are presented at the general body meeting when the entire parent and school community is in attendance. Also, the auditor's report is submitted soon after the general body meeting after everyone has had a fair chance to ask questions about the PTA progress. Jaya says,

We have resolutions and need to get them signed by the executive committee after every meeting. This will go in a very systematic way. We have all the agenda copies and old resolution copies and achievements and the PTA treasurer knows where everything is. Without a resolution, we cannot take the money and utilize it. The financial side is not the only area we have resolutions for but also for other issues we discuss related to academics. This transparency is important [Line 215-219, IT 4, HM 1, 2011-10-14].

Due to the achievements of Kaveri's PTA, Jaya holds office as the vice-president of the district level PTA. Since there are representatives from schools, she believes that this is a chance to share the successes of Kaveri's PTA and also hear of the work being done by other active PTAs.

Overall, Jaya took several steps to maintain Kaveri's PTA. Her actions included carrying forward the prior successes of the PTA in advancing Kaveri's academic, student development and school development. Her key actions include forming the PTA and nominating members. Further, she makes sure the PTA runs smoothly by involving herself in leading monthly executive committee meetings, framing agendas for the annual general body meeting, checking documents and collaborating actively to identify resources for student and school development.

Figure 5. Jaya's Actions around Parent Teachers Association (PTA)



Parents' Meet

The parents' meet is conducted for all parents and is particularly focused on fostering critical discussions about students' academic performance and other topics related to students' academics. Kaveri's commitment to upholding the academic performance had created a need to meet with parents of students facing board exams from classes 10 and 12 multiple times over the school year. While the PTA provides that opportunity for the entire parent community to get together and have dialogues with school twice a year, the parents' meet further strengthens that practice.

In a very interesting way, the PTA also operates as a precursor to identify issues that need

to be highlighted at the parents' meet since the executive committee made up of teachers, parents and Jaya meets every month. In conjunction with that, assistant headmistresses of the high and higher secondary levels meet with their respective teachers to analyze results after midterms, quarterly, half yearly and after final board examinations. They also discuss various other student specific issues and bring them to Jaya's table. All this together determines the agenda for the parents' meet over the school year.

Jaya talks about the result analysis meetings with assistant school heads and teachers that led up to how the parents' meet is framed:

I have a meeting with my teachers where I see the percentages and who has got lower marks and I analyze everything. We look and discuss all that and decide what to concentrate on after every test and exam. Then we draft the agenda. After several meetings, we frame key issues that need to be communicated with all parents at the parents' meet. All students can do well and the parents' meet is a forum for broader issues to reach parents [Line 110-114, IT 6&6.1, HM1, 2011-10-18].

While the ongoing analysis of results with the teachers and the PTA executive committee contributes to identifying various issues to focus at the parents' meet, the forum itself allows for a number of issues to emerge from the parent's side. The parents' meet also includes the PTA executive committee, adding to their continued presence beyond the PTA.

To prepare for the parents' meeting, we give notices. We arrange the stage and the HM prepares and gives the opening speech. The PTA president also works closely with the HM and teachers. For 20 years this meeting occurred. Parents talk and they tell the teachers or make requests about special classes or additional support. We tell them that this is important and come to a consensus on various issues for the student's welfare. This is almost like a forum for us [Line 143-148, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

Through this practice, Jaya encourages and promotes individual teacher and parent connections. This action ensures that the messages presented at the parents' meet reaches all class 10 and 12 parents. Since some parents cannot come as they are day laborers and will lose that one wage which is feeding their family, the school is very flexible. To foster this, parents'

meet is usually conducted on a weekend. If they are still unable to attend, the teachers reach out to the parents and pass on the information discussed at the parent's meet. For this to take place smoothly, registers are kept at the meet for parents to sign in. From there, respective class teachers or subject teachers to contact individual parents.

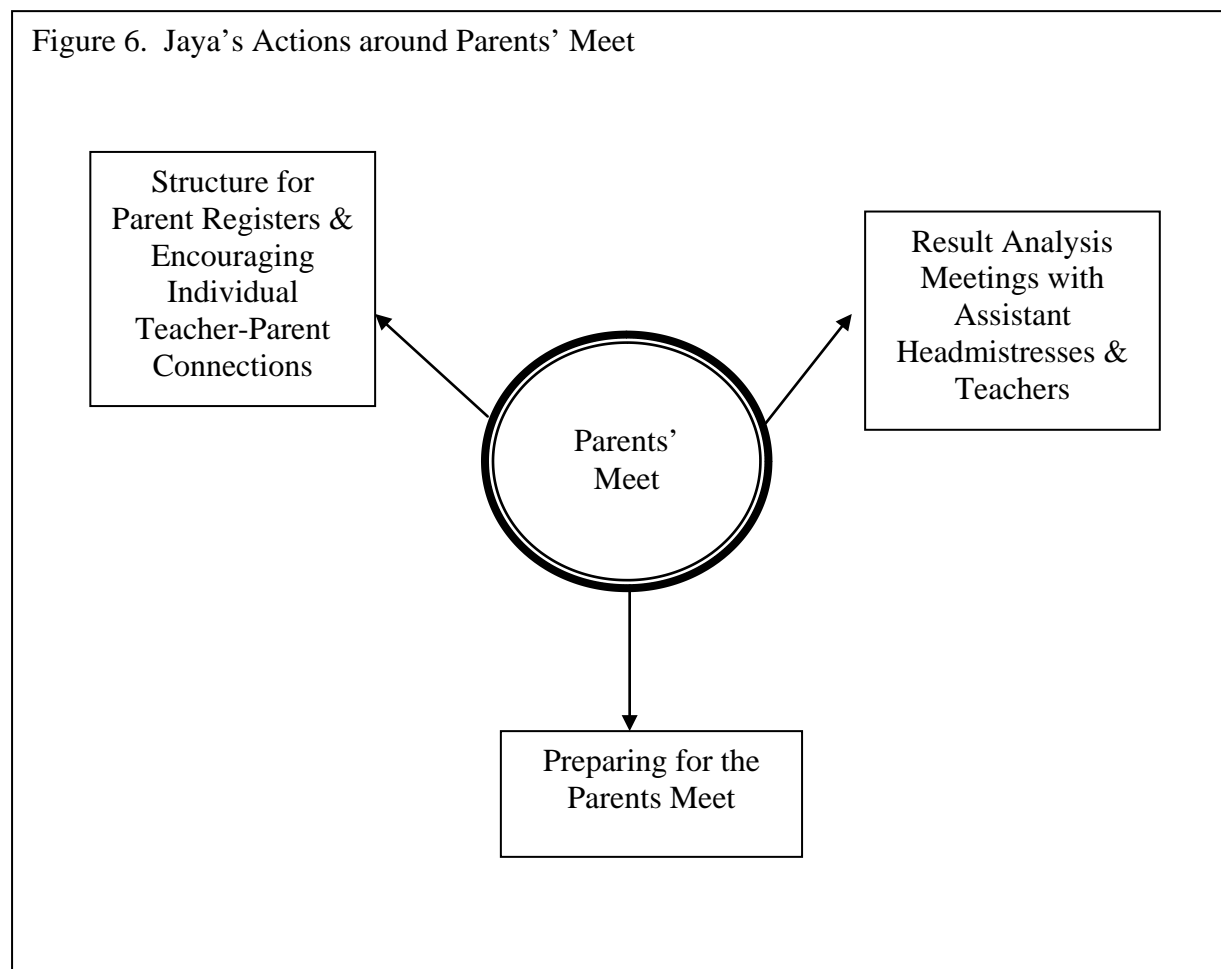
The rules are flexible here. We cannot follow the same rule with all parents. In private schools, there are fixed rules, even the timing. Here, the cooli worker or the day laborer will say, we could not come, we can come only at 10 am. Only by 10 am, we can see you and we have to make an exception. That flexibility you cannot find in private schools. Once the gate is closed, it is closed. HM expects all teachers to be constantly connected with parents, so the important messages is provided to all parents even if they are unable to attend [Line 171-174, IT 1, Teacher 1, Kaveri, 2011-10-12].

A PTA executive committee member says that some parents come and complain about the lack of infrastructure or other facilities, but the HM emphasizes continually that her doors are always open for parents to bring issues to the table. The parents' meet has also proved to be a forum to make parents understand that combined effort of the school and parents will help their child's progress even more. The parent says,

When there is a parents; meet, even if they don't come, the teachers call and follow up and give all the information. Last time, I came as a parent and as a PTA member. Some people said the toilet is not good and the classrooms don't have a fan. She only turned back and said your daughter's marks are lower. Why don't you come and ask me that daily? Is that not the first priority? We [parents] only see one child. She [HM] sees 1500 students. Even if we give one percent, families and schools can be on the same page and I got up and said that at the meet [Line 253-262, IT 1, Parent 3, 2011-10-15].

Jaya takes several key actions to promote the parents' meet. She uses the PTA as a precursor to identify several issues that need to be addressed at the parents' meet. Her ongoing meetings with teachers to analyze student results also leads to identifying topics for the parents' meet. Her other actions include: preparing for the parents' meet through framing agendas and meeting with teachers to plan for the parents' meet. Further, the structure around having the registers signed by parents who attend the meet helps ensure that the parents who do not attend

are contacted. This action by Jaya helps promote individual teacher and parent connections.



Open Day or Report Card Day

The Open day or Report card day is a practice that is common across all government schools. Unlike the PTA general body meeting or parents' meet, this day facilitates one-on-one interactions between class teachers and parents; subject teachers and parents; and Jaya and the parents.

Parents from high and higher secondary levels (classes 9-12) are expected to attend the open day after the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations, usually along with their children, to collect the students report card. At Kaveri, Jaya also brought in a system where parents of

children who are not performing well are required to come after the monthly and mid-term tests between the three term examinations. This additional layer of the practice, she believes, allows for continual connections between the parents and school between the three report card days.

For this practice, Jaya conducts report card analysis with assistant headmistresses, class teachers and individual subject teachers through the school year. During these analysis days, the class teachers and subject teachers use the report cards and mark registers for discussions with Jaya. They identify and talk about students who are not performing well and need additional support. The teachers' mark (grade) registers provides them more information about the parents' background, which they take into consideration during these discussions. These discussions are important as the notes that the class teachers, subject teachers and Jaya makes are crucial for the interactions with parents during the report card day.

Jaya says,

Other than the three term exams, we have mid terms and monthly tests that student from classes 9 to 12 write in all subjects. All these results go to parents through the report card day. Teachers maintain the registers and the monthly tests results are kept separately. These also go to parents. I personally see these records with teachers. They come and give me mark lists and how many students have got below 30 and 35 and so on. This way I have an overall view of how the entire year is going as it advances and also document the progress of students regularly. This also helps me to interact with certain parents personally during the report card day [Line 124-129, IT 6&6.1, HM 1, 2011-10-18].

In the report card day, class teachers are seated in their classrooms with the report card or rank card of students which notes their marks. Their mark registers notes additional student strengths and weaknesses. Parents first visit their child's class teacher, where overall performance is discussed. At Kaveri, since the majority of parents are not educated, Jaya encourages all the teachers to share as much information as possible about subject matter and curriculum during the report card day and about student growth in academics and other areas like

sports and arts. This information has been very useful for raising parent awareness and their involvement as they know how their child is performing at every step. Jaya notes:

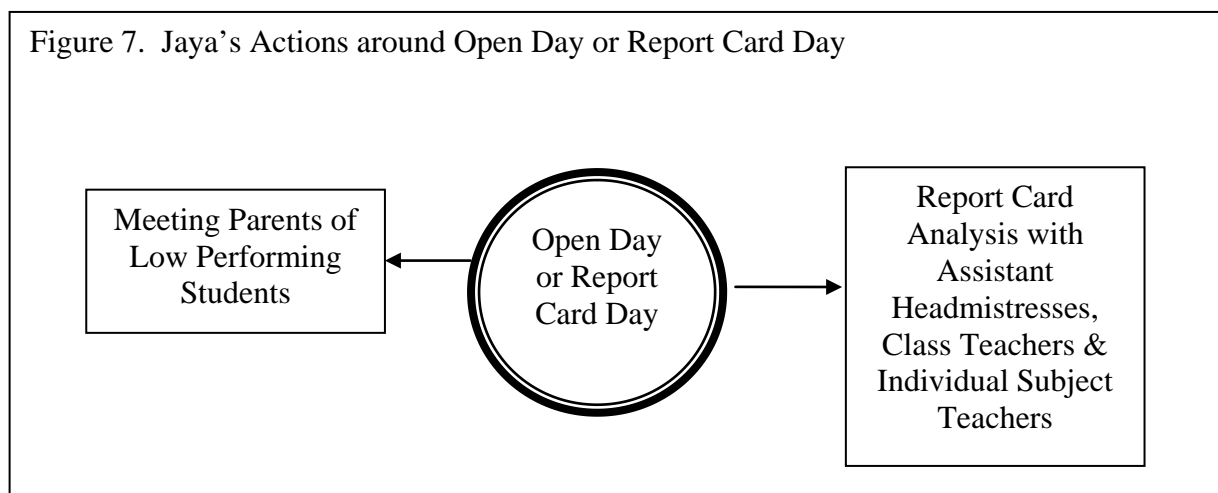
They should know directly what the child is doing and where the child is. Some people don't know that. For parents who are not that much educated, they don't know what stage their child is at. They just come and get the report card. We need to make them understand that this is what their child is doing and these are her strengths and weaknesses. When it comes to students who are performing well academically, these meetings are helpful as we can help the parent and tell them what she can pursue in higher education or at least point them in those directions. It is sort of an education for them too" [Line 56-62, IT 5&5.1, HM 1, 2011-10-15].

Jaya and individual subject teachers for all content areas are available in their offices on report card days, so parents of students who are not performing well in academics or certain subject areas can meet them individually. A teacher talks about Jaya's support for this practice,

HM is available to talk to parents during the report card day which is critical. If a student is getting 90, we only say she should get 95. She should do better and better. Lot of parents also come to school if the mark drops. Even if the parents are not educated, the parents come and ask why has she dropped by 2-3 marks? In fact it is the poor children and the children who don't have parents who are educated who study well and work so hard. Seeing them, we also want to work double hard [Line 166-170, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

By analyzing the report cards and mark registers with the assistant headmistresses, class teachers and individual subject teachers, Jaya is able to foster important discussions around parent awareness of their child's growth that would help during the report card day. Further, her actions around meeting parents of students who are not performing well during the report card day also helps strengthen direct connections between her and the parent community.

Figure 7. Jaya's Actions around Open Day or Report Card Day



Parent Bio Data Books (Parents' Background Information)

Jaya and the teachers at Kaveri speak about the importance being aware of the parental backgrounds of their students. Although the class teachers have mark registers in which they record some details about their students' parents' backgrounds, there was still a need for a more structured place to keep the data. Jaya notes that she used to practice something called case study journaling in which she used to write detailed notes about the background of her students' and parents' during her teacher training days in various schools. The same thing was also practiced by some teachers at Kaveri who had learned its worth during their own teacher training days. Somehow, the practice never took off among all teachers at Kaveri.

At one of the teacher meetings, a veteran teacher who had continued the practice emphasized the value in creating something called parent bio data books to record parents' background information and described how it strengthened her connections with parents. Using that example, Jaya revived the thought of maintaining parent bio data books among her teacher community and encouraged all of them to try this practice.

As a result of these books and recording brief information about parent's backgrounds, teachers could follow and understand the children more closely. As one of teacher emphasized, most of these students have parents who have serious economic problems and any additional information goes a long way in understanding the child more. Again, what students go through at home has a profound impact on how attentive they are in class or perform in academics as noted by Jaya. This information in the bio data books supplements all the parental contact information they have in their mark registers.

Every teacher has a different method. All teachers have a bio data book which has the

fathers' qualification, mothers' qualification, occupation, background, contact number, name, address and so on. They also make notes about home situations and other issues that come up. This helps the involvement of teachers with students' parents and the ultimate beneficiaries are their children [Line # 101-105, IT 5&5.1, HM 1, 2011-10-15].

A teacher says,

We make a bio data book. I have the photo of every student, their parents' or family background, parental occupations, mothers' and fathers' occupation, their cell phone number, address, and all details about the student and even their friends' names. I know all teachers don't maintain it all the time but it is gaining importance now as the HM supports us. This helps us understand the family background of students as much as we can [Line 86-90, IT 1, Teacher 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-13].

This practice is also boosted by Kaveri's practice of moving the same class teacher with a cohort of students from classes 9 to 10 and 11 to 12. Jaya's support of this practice, in turn, fosters important teacher and parent connections for two years consecutively. Jaya notes,

For 9-10, we have the same class teacher and for 11-12, we have the same teacher. If it is a single academic year, the time won't be enough to foster connections with students and parents. So it's a rotation system. Because, current 11 students will go to the 12th, and this year all the 11th class teachers go with them to the 12th. Previous year 12th class teachers will move to the 11th. This has always been there in this school. It is a practice from the beginning. This helps connections with parents and families, as teachers have the registers and bio data books also. It increases familiarity and more closeness and parents can be very free with teachers. They can share all details and any problems they can talk. First the benefit is for students and then for parents. It brings all of them closer to the teacher [Line 47-55, IT 6&6.1, HM 1, 2011-10-18].

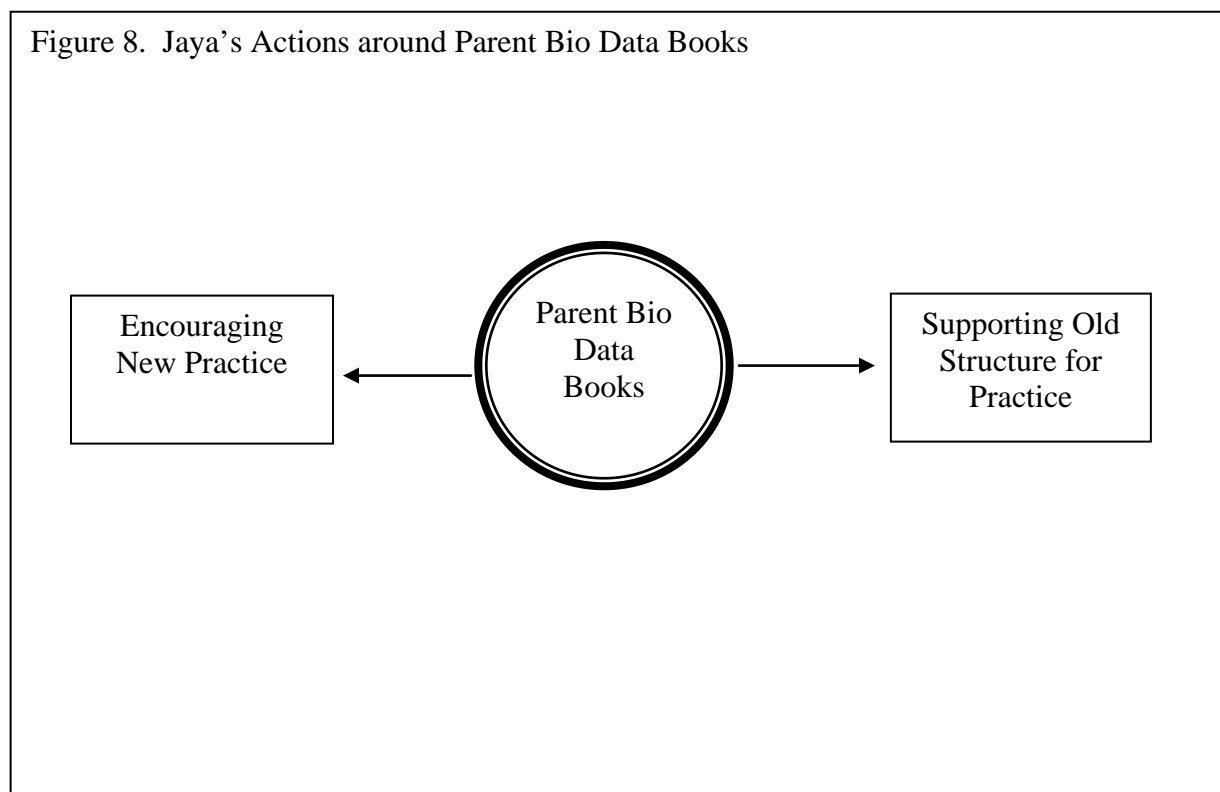
A teacher talks about those connections,

We know them [students] more since we know their background through these books. We know how they study, their family situation and their parents' background. When we look at their face, we know. We then talk to the student. Did she work? Did she eat? Why did she not bring lunch? What is the situation in her house? If she is really dull we need to know this. In a lot of houses, the situation is so bad. We try and adjust and help in any which way we can. If we did not have this practice, we would have never known all this [Line 59-65, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

Overall, Jaya's actions to encourage a new practice around creating parent bio data books has helped Kaveri's teachers understand their students' parents' background better. Further, her actions towards retaining the structure to move the same teacher with a cohort of students from

classes 9 to 10 and 11 to 12 has also strengthened the connections between teachers and parents further.

Figure 8. Jaya's Actions around Parent Bio Data Books



Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School

Jaya uses the PTA and PTA executive committee meetings to identify volunteers from the school's parent community. She also notes that the bio data books with teachers have helped to identify parent volunteers for school development. Parents who are educated are able to volunteer for assisting teachers in competitions or teaching special classes in rare occasions. Other parents who are laborers of some sort are able to volunteer for school infrastructure development and maintenance like electrical, plumbing or mason work. Some parents are able to accompany the physical training teacher to district, zonal or state level sports tournaments.

She further describes that parents are willing to come forward and help as they feel

gratitude towards the school for the education that is being imparted to their children. And although their educational background prevents them from volunteering in classrooms or assist in teaching and learning in most cases, their contribution is valued. Jaya collaborates with her PTA executive committee to find volunteers.

Yes, some educated parents volunteer, but very rarely. When we were having shortage of teachers for Economics, one parent volunteered and taught a special class for two hours daily. Another parent provided gas connection and other lab materials and volunteered in our lab. When there is need for anything, I express it at the PTA executive committee meeting and usually the PTA has great ideas for finding volunteers. The creative use of existing social capital is a must in government schools [Line 179-183, IT 2, HM 1, 2011-10-12].

In another case, Jaya talks about her collaboration with the PTA and a volunteer who is an auto rickshaw driver who was identified through this collaboration:

For parents, their children should come up in all activities. There was an auto rickshaw driver who had two daughters. One daughter used to draw incredibly well. She used to participate in competitions a lot. He was so involved that he used to take all the other children who draw well to competitions so they can experience it as well. Although he is poor, he is always ready to volunteer to take students to competitions. I see where parents' strengths are with the help of the PTA executive committee members, notice these kinds of incidents and tap into them and build the connection from there [Line 207-213, IT 1, HM 1, 2011-10-11].

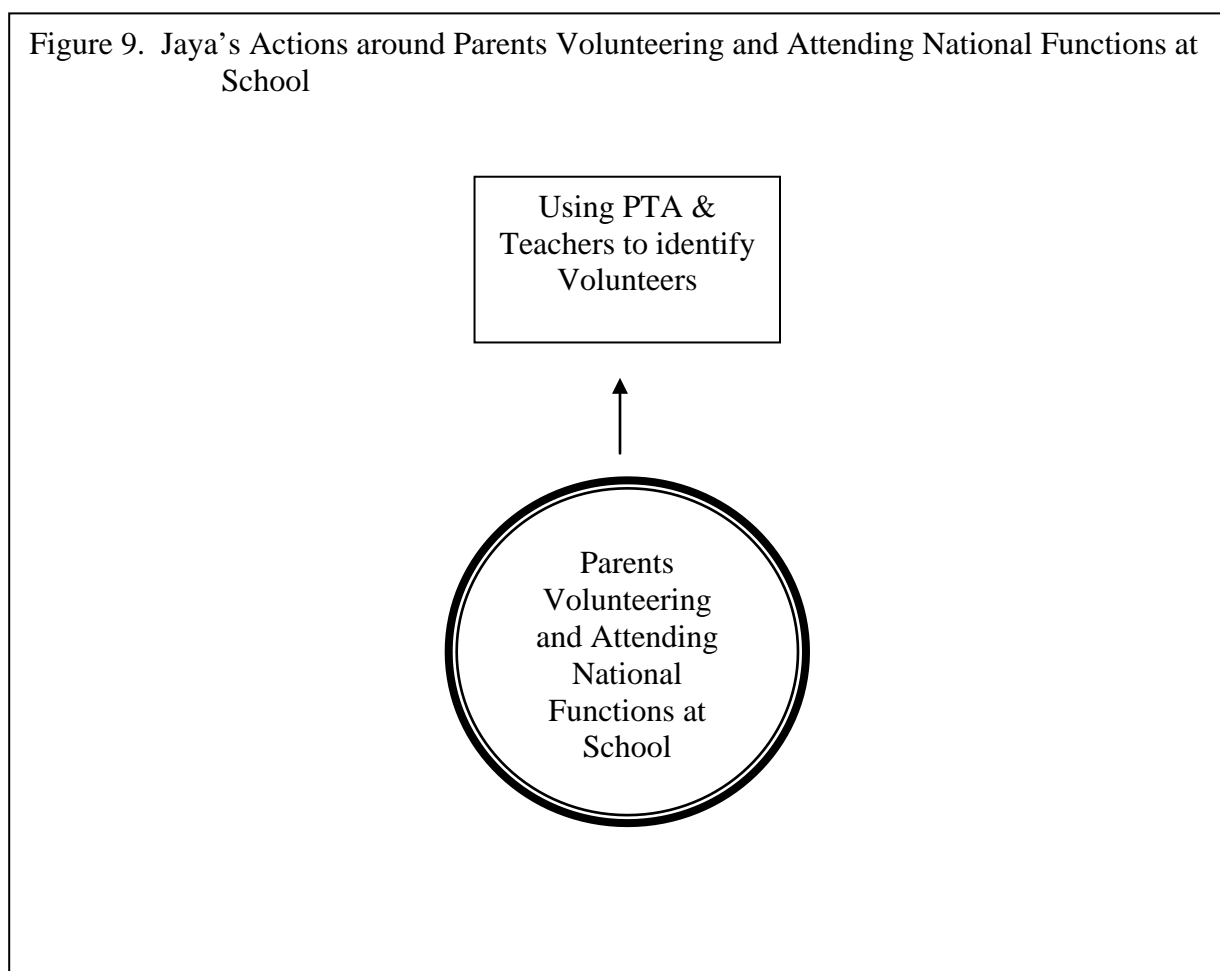
Parents also participate in national functions like Independence Day and Republic day and the school's sports day. Using their bio data book, teachers and Jaya were able to identify a parent who is a makeup artist to help out at the Independence day function. Although this may seem small, in a place where there is crunch for resources, this kind of support from the parental community goes a long way. This also provides students an opportunity to participate in cultural activities and arts just like students in private schools. A parent describes:

We come for all functions as that is an opportunity to see our children. My daughter always participates in dance at the Independence day function. Every year, I volunteer and arrange a choreographer so many more students can participate. Whether this is a

group dance or solo, I can help with this. The HM, PTA committee and teachers have always reached out to me whenever there is a function and I volunteer to help find a choreographer [Line 195-199, IT 1, Parent 4, Kaveri, 2011-10-15].

Jaya's ongoing collaboration with the PTA executive committee members and teachers through meetings helps them identify parent volunteers. The parent bio data books maintained by parents also help recognize parent occupations which teachers bring to Jaya's notice during meetings as the need arises.

Figure 9. Jaya's Actions around Parents Volunteering and Attending National Functions at School



Communication (Phone Contact & Parent Visit to School)

Over and above the practices already described, Jaya also describes her role towards supporting the overall practice of communication with parents (phone and in person) around a

number of areas. These include: communication with parents about academic issues, extra-curricular activities, developing the home conditions and teen development.

Academics

Cell phones are important in this communication and Jaya encourages teachers to use them frequently. Teachers also note that Jaya's own direct connections with parents and her support to teachers to strengthen direct connections over the years has opened up doors for parents to also visit school and talk to teachers on a daily basis. Teachers note:

We all have the parents' cell phone numbers and they have our numbers as well. I have even called and given a wakeup call to a student at 4.30 am in the morning to study. This I have done with students during approaching exam time. With parents, we are so constantly in touch. We continue to track the students and the HM constantly reiterates the importance of this to us whenever we meet her [Line 213-235, IT 1, Teacher 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-13].

The parents' support has grown because of the phone and in person contact. Otherwise parents would have never continued that support. They will come during admissions, for events and during signing the transfer certificate when their child finishes 12th. HM motivates us to continue that direct contact daily with the parents' of our students. That is how their involvement has grown [Line 257-262, IT 1, Teacher 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-13].

As a result of the growth in parent support, Jaya requests all teachers to use their cell phones or the school phone to contact parents regularly to pass on important information, address student-specific issues or follow up on students. Jaya notes that most parents now, unlike five to ten years prior, own a cell phone and are able to receive free incoming calls. They consider this to be a big boon as at least one parent holds a cell phone, even if they earn a meager salary. The school is able to contact them through the school year. Further, 20 to 30 parents were spotted at different points during the school day interacting with teachers at Kaveri even when there was no specific event [Line 4-7, Memo 7, Kaveri, 2011-10-20].

Jaya's encouragement to teachers to contact parents on their cell phones to discuss any academic concerns and follow up on the student closely also strengthens other practices. This

ongoing contact strengthens the three biggest practices that happen during the school year which are the parents' meet, PTA General Body Meeting and Report Card Day. Jaya also explains that teachers use their mark registers to maintain the follow up by phone, in case student performance drops.

To accomplish all this, Jaya helps teachers set goals for this practice and talks about this during her teacher meetings. In addition, she always makes herself available to teachers, in case they require some assistance in talking with parents.

She [HM] feels that the teachers should have contact with the parents. She gives a lot of freedom. She allows the class teachers to deal with the parents and she talks to the teachers regularly, when it is needed. If there is problem and a need for immediate discussion, teachers report it. The HM meets with the teachers individually and in groups and sets goals around solving issues or any concerns we have with parents [Line 115-123, IT 1, Teacher 1, Kaveri, 2011-10-12].

Just as Jaya stresses on phone communication with parents, she also has a unique focus on meeting with parents of student absentees. She meets with parents of student absentees in class 10 & 12 when students take the board exams. For classes 9 & 11, parents meet the class teacher. The parents have to come with a letter and a medical certificate even if their child is absent for a day. For long absentees, parents are contacted by phone and if there is no response, a member from the PTA executive committee, in this case the PTA president, visits the student's home to find out why the student has been absent from school. Since the PTA has positive connections with the parent community, this is done as part of their role sometimes. A teacher notes,

Most of these parents are from very poor backgrounds. Without their involvement we really cannot do anything here. Even if it's a practical exam in the laboratory and the student does not come, we will call them and they will bring the child and come immediately. If the parent is well educated they will bring the child and come. On the contrary, if the parent is not, they take the child to work with them on some days. They don't know that the student has a mid-term test or a practical exam. With the other

parents who are not responding, we still contact by phone as that is the best way to reach them and get them to be involved and understand the importance of their child's education" [Line 57-64, IT 1, Teacher 2, Kaveri, 2011-10-13].

Jaya also encourages teachers to meet with students and parents during special coaching. Some teachers stay after school to supervise students of class 10 & 12 who attend special coaching, and most teachers are encouraged to stay. Teachers note the support they receive from Jaya after school during these supervision sessions as it is a good time for parents to interact with teachers. Further, teachers explain that some students don't have study facilities at home so they prefer to stay after school and study. In this situation, the teachers stay and help them out. All these present opportunities for teachers to also pass along positive messages about students and give parents information on options for post-secondary education. Jaya notes that each of these steps helps build positive relationships with parents.

There are aspects like sending positive message about students. For the student who is performing well, teachers call or meet with parents at school. Every day, a minimum of 40-50 parents come after school to pick up students after special coaching. This is valuable time for teacher parent interactions and teachers help the parents and let them know where the child is at and what they could pursue next [Line 44-47, IT 5&5.1, HM 1, 2011-10-15].

Extra-Curricular

Just as Jaya focuses on communication towards academics, she also expects teachers to communicate about student awards to parents. Jaya herself announces all zonal, district or state level awards or other competitions that students have participated in outside of school. She also presents the awards during the morning group assembly to students and encourages other students. Parents are notified by phone or in person about prizes the students receive outside of school and at most times even attend the group assembly to see their child receiving the award.

She also tells teachers to acknowledge student awards by announcing them in their respective classrooms.

While encouraging every achievement and communicating that to parents is very important, Jaya also encourages teachers to continue to find more educational opportunities for students. For most of these students, opportunities to attend educational camps and exhibitions are rare. Therefore, Jaya also helps find such opportunities and supports these students by talking to parents in person when needed.

Teachers talk to parents about children's goals, aspirations and strengths. The class teacher and subject teacher does that. Some parents don't allow their children to participate in camps. In this situation, even I have that direct contact with parents. During the recent INSPIRE⁵ camp, some parents did not want their daughters to participate as it's a residential camp. But I had to step in. You saw the group of teachers and parents in front of my office. We again gave the information and asked the parents to call. I also called them. So now we have one hundred percent participation but it did require extensive interactions with parents [Line 39-45, IT 6&6.1, HM 1, 2011-10-18].

Developing Home Conditions

Jaya works with class teachers and individual subject teachers at Kaveri to develop check points for parents to support learning at home, whether they are educated or not educated. Jaya emphasizes that increasing parent awareness towards developing home conditions is important as most of these students live in very poor conditions. In this context, the little the parents can do goes a long way to help the student perform better in school.

Some parents don't know if the student has passed or how she is performing. Even those parents, we push them, and make them come to school somehow. They need to know what their children are doing. They tell us that they are not educated and ask us what they can do. If they are educated, they help students at home. Even if they are uneducated, we just tell them to sit next to their child or keep a watch. They can just see if she is studying or if she is watching TV or doing something else, not spending her time usefully. Even if you don't know the subject, give her two paragraphs and ask her. Just hold the book in

⁵ INSPIRE is an educational camp for class 10 & 12 students

your hand and ask her since you can read some Tamil. She will automatically tell you what she learned [Line 36-45, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

Jaya encourages all teachers to communicate to parents about different aspects of parenting such as: providing adequate food to their children, disconnecting television and not allowing the child to get distracted during examination period. She uses her PTA to visit parents in low-income neighborhoods during exam times and her teachers reinforce ways to create a positive environment and values of hard work, so parents themselves come forward. A parent says,

My daughter studies well and got good marks in the 10th standard. I can only tell her about the value of education. I tell her that if she studies, she won't be as poor as me. My wife helps her as she can read and write Tamil. Teachers in this school give us guidance and we follow what they tell us and meet them often [Line 62-65, IT 1, Parent 5, Kaveri, 2011-10-20].

Teen Development

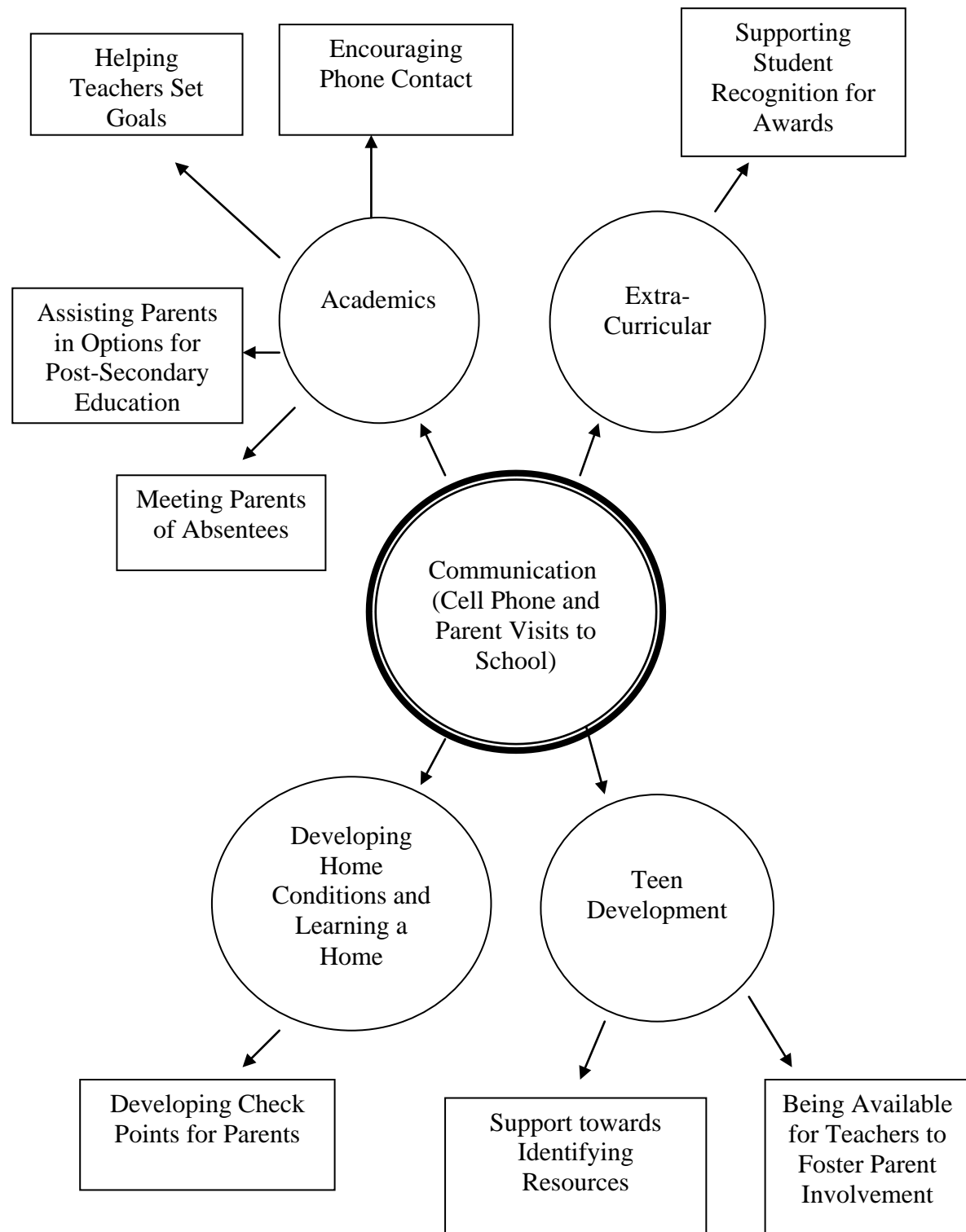
Through various teen development workshops, Jaya and teachers pass along information to parents about adolescent development. The PTA also mobilizes support from non-governmental organizations to talk to students and parents about various topics concerning teen development.

We don't have a separate moral science period but teachers talk to girls in the beginning of every class as needed about any issues they face. People from the woman police station also came and talk to our girl students about how to protect themselves and being safe. I want to try to do this every year and we also provide this information to all parents at group events or individually [Line 11-14, IT 6&6.1, HM 1, 2011-10-18].

Overall, Jaya takes several key actions to encourage communication with parents. She encourages all teachers to be in touch with parents through usage of their cell phone and school phone. She assists teachers set goals and meets with parents of students who have been absent for a substantial period of time. She works with teachers to develop check points for parents for developing home conditions and also supports communication to parents around student awards.

Further, her availability to teachers to foster parent involvement when it comes to identifying resources is also vital.

Figure 10. Jaya's Actions around Communication



A parent says,

When I think of this school, I think of a pyramid or triangle. The headmistress on one side, the teachers on one side and the parents on one side. My children have grown up in this pyramid successfully [Line 15-17, IT 1, Parent 6, 2011-10-20].

The testimony of this parent and others interviewed with is perhaps the most striking characteristic of this school when it comes to parent involvement. Jaya's sustained leadership that fosters parent involvement practices through her direct connections with parents coupled with the effort by the teachers at Kaveri to reach out to their parent community, continues to draw the support of parents each year.

CHAPTER 5
PALANI SCHOOL

Discovering Opportunities for Parent Contacts: from Latha's Office

The busy main road of a suburban district in Tamil Nadu leads to a mud-covered, narrow street. Walking through the numerous turns of this quiet street, one can hear a faint drum beat, getting louder with every step forward. In a short time, a compound wall painted with proverbs in bright yellow and blue boxes appears. As you read the proverbs on the wall and make a final turn on that street, you reach the entrance of Palani Government Girl's Higher Secondary School. Outside the school, you see groups of students walking together or their parents dropping them off in their motorcycle or bicycles. Teachers stand outside, greet the parents and interact with them, as some parents walk into the building to attend the morning assembly.

Inside the school, students get ready in the open ground for the morning assembly. Headmistress Latha makes some announcements, followed by distribution of prizes to winners of a district level sports competition. As the students receive their prizes, parents who were present also come forward. The entire school's made up of the students, school staff, teachers and the HM clap in a synchronized way three times as the drum beat gets louder and fades away slowly.

The drum is the unique thing here. It was started for everyone to just gather silently for the assembly originally. HM Latha brought in the continuous drum beat and the three clap for the parents and visitors and prize winning students. This makes them feel valued" [Line 264-266, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Latha also recognizes the parents in the morning assembly and encourages all students to bring their parents to school, irrespective of whether one wins a prize or not. As the assembly ends, the students disperse silently into their classroom. Latha walks into her office and keeps her door open, as an opportunity for parents, teachers, school staff and students to speak to her

any time of the day. She also answers the school phone herself, while she does her habitual morning tasks, in an effort to keep connections with her parent community. Walking around for her morning supervision of classrooms, she interacts with a group of parents who have come to help their children set up their projects for the science project day. She also talks to the watchman about disposing a snake he found in the school ground and to a mason who is ready to start building Palani's first ever computer lab. As she continues her morning rounds, a parent PTA member who has volunteered to oversee the lab construction says:

It has been in their culture to welcome us inside and make us feel respected this way. HM Latha and every teacher go out of their way to build these connections with us [parents] in all ways possible. We feel like family [Line 236-238, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Palani's History

Palani is a young school. A decade ago, the school had just one building, eight rooms and total student strength of 200, serving classes 6-10 at the high school level. There was no school compound wall; the playing field was a deep lake with water snakes; and rainwater would flood the building hallways and classrooms forcing a canceling of school. On the other end of the school field was a burial ground and a massive garbage dumping space for all of Suburban District A. It was then that the school's connection with the parents and community began, making it a significant part of its history. A teacher and parent says:

The parents, teachers and the HM collectively spoke to the district collector and we put forward our requests to the officer. The members of the initial Parent Teachers Association [PTA] fought for us. The PTA along with other parents went to the collector's office to get rid of the garbage dumping space. It was a long battle but we won it finally. The burial ground and garbage dump were removed. [Line 13-17, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

It was a devastating sight. Nobody used to come here. Even teachers and students never used to come. We worked together as parents and community and with the HM's support, we turned things around. After that, the percentage of students has gone up and teachers

from outside want to come and serve in this school [Line 21-24, IT 1, Parent 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Palani had four school heads and each one played an important role in pushing the school's development and overall student achievement forward in Suburban District A. The first three school heads led Palani when it was a high school, serving classes 6 to 10. HM Latha was fourth in line, but was the first school head after it was upgraded to the higher secondary level in 2008, serving 1800 girl students from classes 6 to 12. One teacher said,

I have seen all the prior HMs. The previous HM developed the ground and buildings for 6th to 8th. This HM wants to do more for the track and field, library and computer lab. I can never forget that. Every head develops something and the other heads carry forward the work and only develop more" [Line 189-192, IT 1, Teacher 2, Palani, 2011-10-24].

HM Latha got the buildings for 9th to 12th and office room constructed. In the previous HMs period, the building for 6th to 8th was built. Earlier, the instruction was only in the Tamil language. HM Latha introduced the English medium sections. Our school's student performance has been so good. It has been above 90 percent and that has boosted the confidence among the people in the community [Line 13-17, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

The success of Palani's development and achievement at the higher secondary level over the last four years is visible. Students make long commutes each day to school, to access this quality education. Earlier, students needed to travel 6 to 7 kilometers from this community to find a government school that was safe and provided good education. Now, people travel 2 to 3 kilometers to join this school as it has developed rapidly and kept its promise of providing good education. Also, Suburban District A is considered as one of the fastest growing suburbs in the state. It had a changing community of day laborers, often finding homes in government lands or the roadside shelters and accessing education for their children. Now, the suburb has industries, manufacturing plants and small agricultural markets growing at a fast pace and extending the education to a broader parental community. A teacher notes:

Parents get safety and quality education for girls here. I have come across government schools and Palani is equal to a Matriculation [private] school. The standard is so high [Line 117-118, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

According to HM Latha, Palani's achievement of high standards and repute did not come easily and was boosted by repeated parent contacts. She also believes that this reinforced a part of Palani's history and her predecessors' work in building connections with parental community at large.

I joined in 2008 and the overall student achievement of the first set of students in the higher secondary level was very poor. I was not sure how I would turn around the results. They were also irregular and attendance was low. We needed to speak to the parents and call them over and over again. Since they were the first set, I was particular about improving the results. I called the parents and students individually and spoke to them. I had to repeatedly talk to them. Very soon, we began seeing a change. The first set of students itself we produced an overall pass percentage of 92 percent. This time we are the first in Suburban District A [Line 150-156, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

In addition to the academic achievement, 80 percent of Palani's students also pursue higher education in some form like a vocational course or a degree in the field of Engineering, Arts or Sciences. Parents and teachers recognize this as a notable achievement and part of this school's history. One parent says:

My daughter finished 12th here and is doing an Engineering degree. She is doing so well and studying hard. I took a loan and somehow got her into a private college. Out of all the schools, I am so proud she studied here. A lot of girls who studied here are studying in other Engineering colleges. My daughter tells me at least 25 girls from this school are studying in the same college she is. This is not like a typical government school, but almost like a private school and I am glad my younger daughter is getting educated here. In a short time, this school has achieved great things [Line 31-37, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Palani's history after it was upgraded to the higher secondary level is made up of a combination of achievements in school development, student achievement, post-secondary advancement of its students and school safety and discipline. The participants interviewed for the study attribute the turnaround to a number of factors, one of the strongest being their link with

parents and the community. HM Latha, teachers and school staff acknowledge the positive role that the parent community had played since the school's inception and continues to use that power to leverage positive change for Palani and its students. A parent describes the school's reputation this way:

Within the community, this school has a fantastic name. In the last four years, it has come up so much and people respect it because of that. This is because of the HM. She is really developing brick by brick every single day. Parents are realizing the quality. Some shop owners in the main road were talking about how this school has been a positive influence on the children of this community. This is a great pride. [Line 197-205, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Parental Background and Occupations

Situated in Suburban District A, Palani's parental background and occupations has changed over the years. As noted earlier, the suburb has moved from shifting populations of day laborers who access education in government schools to a more permanent population of day laborers. This movement was due to the increase in industries in the district, although the agricultural sector still accounts to more than 50 percent of the jobs. Further, the district also has a mix of suburban and rural characteristics and draws from cultures of the state of Tamil Nadu and another southern state since part of the district is situated towards the later.

Like other government schools, parental background details and occupations are gathered during admission. Teachers also have records of parental background and occupations in their attendance register. In addition, Palani has issued Student ID cards, in a move to have accurate parental details like name, address and phone number and also has a special meeting at the start of each academic year to verify the details on the Student ID card and maintain their parental database on paper accurately.

Palani has a large spectrum of parental occupations. HM Latha and teachers interviewed note that the number of single parents is relatively high for the district and students sometimes live with grandparents, their aunt or uncle. In addition, most of the parents from this school are below middle class and financially not stable as they are daily wage workers. One teacher said,

Most parents are day laborers. Before, some parents were in the cinema field as this area has a number of production companies also. Now, we have parents who are industrial workers, electricians, plumbers, auto drivers and even farmers. Very few parents are educated, while 10 to 15 percent have studied up to class 12 and beyond [Line 51-54, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Around two percent of the parents also migrate from Suburban District A to another district, while numerous other day laborers find houses in this district and access education at Palani. HM Latha estimated that at least 10 percent of the parents used to take the transfer certificate for their children and shift their house from the Palani school area to a peripheral area. In turn, the school used to get children enrolling from other peripheral areas. One can get a transfer certificate and move to another government school easily, provided they are within the stipulated period set by the government for new admission.

This migration trend also gradually decreased as Latha and other teachers constantly advised parents and students not to shift schools very often as it would disrupt their education. Further, the school's achievement and its place in the community also grew, turning that into an important factor for parents to listen to the school and school staff and reconsider their decision to migrate and enroll their child in another school. One teacher said,

Each and every government school will face the same problem and the migration will be there. After 10th standard, the children would normally migrate from one place to another. From 6th to 9th, the migration will be there always. In 11th and 12th they will usually stay as that determines their entry into college. We advise some children not to go because they are very good students. As this is one of the top government schools, we requested parents not to take away the children from here. Some still want to move, as these communities don't

offer stable jobs. In those situations, there is very little we can do [Line 168-174, IT 1, Teacher 3, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Latha's Vision for Palani

For nearly two decades, Latha worked as a higher secondary school teacher in urban and suburban government schools in Tamil Nadu. Although she says that she did not initially plan to be a teacher in the very beginning, she believes that the experience as a teacher over the years was critical in realizing her current vision for Palani. Working with other teachers, students and parents across some of the most challenging districts in the state not only changed her as an educator, but also made her see the need to become an administrator. This would be the only way she could impact children from low-income communities beyond her own classroom. In 2007, she got her administrator posting at Palani. Since the very beginning, Latha has had a steady vision to turn Palani into a “model government school.” She also attributes her achievements over the last four years to strong parental and teacher support at Palani.

I wanted to make this a model school from day one and that is my vision even today. This school should be an example to other government schools for its consistent educational achievement, curriculum and school infrastructure. I have done around 40 percent and still have another 60 percent to achieve. The infrastructure needs to improve and we still need laboratories for sciences and arts and a playing field. Teachers and parents are very committed after seeing the changes at school and continue to provide support to work for our children [Line 132-138, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

As she describes her vision around turning Palani into a model school, she also highlights the steps taken from the start. Palani's academic achievement and high overall percentages of its students comes first. For this, parental support has been critical.

Parents want to put their children in this school. Children come from places that are about 10 kilometers away. They travel and come as this school is good. That is an achievement from the school's side [Line 175-177, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

All teachers are well aware and it is a shared vision. According to teachers, they have to get their students to have a perfect score in their subjects. That is important. They will do everything they can. That is a prestige for them. For that, report card day, parents meet and every other type of contact with parents from these low-income communities is so important. Teachers meet them and I also meet them almost daily [Line 199-203, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Headmistress Latha also gradually worked towards improving the school's infrastructure by bringing in computer and language labs, installed lab instruments, investing in more buildings and fans and desks. She continues to work to develop a playing field with tracks and an air conditioned computer lab. Despite challenges, she notes that all help take the government school forward and realize her vision of making this a model school. Further, the PTA, parents, teachers and external organizations have rallied to her vision.

Both external organization X and Y [pseudonyms] have come forward and want to make us a model school and invest resources in our school. They constructed the new building and toilet. Then organization X has given us purified water and many organizations continue to come forward. We are approaching them constantly. I am retiring in a few years and I want to do everything I can to make this a model school. That is my aim really. I will do it [Line 187-191, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

As a young administrator, she also feels that she has an opportunity to positively influence thousands of students. She says:

I tell the girls myself, if you lose one minute it's like you are losing 1000 rupees. You are investing in education now. It's like an investment. You will get it back if you work. If you waste time, it's like financial loss for you [Line 343-345, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Latha's Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Latha believes that parents or the child's guardian must be involved in their education or development, and this is the only way in which the school can really push the child forward. She notes that teachers, school staff and parents at Palani believe that parent involvement is a mission of the school. However, this shift in viewing parents and school as key partners for the child's

welfare did not come easily among all the stakeholders. It began with Latha's direct connections with parents during her days as a teacher. She stated,

When I was a teacher, I was mostly working in government schools serving children from communities with low economic backgrounds. I used to take extra papers from my house for them to write exams and tests. I had to work for those children. I connected with parents and spent most of my time meeting with them, before and after school. That made a great impact among parents who are poor. Now, I can tell my teachers that I worked in similar conditions and they can do it too [Line 157-162, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Here, my connection with parents, the direct contacts is much more. Here, it is something that I myself initiate and do. Not all government schools do it. When I was a PG teacher, I tried to solve issues and kept going without contacting the school head. But for me now, it is crucial to keep those connections with parents to make a change [Line 324-327, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

While her advocacy was strong, changing parents' opinions of schools and getting them involved was a challenge. They needed to understand that the government school is also as worthy as private schools and their involvement matters. Latha says,

When we talked to parents or the guardian, they thought 'it is only a government school.' If it's a government school, it is okay to not follow rules. Students can come whenever they want and go whenever they want. If a student comes late, I just ask them, just because it is government school, is it any less? I will insist parents to come to the school and meet me. It is a shift in mindset. I used to tell the parents that even government schools have rules and are worthy. Eventually, they got used to the culture here and began coming [Line 228-234, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Latha notes that there is some difference between parents who are educated and parents who are not well educated. While both groups understand the importance of education, uneducated parents tend to need an extra push from the school to be involved more actively.

Now, educated parents are very much aware. They will come to school directly and want know what is taught in class and why the exam marks were not awarded or are less. They come and question us immediately. You saw that parent this morning. She went and met all the subject teachers individually and asked about her child's marks. All parents come this way. We tell them that she needs to improve in these areas and tell the parents how they can help at home [Line 251-256, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Even the parents who are not educated talk so responsibly. They know a lot of information. and will ask us, both teachers and me if they can do this or they can do that. This is because teachers share information and due to interest they collect so many things and so many details from outside. An auto rickshaw driver's child was first in her class last year and her parents were so involved even though they were not educated in school [Line 290-294, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

If they [parents] come home, they switch on the TV and watch TV at home. When parents come, we give them some counseling. We sit and tell them that it's disturbing their children. Because of that push, we are seeing some improvement and change [Line 285-287, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Latha believes that the school's effort to involve parents along with a conscious move to help stakeholders shift their mindset about government schools' led to a shared commitment between parents and school.

The parent involvement has definitely increased. They have realized that when we are taking so much effort, they have to take the effort too. The parent who I was talking about this afternoon comes and meets me weekly about her child. She comes and meets the class teacher and me. Only once a week if she comes, that itself will make a huge difference [Line 258-262, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Even if we call the parents, they are so happy. If we call them in and talk to them, they feel that the school has taken so much responsibility. At any given time, there are many parents. They are excited because we reach out. They are so interested in their child's education. They come in with one thought that they did not study and their child should. They tell me that repeatedly. When we call them, they come into the school in a very happy way. It is a dual responsibility between the school and parents [Line 17-22, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Latha also continues to believe in parent involvement as an administrator now. Latha states,

It makes me satisfied. I need to talk to the parents on my own. It does increase my work load, but only if I do it, the children will do well. Without parents' support, it is very difficult. I want to lead in different angles. And here, parents' support and gaining their support is one of my core agendas to lead and for students to perform well, their support is so intricately tied. So I have to do it and devote more time towards developing these strong connections [Line 334-339, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Teachers Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Teachers interviewed at Palani believe that parental awareness of education has increased over the last few years under headmistress Latha's leadership. They note that Palani's parental community believes that the school has demonstrated high academic standards and also provides a safe environment for girls. Teachers know parental involvement is a goal and that they need to pursue all strategies to keep in contact with parents and draw them into school.

Parents fight for our school's development. They come whenever we call them and we take up issues collectively. When they come, the local officials know we are fighting for the children. Most parents get attracted and come here for admission as the results are good. The discipline is good and the results are good. They feel that the girls are safe here. Everyone believes that the students are why we are here and the parents are here. Parents also cooperate as they know it's for their child's welfare [Line 242-247, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Since Palani's primarily caters to parents from low-income communities and is made up of parents who are mostly uneducated, teachers sometimes encounter challenges in drawing their support. This includes the feeling among parents that their educational background impedes their ability to help their child or their own limitations of time in participation in various activities at school.

Some parents feel ashamed of being uneducated and sometimes don't come. The teachers will talk to them and encourage them. We make them understand that it's for the welfare of their child. Being uneducated does not come in the way of helping their child to succeed in life [Line 337-340, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

The parents who work as day laborers have limited time. Educated parents are able to devote more time. If they are working as a day laborer, they have to leave early morning for work. Educated parents are helping them, at least asking, have you done your homework or not, show it to me. Uneducated parents don't have the time. We cannot say the parents do not wish to help; they do. But they have so many difficulties and constraints. They are living in small huts. They have financial and social problems. This restricts them from participating actively [Line 89-108, IT 1, Teacher 3, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Despite these challenges, Palani reaches out with all information possible and has a range of activities for parents. Teachers also believe that parental support is crucial for students to do well.

Teachers and parents are two sides of the same coin. When they join together, there is collective energy. As far as the child is concerned, parents have the maximum time with their children. Teachers have limited time with them, limited number of days and hours. For example, the Maths teacher has only 210 working days. Out of that we have the flexibility of 3 holidays for festivals, 35 student examination days, and 10 vacation days. The remaining is only 150-160 days with the student in class. Each class period is only 40 minutes and the time is meager when you total it. Therefore, we need parents to collectively work with us [Line 46-56, IT 1, Teacher 3, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Parents' Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Palani's parents also believe that their involvement is important. They proudly note Palani's connections with parents from the beginning and the role they played during the initial years of the school's rapid development. Parents also feel that this school is well respected in the community. As parents stated,

When some happens, teachers immediately call the parents, whether it is a student doing well academically or misbehaving. This way, the parents are aware immediately and can take the necessary steps so the child can improve. That constant connection is important. Even parents feel that this school is a safe place. It's also a girls' school. The entire community knows that this is a great school and they know the headmistress. They know the teachers teach well [Line 114-118, IT 1, Parent 1, Palani, 2011-10-28].

The HM talks so well to all the parents. Whenever students are not well, she calls them and advises them. The assistant headmistresses and teachers are equally good. They also struggled to develop the school. This HM is also like that. They encourage people to donate and parents help her a lot [Line 101-104, IT 1, Parent 1, Palani, 2011-10-28].

The parents also feel that the direct connections between the school and the parents has made a big difference in the way uneducated parents view education and remain involved in various activities at school over the years. A parent noted:

There is some difference between educated and uneducated parents. Educated parents are more involved. Uneducated parents know that they lack education. But, they emphasize

they want their children to study and are more involved. They tell us during admission time also that they were not fortunate to receive education and therefore, these children should be educated. They keep coming. This changed due to the positive school parent contacts. Uneducated parents come more often than educated parents these days [Line 78-83, IT 1, Parent 1, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Further, the parents themselves believe that being involved not only provides them more opportunities to reinforce the importance of the education to their children, but also helps them learn something new every day.

My children read and write in English very well. They are very enthusiastic to learn. They tell me things that I did not learn or even know. They tell me what to say and what to do. They tell me that because I am a house helper and this is the only way I can get educated now. They assure me that they will study well and come up in life [Line 13-16, IT 1, Parent 4, 2011-11-01].

Even now, the headmistress will call me. When I wake up, I tell my children what the HM says all the time. You need to study and get a job because you should not suffer or struggle. You must get educated [Line 299-301, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Parent Involvement Practices at Palani

Palani has several parent involvement practices. Headmistress Latha revived some of the old practices like the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) which existed while Palani was a high school and created a new focus it. Simultaneously, she created new structures within the parent involvement practices to strengthen teacher and parent interactions. The structures in teacher collaboration were teacher committees and ongoing teacher meetings with her that included parent involvement. Further, Latha's own communication and availability to parents in her office each day also accentuated the importance around parent involvement. In the following pages of the case, the parent involvement practices at Palani and headmistress Latha's actions focused on are described.

Student ID card with Parent Information

Latha notes that the starting point for building connections with Palani's parent community was by taking specific steps to maintain a reliable database with parent or guardian (grandparent, aunt or uncle) details like name, cell phone and home number, and home address. Although Palani gathers the parent information during student admission and teachers continue to maintain their attendance registers with the same information, something more was needed to improve the accuracy of the data and be in close contact with parents.

This thought led Latha to introduce student ID cards at Palani, just one year after she took over as the school head. While ID cards may seem standard at any private school, it was an extra cost but of great significance to Palani, a government school. Latha believes that this initiation to keep accurate records of parents through using ID cards that all students would wear every day was a step to strengthen connections between teachers and parents. First, teachers would not have to walk to the office and look through the admission forms to find the student records which list parent details. They could use the ID card or their own attendance registers to contact the parents using their cell phones. Further, the students subject teachers who would not have access to other class attendance registers could easily find parent or guardian information on the student ID. A teacher noted:

The student ID card that HM Latha introduced is such a boon as it has all the parents' information. Earlier, we would have to depend on the attendance registers of respective class teachers or look through huge admission logs to find parent details [Line 313-315, IT 1, Teacher 2, Palani, 2011-10-24].

As with any new practice, just printing ID cards for students did not guarantee a reliable database with parent information. Latha created a structure wherein the students' parents' details are verified at the beginning of each academic year by their respective class teacher during the

orientation meeting. With the information gathered, the teachers are required to manually update their class attendance registers and the school's main admission forms register. This way, all the parents' information is consistent throughout. Latha notes that this has been done over the last two years by all her staff.

All teachers have the attendance register with the parents' details. All registers need to be maintained accurately with the information on the ID card at the beginning of the school year. We have accurate records now as teachers and can contact parents anytime easily. [Line 144-146, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Further, the students who do not wear their student ID cards are not allowed to sit in the classroom after the first warning has passed. Students who forget it the second time are made to sit in front of the headmistress Latha's office and parents will be called to the school. Latha has made the class teachers responsible to check if students are wearing their ID cards daily. During Palani's morning assembly, the individual class teachers make sure students are wearing the ID cards. If not, they check their registers and allow them to sit only if it is the first warning. If not, they are sent to Latha's office to wait until their parents bring their ID card. Latha notes that this inflexible structure has made the students more responsible and increased the importance of the ID card to parents. A teacher notes,

When the parents come, we require a letter from them if students don't wear the ID card for a second time. The letter is not a requirement by the state government. It is a strong practice here as we want them to know the importance of it. There are some rules that cannot be changed. The HM supports it completely [Line 356-359, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

ID cards have also been helpful as students sometimes travel long distances or in other emergencies like fainting during the summer months, which Latha notes as being very common. When this happens, anyone from the community is able to contact the school and provide the student and parent or guardian names and contact them directly to give the information. Most of

these students don't have other ID cards, even a driver's license, as they are very poor. Latha notes that the school student ID is helpful in this situation. A teachers says,

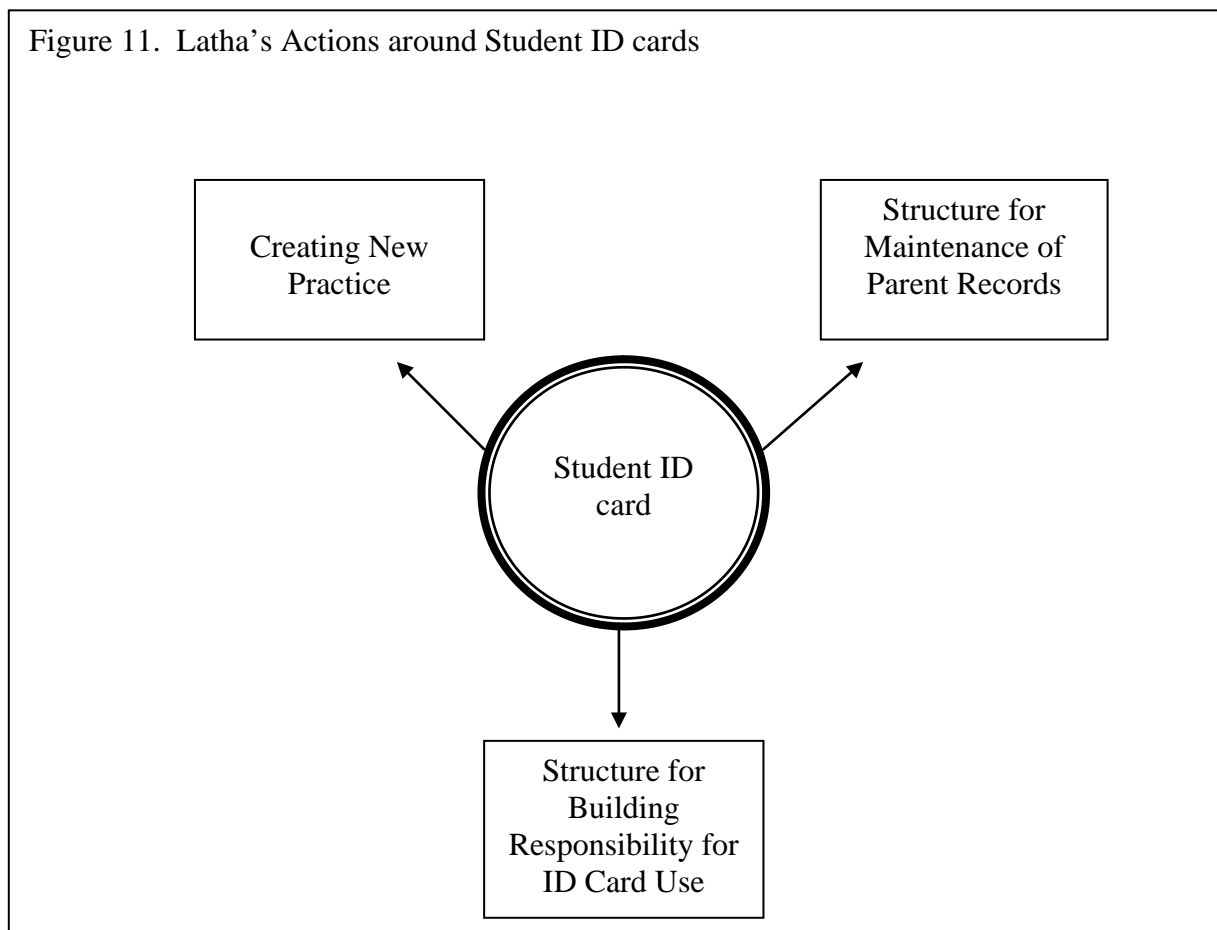
It is useful for the students. A student lost her practical lab books which were needed for her board examination. The bag had her ID card and one person brought it and came to school. Some children faint in the bus due to the heat. The public looks at the ID card and contact us immediately [Line 317-320, IT 1, Teacher 2, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Teachers and parents also talk about how their connections have been strengthened due to this practice initiated and sustained effectively by Latha.

All students have to come with the ID card that has all the parent contact details. With the information in our class registers about the parent occupations, we can understand the students' position. A year ago, a girl in my class in the 10th standard was a top rank holder but very poor. Her father was somewhere and mother was a sweeper. She was not in a position to pay even the house rent. The student used to talk a lot to me and I simply called her and asked her how her family is doing. We helped that student through the PTA. Having all the details makes a big difference to stay connected with all the parents [Line 144-150, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Through this practice, Latha effectively instituted a system that ensured accuracy of the parents' records through ID cards. She also believes that this helped bring the teachers and parents a step closer. Her actions included creating a new practice, structures for ongoing maintenance of parent records through the school year, entrusting class teachers to ensure students wear the ID card, and making the students and parents more accountable, thereby creating more awareness.

Figure 11. Latha's Actions around Student ID cards



Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

Palani was a high school for nearly a decade since 2000 and during this period, the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) was not used effectively. While the PTA in a government schools is considered as a state-mandated practice, some freedom is provided to schools for the functioning of the same. PTAs typically consist of a 13 member executive committee that has representative members from the parent and teacher community. The president, vice president and treasurer posts are held by the parents and headmistress Latha holds the secretary post. All other posts are filled by parents and teachers who are nominated or elected the PTA.

Palani's PTA history was not a positive one. The parents and teachers note that the PTA was not that strong in the past and did not have the full support of the main executive committee members who are from the teacher and parent community. The infrastructure in the school was poor and being developed slowly. The executive committee would use the PTA forum as a platform for raising concerns rather than generating positive energy for collective action. As a result, the previous school head only maintained the PTA as a state-mandated body. It was not used for parents and teachers to come together through monthly PTA executive committee meetings and PTA general body meetings, which usually involve the entire parent community. A current PTA member talks about the former PTA when Palani was a high school.

The previous HM almost removed the PTA because of the committee parents. There was no active PTA here. Some schools have strong PTAs, but that was not so here. Some of the members fought for us initially, but not all. Without the PTA, the previous HM identified parents who are doing well and got their support. That was some amazing talent. But the PTA is useful as a forum to connect the parents and teachers and needed to be brought back. [Line 190-195, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Some of the PTA core members used to just scream and raise negative issues about the school. The HM used to beg them to come after 4 or before 8 in the morning and not disrupt school. They used to fight with the previous HM and as a result the PTA was never a priority. [Line 205-207, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

When Latha joined Palani in 2008 as headmistress of the upgraded school [to higher secondary], she heard about the positive force of the parents and school community to steer the infrastructure development forward. She met with teachers and parents and talked about their initial collective fight for the school's development. From here, Latha took all steps possible to revive the PTA at Palani. Initially, she formed a small executive committee with parents and teachers and filled the key posts of president, vice president, treasurer and secretary. She also contacted the executive committee members by phone in an effort to have continuous monthly meetings. One parent says:

Whatever the HM asks, I help out. I am always behind the HM. I take part in all PTA executive committee meetings and we try and get more parents to participate. The HM leads and that makes a huge difference. HM takes all the effort and has all the numbers. She herself calls the parents who don't actively participate and make them come to school. When that commitment is there from the HM, the parents also respond. [Line 57-61, IT 1, Parent 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

From regular monthly executive committee meetings, Latha also networked with various non-governmental organizations (NGO) to keep the momentum around Palani's infrastructure development. By doing so, she was using the PTA as a platform for positive action. Latha and a parent talk about this.

These members of the R club have helped to fix the water purifier and some buildings. They setup the Interact club and gave badges to the office bearers also. They also gave the students track pants and t-shirts with the school name printed on it. Through our PTA executive committee, we have been tapping into these kinds of organizations a lot [Line 390-393, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Through the PTA executive committee, the ground and buildings have been constructed and infrastructure has been restored. We raised a lot of funding to develop these buildings [parent shows photo albums with the pictures of the pond in the school field, potholes, broken building, doors, chairs and desks, water logged corridor, and the open toilets]. [Line 28-31, IT 1, Parent 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Further, Latha also used the school assembly and other school functions when her entire parent and teacher community were present to showcase the small achievements made by the PTA. She also used the PTA to find sponsors for prizes for students and also invited parents to be part of those functions. Postcards and cell phone contacts are initiated for parents to participate. This also provided a way to reinforce the revival of the PTA among the parent and school community.

There was no strong PTA in this school initially. Earlier, just a few members in the PTA would come. Because of our HM and steps to use the PTA, parents and all the PTA executive committee members come. Parents will give prizes for students. Students who

get the first rank in 10th and 12th classes are given cash award and prizes. For dance and speech competition winners, sponsored prizes are given. We also have competitions for students' interests as part of PTA and parents come for that [Line 127-132, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

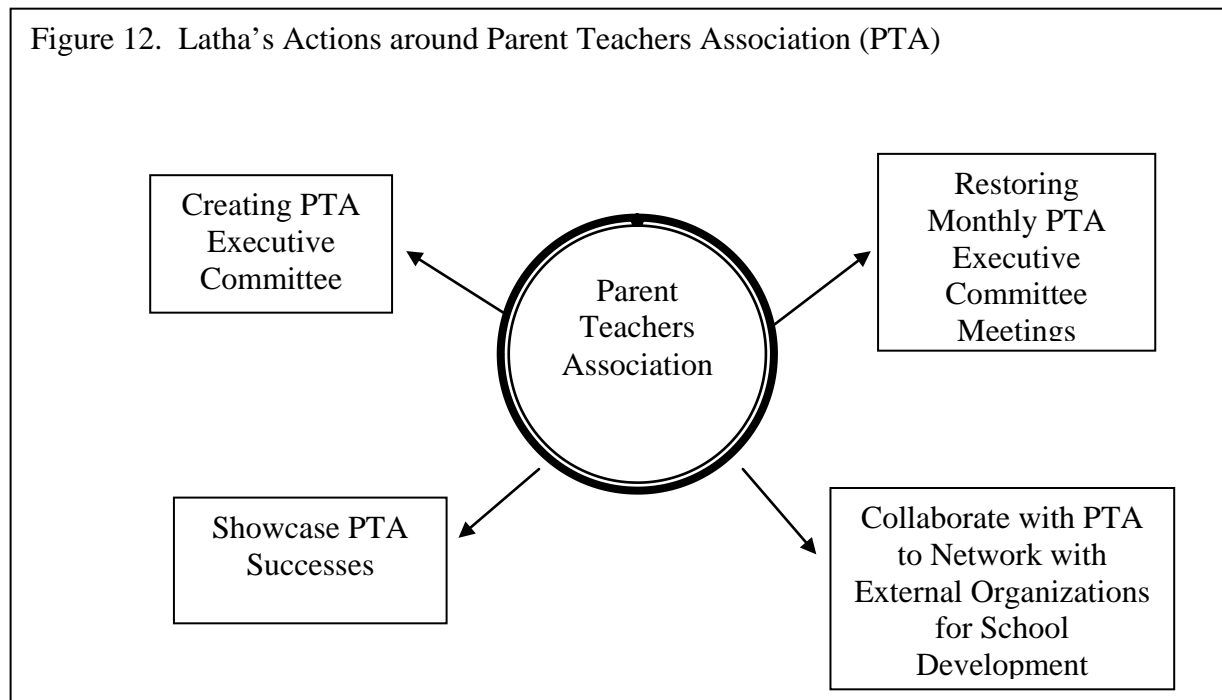
We need the parents' support. We have PTA meetings and we send postcards and we call them on their cell phone repeatedly so they can participate. [Line 353-354, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

Members of Palani's PTA executive committee also highlight the positive turnaround of the PTA in a short time. They highlight Latha's role in reviving the school's PTA and increasing involvement of parents over the last few years. This has also been strengthened by other parent involvement practices in the school like the parents' meeting, report card day, communication with parents among other practices. Latha notes that although the PTA is currently only used for school development, the forum needs to be extended for discussing academic, disciplinary or other issues that come up during the parents' meeting.

Parents are deeply involved now. They all come for parents' meeting, report card day and they are free to give their opinions. The PTA still needs to be made as a larger forum, but the HM is very proactive. She herself calls executive committee parents and meets them regularly. You don't see that in many government schools. She goes beyond her duty also [Line 28-32, IT 1, Parent 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Overall, Latha revived the PTA and effectively used it for the school's development. The specific actions she took included: creating a small executive committee; networking with external organizations through the PTA for the school's development; and highlighting PTA achievements to gain further support.

Figure 12. Latha's Actions around Parent Teachers Association (PTA)



Parents' Meet

While Latha reinstated Palani's PTA practice with a new focus on collaborating with parents to strengthen school development, the parents' meet was created as a forum for discussing academic and teaching and learning issues. Latha believes that the Parents' Meet in which the entire parent and teacher community participates (classes 9 to 12) is one of the strongest parent involvement practices at Palani. She notes that this practice uses the traditional approach of group meetings with parents of students appearing for the board examinations (class 10 and 12). In addition, several meetings through the school year also allow the school to discuss important topics with parents. These topics are identified through suggestions from the teachers or parents over the course of the school year.

Parents' Orientation Meeting

Earlier, the first Parent's Meet would take place after the quarterly examination in the

first term, but Latha introduced the “parents’ orientation meeting” at the beginning of the school year to initiate the collaboration with parents early and as a welcome for new parents. For this, Latha meets with her teachers before the orientation to review goals and plan for the year. A teacher notes that this addition by Latha has helped establish a concrete plan for teachers to work with parents at the very beginning of the school year. Further, it has also helped to present the school expectations to parents early in the school year and also receive suggestions from them. Latha and a teacher talk about the parents’ orientation meet.

We have meetings with teachers to plan for the Parents’ Meet. Even before that, at the very beginning of the school year, the parents’ orientation meet will take place. Teachers will meet with me for planning before that and talk about all the issues to address at the parents’ orientation meet [Line 54-57, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01]

We have a parents’ orientation and lay out the expectations for school discipline, marks, and uniform among others. The parents can also share their views in this initial forum. In the orientation meeting, after the HM and teachers talk, parents have prepared remarks. Parents also speak to the HM any time during that initial meeting independently. She encourages that [Line 285-288, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Planning for Parents’ Meet

After the orientation meeting, the planning for the Parent’s Meet begins. Earlier, higher secondary teachers and the school head would plan for the Parents’ Meet at the monthly teachers’ meetings. But now, Latha has created teacher committees which are divided by their class (9-12) and led by their respective assistant headmistresses. They meet and review student progress through result analysis after the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations and identify topics for the Parents’ Meet. Latha also works with the individual teacher committees and at teacher meetings to create specific agendas for the Parents’ Meet. Latha notes,

After the quarterly, half yearly and year end, we meet as a group and plan extensively. We have committee meetings. We don't ask all the parents to come. Only very poor children are called first time. There will be kids who are five subject failures or four subject failures, we ask those parents to come first [Line 48-51, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Teachers reported:

We have teacher meetings once a month. The HM reiterates that. She does not tell us every time. We already know the importance of that. The beginning of the year, she talks to us in depth. She tells us that the parents have these kinds of problems or these are the problems that we have faced in the past and we need to do this and so on [Line 205-208, IT 1, Teacher 2, Palani, 2011-10-24].

HM holds a staff meeting every month and highlights all the problems in that month that they have had with parents and families and guide us. If we need help individually, she talks to us and is accessible anytime. We can definitely go anytime and talk to solve the various issues [Line 158-161, IT 1, Teacher 4, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Parents' Meet Structure & Issues Addressed

Parents' Meet at Palani after the three term examinations covers a range of issues around student academics and development. Latha participates with the teachers for these meetings every year. For parents of the students preparing for the board exam, additional meetings are conducted before they appear for the final examination. Latha notes:

If it's a group meeting, we talk about school performance, what the children have to do, how the parents can help the children and all other general things that affect all children. In the beginning of the year, before we start all the coaching, we talk to all the parents. [Line 32-34, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Before they appear for the exam, we talk to 10th and 12th parents separately also. We remind them that there are only a few days left for the exam and ask them, 'How can you help them and reduce their chores at home? They did not bring food, so please give them food properly.' Both the teachers and I are present. Those who are taking classes for 10th and 12th, those teachers are there for the meet. We allow the parents also to talk and express their concerns. The parents say, if you do it like this it will be nice and so on. That is effective" [Line 39-44, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01]

Further, specific discussion topics for parents are encouraged by Latha during the school year. Teachers talk about several topics that have been the focus of the Parents' Meet earlier

including the importance of education, limiting TV viewing, nutrition and hygiene, among others. Latha notes:

During the academic year, if teachers identify issues to hold a Parents' Meet, we hold it immediately. There is no given time. It could be related to academics, discipline, and behavior. Discipline was a huge issue earlier. When I joined first, we had a string of parents' meet just for that. We called the parents and tell them that students come and go whenever they want. Until students are inside the campus, we have a watch. When teachers identify issues, I will take action straight away [Line 81-86, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

This year for the Parents' Meet we invited everybody and talked about the importance of education. If they are not able to make their children study after class 12, we provide examples of successful students who have done higher education and help them. We get the money from NGOs. The girl who ranked first in her class, we gave the student money. Even from PTA we give and other NGOs supports [Line 219-223, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Parents' Meet as a Goal

At Palani, all teachers know that Parent' Meet is a goal and that the steps Latha has taken and the meetings have increased collaboration among parents, teachers, and herself. Latha says,

All teachers know that Parents' Meet is a goal in the school. We have to get all parents to come and also meet them individually. This is more crucial for irregular students and weak students [Line 256-258, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

A parent notes:

Teachers have to encourage and meet parents and they do that. They meet with parents individually and in groups as it is a goal in this school. I also interact with other parents. There is always plus and minus and in all schools, whether it is a private or government school. Some parents don't understand and some do. Some just come and complain while others make a positive movement forward [Line 187-191, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

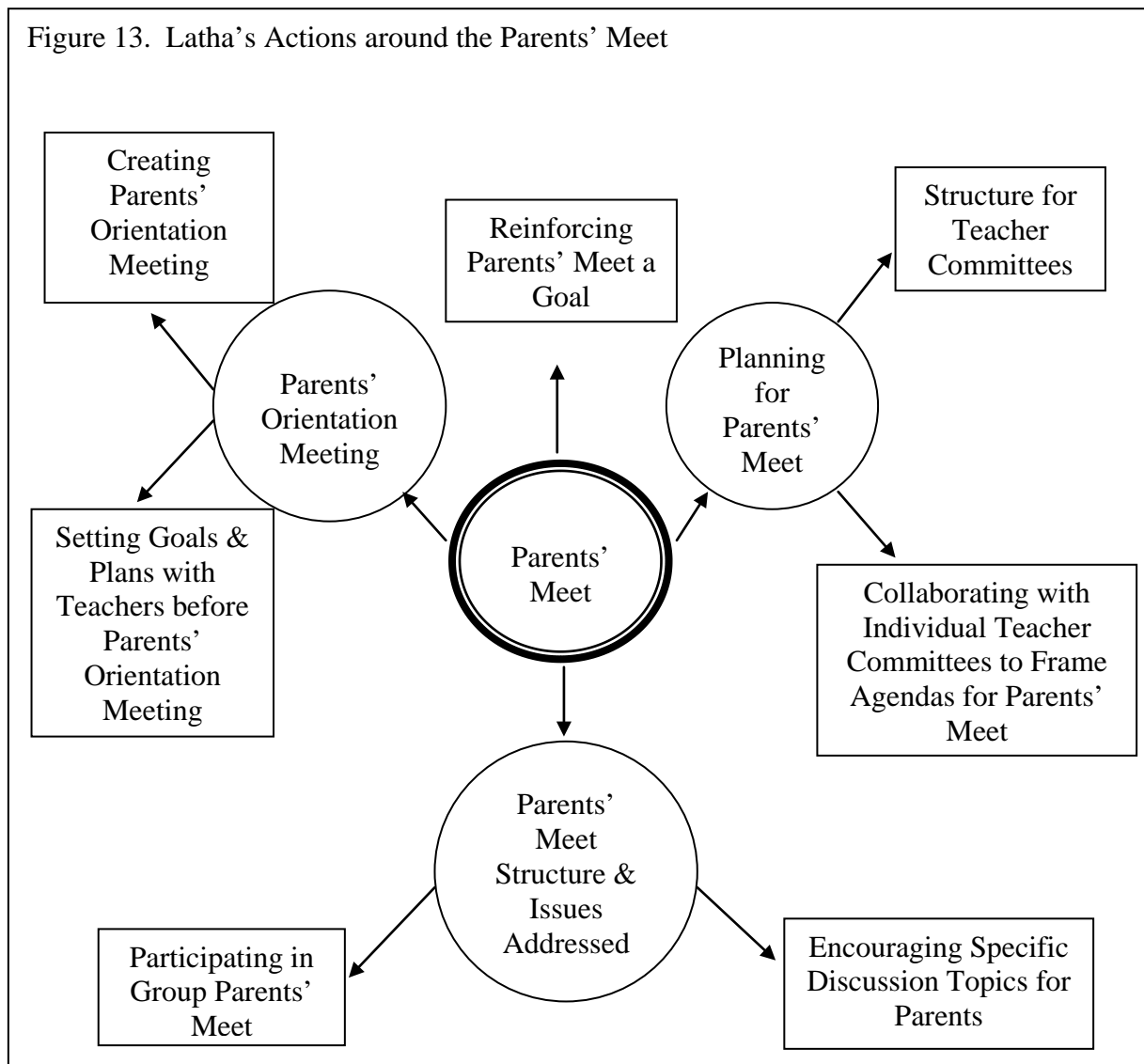
When all parents meet, they all talk. That collaboration is important in this community since they don't have much time to devote as they are poor and cannot miss work. This collaboration through the Meet has kept our school and parent community in dialogue [Line 225-227, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

One parent describes the prior Parents' Meet and the changes that have taken place. The parent also notes that Latha's steps have increased collective action among the parent community over the years.

Like all parents, I also come for the Meet regularly. We meet other parents and it is a good opportunity to network and interact. In the first parents' meet that I attended three years ago, everyone had only complaints about the lack of infrastructure. But if they let me talk, I was very interested in talking. When they started the school, the facilities were limited, but after this HM came she collected funds and spruced up the infrastructure. She did that for the girls. The first Parents' Meet, the teachers were not even allowed to talk. Parents kept getting up and saying this is not right and that is not right. But things have come a long way since then and now it is more effective and we all work together [Line 172-179, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Overall, Latha used the Parents' Meet to effectively address academic issues and other important issues for student development with parents. Latha's actions for this practice included: setting clear goals and expectations for the parents' meet; creating a parents' orientation meeting; forming and encouraging collaboration through teacher committees; ongoing monthly teacher meetings with her; encouraging all topics and issues as suggested by teachers and parents for ongoing parents' meetings.

Figure 13. Latha's Actions around the Parents' Meet



Teacher-Parent Contacts

Individual Teacher-Parent Contact

In addition to the Parents' Meet, Latha has created several structures that assist individual class teachers and subject teachers to foster effective teacher and parent connections throughout the school year. These connections between teachers and parents go beyond academics. Issues identified by the teacher independently or ideas from teacher committee meetings, teacher meetings with Latha and the Parents' Meet are used for strengthening individual connections

with parents. Latha encourages these connections through several ways. As a first step, she requires teachers to maintain attendance registers with parent information. Latha had introduced the student ID card with parent information for Palani's students. This information provides teachers detailed information about the students' background and a chance to identify and solve problems by getting in touch with their parents. Further, class teachers also follow up with Latha on their parent contacts. Latha notes:

The teachers write about the parents' background and occupation in their attendance registers. For students who don't perform well academically, they have additional information. They [teachers] come and tell me that the student is going through such a difficult time at home and ask for ways to deal with the situation. They approach me individually. If the child studies well, we try and do other things like get her scholarships [Line 111-118, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Latha encourages class teachers to emphasize the importance of parental involvement to students during their first class period. She believes that students should be aware of the importance of their parents being involved at home and in school. Since the class teachers have continuous contact with their cohort of students for an entire school year, she believes that repeated positive messages will help bring in more parents to school. A teacher notes:

Parents' cooperation and support is so important. We need to tell the students every day, for at least 5 minutes, positive things and bring them [parents] here. As soon as children come into class and as soon as we enter, we talk to them for 5 minutes about good things and encourage and motivate them and then begin classes. We talk about parents' involvement. We tell them that you should bring parents and respect your parents. Teachers have their own way of communicating good messages to their students. As a Tamil teacher, I tell them positive things along with the Tamil lessons itself. Along with the lesson, we tell them what is good and what is bad, what they should do at home and what they should do in school, how to talk at home and how to talk in school and how to behave with parents and teachers and the HM. We all want more parents to come and students to realize the value of that [Line 165-175, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Latha also motivates class teachers to solve problems related to parents themselves. As a practice, Latha's office door is always kept open, just as she answers the

school phone herself. She provides this access to teachers and parents throughout the day to solve issues or welcome new ideas, showing by example the importance of parental involvement. Teachers note:

To identify a problem, it takes a long time. For the truth to come out there has to be a situation. For example, when I was taking class once, I was taking a lesson in Tamil which had a story on parents' love. I was explaining it and this girl had tears in her eyes. I was stunned. After class, she confided to me that she did not have her father and her mother was very sick. I also got in touch with her mother and also went to her house. This made her marks improve. These are the connections. If I can't solve something, I go to the HM. She is always available for issues related to parents [Line 256-262 IT 1, Teacher 2, Palani, 2011-10-24].

The parents definitely come and check if they [students] are paying attention in class and come very often. They tell us that last month she got better marks, this month she has got worse marks. Even if they are uneducated, they still deeply care and they want to know. If they question us, we will see what the reason is more deeply. It is a loop. We will ask her [student]. She [student] will say my parents have some problems at home. We will come to know what the reason is and we will call the parents again and talk to them. We will do anything for the student to improve and the HM supports us to talk to parents freely [Line 82-88, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

Class teachers' contacts with parents are also further enhanced when they want to take the child out during school hours. Latha introduced the "gate pass" and both the teacher and herself sign on it when parents want to take the child home. A PTA volunteer notes that this has helped parents, especially those who are not well educated, gain awareness about education. Sometimes the parents remove the child during the school day for work and to support the other siblings. Latha believes that this system has provided another way to interact with parents. The PTA volunteer talks about this system:

The girl cannot leave campus without getting the gate pass signed by the HM. Previously, they would simply ask the teacher and leave. Now, even if the teacher agrees, the parents and student must get the pass signed from the HM. The brother or sister cannot come and take the child out. The parent has to come. Out of all the HMs in the past, this HM has connected with parents in so many ways [Line 14-18, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Overall, Latha takes several actions to strengthen class teacher and parent contacts. She requires teachers to maintain their attendance registers with parent information; encourages teachers to promote the importance of parent involvement in their classrooms; requires gate pass to be signed by the teacher and her if a student needs to leave school and encourages teachers to provide feedback on parent contacts to Latha.

Individual Subject Teacher-Parent Contact

Just as Latha created numerous ways for class teachers to interact with parents, she also strengthened connections between individual subject teachers and parents. The subject teachers also have multiple opportunities to interact with parents during the extra coaching classes in the morning and after school for students facing the board examinations (class 10 and 12). Teacher committees and ongoing teacher meetings with Latha also provide an opportunity for subject teachers to share experiences they have with parents with her. A teacher notes:

The HM has created a good vision through the teacher meetings. Once in 15 days all teachers get together. Before the examination, for 10th and 12th, subject teachers meet. The HM always says that parents are important and that they should advise the parents this way. She emphasizes many points about that in the teachers meetings. Teachers also share experiences [Line 275-278, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Further, she encourages subject teachers to meet parents at different points in the day, just as the contact between the class teachers and the parents are continuous. Subject teachers keep the mark registers in which they note the breakdown of marks (grades) earned by students when parents meet them during the school day. Latha believes that this has helped talk to parents about specific areas in which the student is weak in a particular subject. Latha notes:

During lunch, after school, before school, they can meet subject teachers when they are free. Some parents get the cell phone numbers of teachers to stay in touch. I have given complete freedom to teachers to contact them [Line 398-400, IT 1.1, HM 2, 2011-10-21].

A teacher says:

If there is a problem, teachers will try and solve it. Next, the HM will help. The 10th and 12th special coaching takes place in the morning and concerned subject teachers will be there and have special coaching in class. Every day, before and after school, parents can interact with subject teachers during special coaching for class 10 and 12 students [Line 105-108, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Individual mark registers are there with the subject teachers. Everyone has their own mark register and particular details of all students. When parents come, sometimes we even share the papers of weak students which we will keep till the exams. That way, we can show them exactly where they need to improve [Line 205-210, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

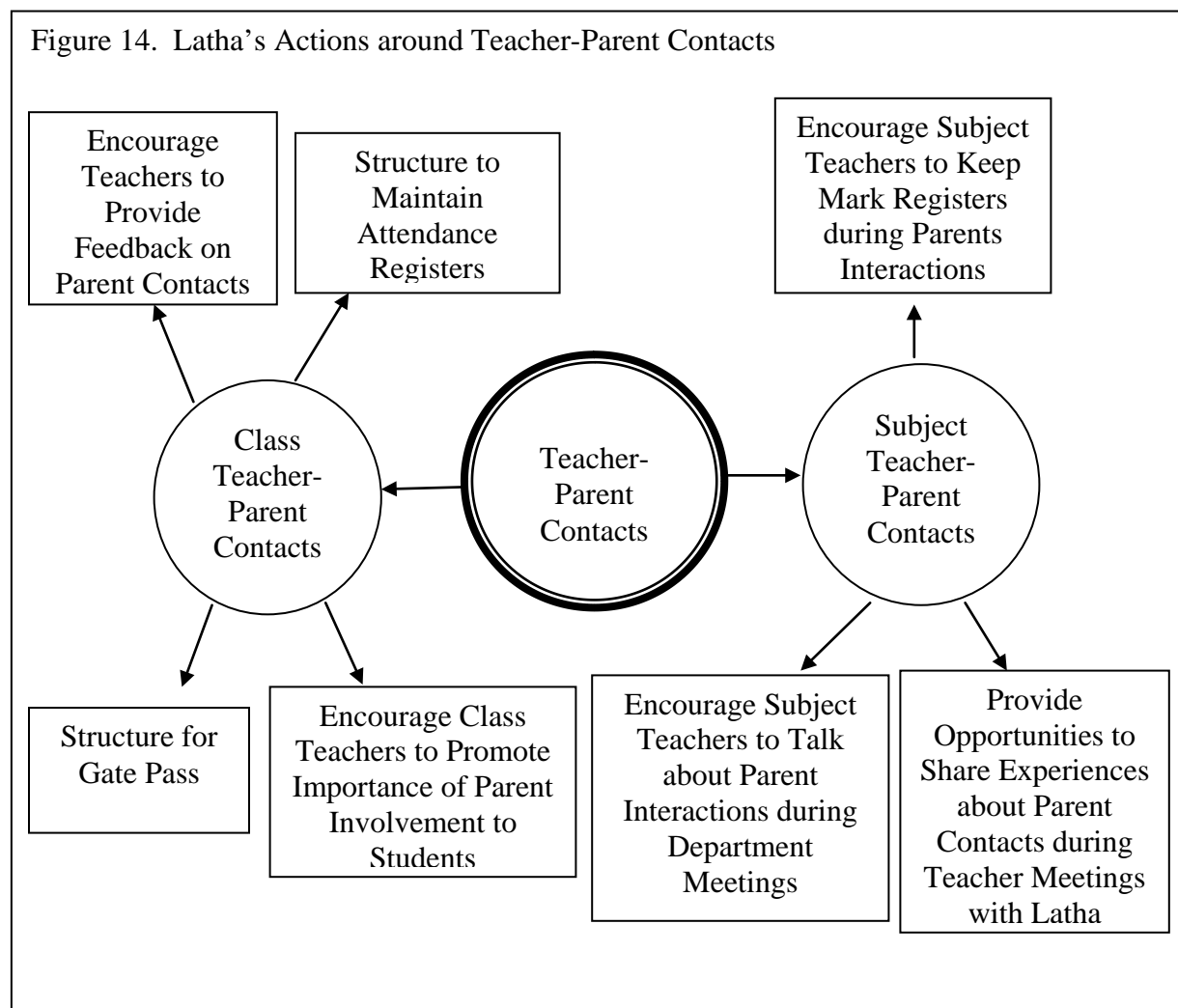
Latha also encourages the subject teachers to meet within their own department regularly.

She also meets with subject teachers individually to review results and their interaction with parents during coaching sessions.

In our department, our group of teachers talks about parents and students. The subject teachers will discuss how to plan lessons but also discuss how to work with parents during the special coaching sessions [Line 170-172, IT 1, Teacher 5, Palani, 2011-11-01].

I meet with teachers subject wise and ask them why there are so many failures in their subject. In that situation, I ask them to take extra classes. Extra coaching will have to be given then. If Maths is less, then there is more coaching there. Parent interactions during special coaching are also discussed during the meeting with me [Line 98-101, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Latha took several actions to strengthen subject teacher and parent interactions. Many of these also strengthened her connections with parents also. That included: encouraging subject teacher to keep mark registers when interacting with parents; providing opportunities to share experiences with parents during teacher meetings and department meetings.



Open Day or Report Card Day

The Report card day at Palani provides an opportunity for parents to meet with individual class teachers, subject teachers and Latha. Since Latha had set up several ways for class teachers and subject teachers to interact with parents throughout the school year, it plays as an effective precursor to the report card day. At Palani, these report card days are conducted after the three main term examinations as a way for parents to interact with the school about student progress.

To plan for the report card day, the class teachers and subject teachers meet and plan through their committees. Discussions with Latha are also held during the monthly teacher meetings. Further, while the report cards are reviewed and signed by respective class teachers for classes 9 and 11, Latha signs the report cards for students of class 10 and 12 who are facing the board examinations. She notes that this helps to maintain the overall results and percentage for class 10 and 12 each year as she also follows up with teachers and interacts with parents during the report card day. In preparation for the report card day, Latha also requires the class teachers to send word through their students for parents to attend.

The class teachers meet with the subject teachers and talk and discuss with the report card. That's a routine practice. On report card day, all parents come and meet with the subject teachers and class teachers. They go for a round and have to meet everyone. The HM is also available to meet with parents [Line 61-64, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

For 10th and 12th, I sign the report card myself and meet the parents individually for weak students. We discuss the students' cases in depth. We all have to keep talking to parents and that is the only way for the student to improve. My direct interactions with parents make a difference in this case [Line 267-270, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

As a way to communicate with parents, Latha also encourages class teachers to write comments on the report cards and pass on positive messages to parents about talents of students beyond academics. In many situations, parents are unable to attend the report card day as they are day laborers or travel far for work. Latha notes that previously parents could just call, but now she requires all parents to meet the class teacher. Even if they cannot come on the report card day, they come at a later time, collect the card, interact with teachers and her and sign the register. This flexibility has allowed parents to understand that the school is making all efforts to reach out about their child's performance.

Even if they don't come on the report card day, they can take a day or two extra but they must come. We are a little flexible. But they all must meet the teachers and me and sign the register. Even if the mother has gone out of town, she must meet the teachers when

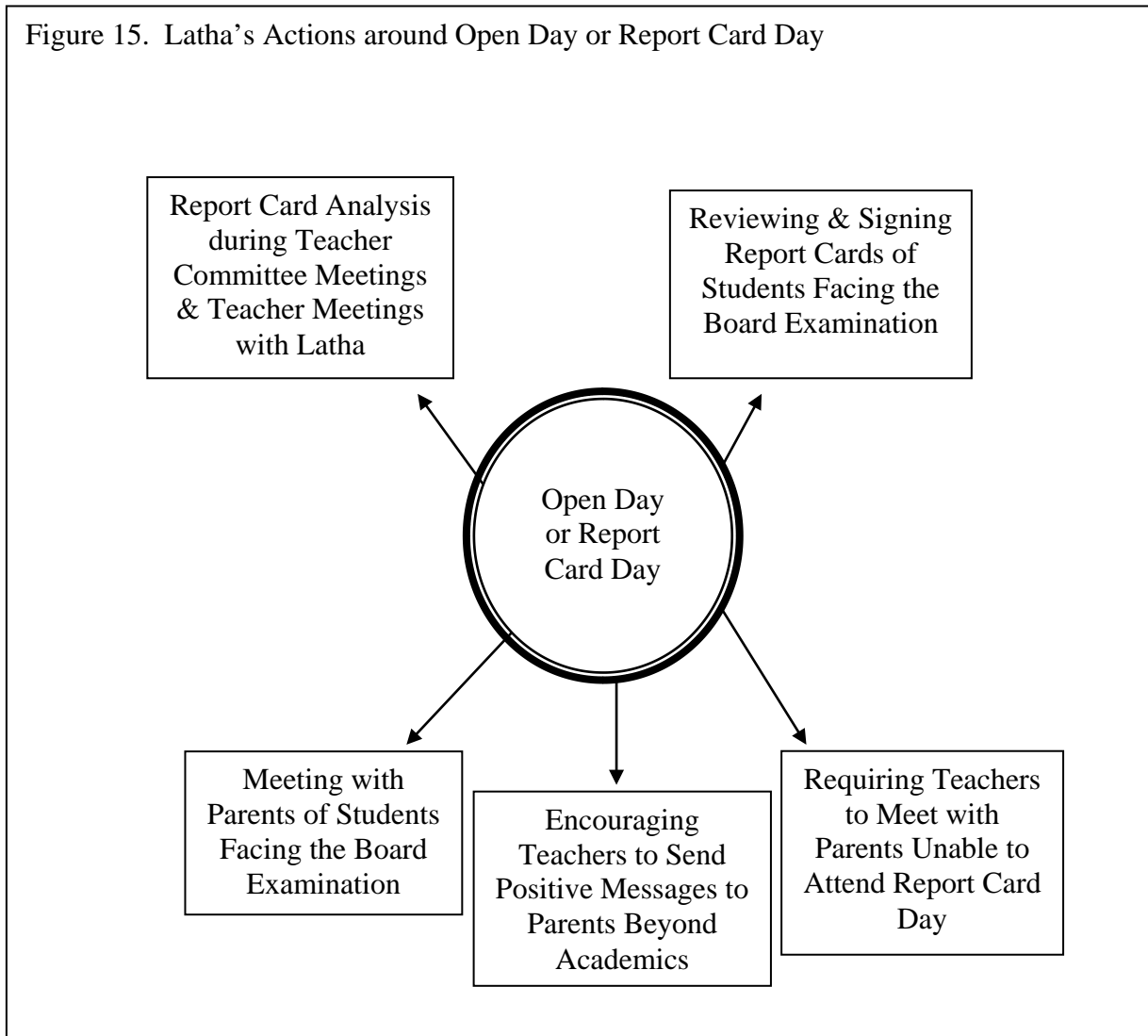
she returns. Till they come, we will not leave them. We will call and follow up. Some students don't tell their parents about the report card day. But parents will realize and will ask their children or come to school and meet us directly. Some parents are very much interested and come and pester us, asking if the teachers are coming and if the progress card is being given at all [Line 76-83, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Teachers use the report card for all around development, not just academics. Some girls sing well or take part in plays and sports. Some students' family background is so poor that they cannot study at home or take part in other activities. So we make adjustments and let them study in the school, even in my office. We tell the parents that during the report card day. Using that opportunity to give positive messages, we can get the children to do well. [Line 169-174, IT 3.1, HM 2, 2011-10-31].

Latha takes several actions to promote the report card day and interactions with parents.

The several ways in which the class teacher and subject teacher interact with parents strengthens the discussions during the report card day. Her actions to sign the report cards of class 10 and 12 students and ongoing meetings with teachers to identify the students who are not performing well academically before the report card day leads to her interactions with those parents. Latha also encourages teachers to pass on positive messages to parents beyond academics, so other talents can be highlighted to parents.

Figure 15. Latha's Actions around Open Day or Report Card Day



Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School

Parent volunteering is a common practice at Palani. Headmistress Latha uses the teacher committees effectively for this purpose. She has arranged for the assistant heads to recruit parent volunteers. At the teacher committee meetings, assistant heads are notified by respective teachers about parents who are likely to volunteer. The most senior teacher for each subject area leads the functions specific to their expertise and plan along with Latha. A teachers notes:

The assistant school heads help to recruit volunteers. For functions, the most senior teacher will take charge. For the science function and exhibitions, the science head of the department will take charge. For Tamil language functions, the Tamil head of the department will take charge. Parents will come for independence day and republic day [Line 117-120, IT 1, Teacher 1, Palani, 2011-10-24].

Teachers note that parent volunteers participate in sports, outside competitions, exhibitions and cultural programs and accompany the teachers. Latha supports this and notes that even when parents who are not educated offer to volunteer, other parents get motivated. She believes any kind of involvement matters. A teachers says:

If there are 36 kids, we all take a van or two and go to the sporting event. Everything is taken care of. Parents can definitely come and they come for the Kabadi and Tennicoit games. That involvement matters and when other children see that parental support, they also get motivated more. One or two parents make up for all other parents who cannot attend [Line 110-114, IT 1, Teacher 4, Palani, 2011-10-31].

In the month of May, the school provides extra computer classes and other courses. When they do that, these students get encouraged as it is a big deal in a government school to offer that. When they have some kind of project work, even if they keep an exhibition like the science exhibition, I sit with the children and help. I come and volunteer and work with them as I have studied up to college [Line 206-211, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Latha also uses contacts of the organizations through the PTA to find external volunteers from the community. National functions are also celebrated at Palani, drawing many parents into school every year. She believes that every small opportunity counts and that her direct effort makes a difference in fostering connections with her parent community. Latha says,

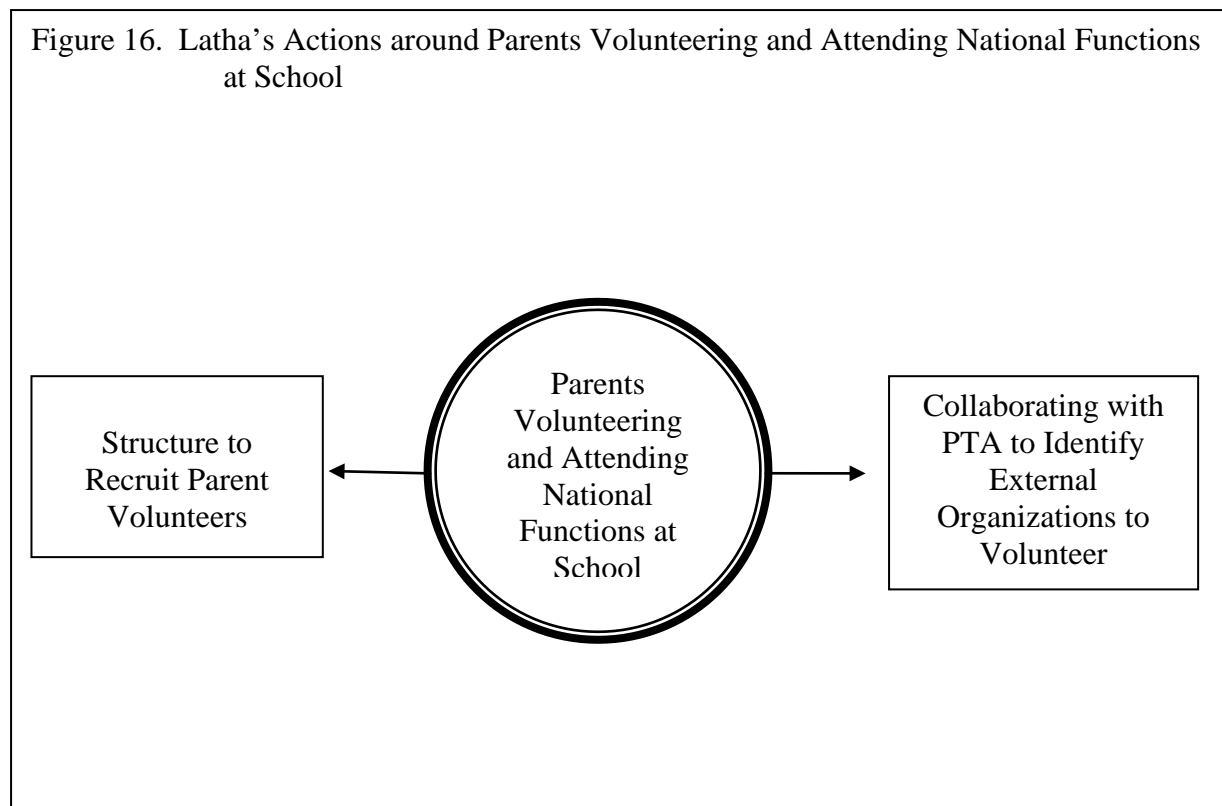
We have volunteers from organizations who come and take summer classes for students. Parents come with students and interact with other parents during this time [Line 182-184, IT 2.1, HM 2, 2011-10-28].

A teacher notes:

When compared to other schools, we celebrate numerous national functions such as independence day, republic day for example. Each and every small occasion we used to conduct and invite parents. We want to provide children here the same opportunities as private school children. HM identifies organizations using the PTA who conduct quiz, speech, essay competitions. The students who win the competition also get prizes and parents come for this. These are ways parents are also connected with the school [Line 185-191, IT 1, Teacher 3, Palani, 2011-10-28].

Overall, Latha has created a system where the assistant school heads identify parent volunteers and the senior subject teacher leads competitions and exhibitions in which parents participate. Latha herself identifies organizations through the PTA that can conduct competitions and provide student prizes, and hold summer computer classes among others.

Figure 16. Latha's Actions around Parents Volunteering and Attending National Functions at School



Communication (Phone and Latha's Office)

Latha talks about the various forms of communication with Palani's parent community.

She says,

Our communication with parents is strong. We use the phone, circulars for events, in person and all sorts of methods. There is repeated reinforcement and because of that parents' involvement has grown more and more. They know that we are watching and that we are taking 100 percent responsibility from our side [Line 95-98, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Latha's Direct Contact

Latha uses two powerful role modeling techniques to show her staff the importance of parent involvement. One, she does not have a set schedule for parents to visit her office; as a result she has an open office policy. Two, when she is in office, she answers the school phone herself. Even when her secretary is present, in a table opposite her, Latha still chooses to continue this practice. She believes that this direct contact with parents helps build connections and network with more people in the community. She also notes that this is one of the communication strategies initiated by her to get parents to keep visiting school. She also uses these opportunities to gather informal feedback from parents. Latha says:

When they come to drop their children or give lunch, we will catch the parents. That is another form of communication. We have an informal question and answer session for concerns in my office. They are welcome to drop in as my office is open all the time and that is when I am able to get more suggestions [Line 186-189, IT 2.1, HM 2, 2011-10-28].

Academics

While Palani's teachers use the cell phone to contact parents repeatedly for academic issues, Latha's open office door policy also has many teachers coming to her when there is a need for her immediate assistance in dealing with parents. Latha notes:

Because we keep calling and calling, things are different. They don't really look at us like a government school. All my teachers with their own cell phones keep calling parents. Without my knowledge also they talk to the parents so often. Finally they come to me. [They sometimes say] 'Madam, I've tried my best to talk to the parents and I am unable

to do this' Then I will call and speak to the parent myself. It makes a huge difference when the headmistress of the school calls to solve something. I look at it as making a difference in the life of a child who has the capacity to succeed. Our school is really an exception. We use different strategies to get parents to come and it is working well as their support is important [Line 136-143, IT 4, HM 2, 2011-11-01].

Sports

Further, Palani communicates to parents for reasons beyond academics. In this school, there is a big push for sports. Students who perform well academically and participate at the district or state level in sports have an advantage when they apply for college. This is the reason one of Latha's goals around her "model school vision" is constructing a track and field for the students. Latha and the teachers believe that girls are much more interested in sports these days and parents also understand the value of sports as a supplement to academics. A parent describes the contact that Latha made in this respect.

The HM called me for sports and she encouraged me so much. Even I was not confident but the HM and teachers were. They said my daughter will win and I know this certificate will matter. They identified her and the teacher would not change her mind. They called from the HMs office and the physical education teacher encouraged us so much and we got our daughter to participate [Line 232-236, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Latha also encourages teachers to contact parents for sports as it makes a difference. The teachers say that the support Latha provides increases the participation of parents.

Parents come with us for sports competitions. They come for all events and we take them in our van as they want to see their daughter and the HM expects it. The headmistress arranges for a van, she talks to all students who are participating, talks to parents and encourages us and supports us to go. She is behind us right through. For coaching for sports, she also arranges someone through her contacts. Parents have come and thanked us profusely for training the children and supporting them beyond academics [Line 169-181, IT 1, Teacher 4, Palani, 2011-10-31].

She also taps into external organizations for sporting equipment and gear sponsorship as parents cannot afford it. She also requires teachers to call parents if students win games. Parents

are then invited to school to attend the morning assembly. The drum and clap ritual is carried out when the parents are present and students receive prizes. Teachers note:

The R [pseudonym] club has given sports uniforms. The children go home and tell their parents about it. Besides that, they give prizes too. The HM gets prizes and encourages them in front of parents. Other students want to participate too. Next time, they are motivated to come forward and take part in sports or participate in some way. It reaches out to them. They tell me and tell their parents. Parents also thank me. Students who have gone to college and got admissions because of sports have come back and expressed their gratitude [Line 190-197, IT 1, Teacher 4, Palani, 2011-10-31].

If the students are doing well in sports, we call the parents and talk to them straight away. We encourage them. The students also ask us to talk to their parents and come and have conversations with me. Without parental support, it is hard. Some parents don't accept if the child goes home and asks for permission. When the student's request is backed up by the teacher and the headmistress, it is more powerful. There was a student who played tennikoit at the state level but lost by one point. Teachers spoke to the parents and made them understand the importance of participation in everything. Madam also speaks to the parents in such situations as this will be helpful later in the student's life, as it is the case now [Line 226-233, IT 1, Teacher 4, Palani, 2011-10-31].

Developing Home Conditions

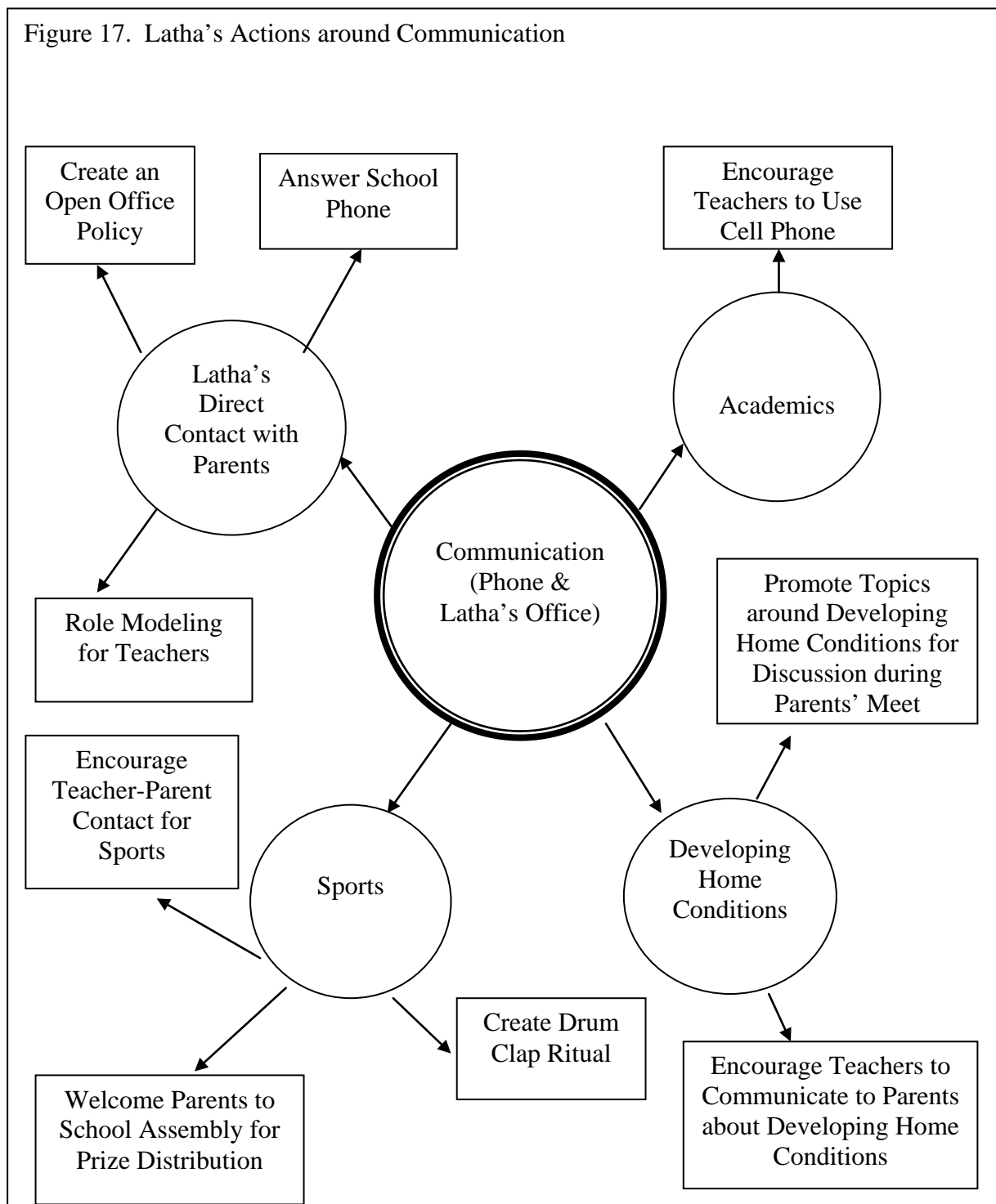
Latha also encourages teachers to communicate with parents around developing home conditions and teen development. One of the biggest challenges Palani had faced was when parents pulled their children out from the school day to work and support their family. Latha and the teachers took various steps, including a special parents' meet, to impart the importance of attendance in school. Further, parents, irrespective of their educational background can help their children at home by developing a positive home environment and having conversations with them.

A lot of students here work outside school as domestic help or in small companies. They don't have a choice as their home conditions are so poor. Some girls are pulled out of school and are irregular to support their family. That spoils their education completely. When they do that, they cannot study. The school's teachers and HM have educated parents a lot about this through special parents' meet and continue to reinforce the same every time we see them [Line 81-86, IT 1, Parent 2, Palani, 2011-10-28].

I would love to have audio visual programs for students and parents. I want to install it in the library to pass on messages with themes. The teachers advise the parents. We do it so regularly. We tell them, even if you don't know how to study, at least sit with them [children]. They tell us they are not educated. But we request them repeatedly to at least sit with the children and watch them. That way the children feel encouraged [Line 48-52, IT 2.1, HM 2, 2011-10-28].

Overall, Latha's direct involvement with parents through answering the school phone and maintaining an open office policy are important actions she takes to foster communication with Palani's parents. This also helps teachers to reach out to her any time during the school day as they solve problems that arise with parents. Further, her actions around finding support for sports and promoting teacher contacts with parents beyond academics are also significant.

Figure 17. Latha's Actions around Communication



Latha's efforts to revive the PTA, strengthen the teacher and parent connections at Palani and take several steps to enhance her direct contacts with parents is strong. Teachers and parents interviewed for this study note that her leadership towards involving parents in this young school is significant. The testimony of this parent speaks to Palani's parent involvement culture:

"The school welcomes everyone so much. Sometimes when a school gets a great name, people just rest on the success. Here, they don't give up on us until we come around and meet them. The school's strength is huge, but every student is important to them. The teachers and HM has encouraged my daughter and helped me a lot. We have changed ourselves for this school" [Line 67-71, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

CHAPTER 6
NILGIRI SCHOOL

Building Parent Links within School & Beyond: from Ramu's Home Visits

Driving on one of the national highways in Suburban District A and crossing several small industrial plants, one can easily fail to notice the small turn to the entrance of the Nilgiri Government Higher Secondary School. But what one cannot overlook is the towering white arch seen from the national highway, which used to be one of the main entrances of this school. This landmark is enough for one to make the turn into a broad unfinished road covered with debris, cross several makeshift homes of day laborers to reach one of the side gates of the school. Also walking from one side gate to another across the large school ground, one quickly notices small brick homes bordering the other side of school.

Outside this gate, headmaster Ramu stands near his motorcycle and talks with a student's family that lives in one of the small brick houses at the end of the street. As he slowly rides his bike towards the school gate, he stops frequently and greets the parents and grandparents who accompany the children to school in the morning. Ramu notes,

I see a huge change that the school has made in this village community in the last five years alone. I go around; I move around a lot and meet parents and families. Sometimes I come through the other gate, sometimes through this gate, sometimes I am sitting in the office and sometimes I am even planting trees in school. Since I use different ways, the parent involvement is more. Also, parents know this now. I also tell people if you spot children outside, let me know. They know that I will be circling around on my motorbike and that I will be in contact with people all the time in different directions. This connection makes the difference [Line 76-83, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

As Ramu rides his motorbike inside the school grounds and parks it below his office, groups of parents have already gathered to interact with him. As a daily custom, he carries a chair and puts it in the middle of the large school ground to sit, making himself visible to

everyone walking in through either of the school gates. For around 30 minutes before the morning assembly and his routine tasks, he interacts with all the parents, teachers, students and the people from the local community like the village leaders who visit the school.

At least 10 parents will be interacting with me in the morning. That is a plus point. Even in a private school you won't see that. The principal will not have seen all the parents and the chances are really less. For me, each and every parent is important and I should have met and talked to each one. That connection is important. They have to meet me [Line 270-273, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9]

In this school, the habit of personal interactions is strong. My interactions are as crucial as the teachers' involvement with parents. And because parents are coming, results are good and the school has tremendously developed. Only if parent involvement is there, the child can do well in school and we have seen that turnaround in this community since its inception [Line 295-299, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Nilgiri's History

Three decades ago, Nilgiri was a struggling middle school, located in what all the veteran teachers and parents recollect as being an "unsafe" neighborhood. The school had no compound wall, allowing access and use of the school premises to almost anybody. The school ground was filled with heaps of sand and heavy trucks used to drive through the ground all day, making it dangerous for the students. There were no buildings, toilets, tables, chairs, electricity, drinking water or even a hut for the school head.

Interestingly, every single one of the 10 heads who led Nilgiri from the start have been described to have contributed for the school's development by winning the support of the parents and the community. It is no surprise that every wall, door and building in the school has a story that deeply connects to the school-parent collaboration, which helped carve a name for Nilgiri in this community and beyond over the years. A parent describes some of these early school development efforts:

I have seen the work of all the past school heads. The first HM went from door to door and raised money for chairs and infrastructure with the help of parents and community. The second HM brought in more rooms as there were only seven thatched roofed huts. The brick buildings had to be constructed as the huts were not safe. Some roads were blocked and this is actually the school property and land. We all had to fight as it was unsafe for the children to enter school. People have struggled so much but we all came together with the school heads. We planted trees, got the lights as children were studying under the public street light. Another HM got rid of the rooms with asbestos and brought doors. That door is still there. It is the room near the staff room. You can see that door. All parents even today are shown that door and the history of this school. It is good to know how much they have fought for us [Line 58-68, IT 1, Parent 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

All headmasters, like this headmaster is tough. Earlier there used to be no compound wall. The HM used to come and literally beg and put his hands together in a prayer gesture and say please don't walk this way, take a few steps and walk the other way as the kids are studying. The parents really loved him for that. They used to literally cry. The teachers and parents themselves doubled their effort and raised money through the PTA to get a compound wall. Since then, there is no looking back. We are all together [Line 70-75, IT 1, Parent 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Teachers also describe how school heads and parents contributed to the students' academic achievement initially. Just as they narrate the stories of the buildings and doors to the new parents, they also talk about the turnaround over the years in the academic performance of its students. Nilgiri was upgraded from middle to a higher secondary school in mid-2000, serving students from classes 6 to 12. One teachers says,

The heads were interested in student development just as much as improving the infrastructure. In 1982, that headmaster used to take English after school since this was a Tamil medium school then. He used to hold night classes so students can benefit learning English. Parents used to come and sit and support him so their children can learn English. The students brought in a great result for the school. When he used to teach, we ourselves were so excited to teach. He used to emphasize to all teachers, we all are one family. He used to arrange tours, so teachers and parents can be together. Even today, we remember this and continue the good practices [Line 10-17, IT 1, Teacher 5, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Despite all these developments, headmaster Ramu notes that when he joined Nilgiri six years ago, he faced some initial opposition from the community. He took steps to close the main

white arch gate as it was close to the highway and thus, making it unsafe for the students. Even though this made the community angry, he says that this event helped him get closer to parents.

There were three gates. I blocked the big landmark gate and people opposed that. They said we fought for that main gate and we kept it so well. People opposed it strongly. That gate has the main road entrance to the highway. A few years before, one child got into an accident and the school suffered a lot. So as soon as I came, I closed it and left the side two gates open. Eventually the community accepted it [Line 228-232, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

All these steps take time, over months where I have faced the community and parents and teachers and so on. But I worked with the parents and the community by talking to each and every one. When they saw the changes in my first year itself, they came around and I won their support [Line 210-249, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Today, Nilgiri is the second top school in Suburban District A for its students' academic achievement. The school serves 1900 higher secondary students (classes 9 to 12) and is also known for its infrastructure and achievement of students graduating to pursue post-secondary education. Ramu says,

When I started in 2006, there was only 52 and 60 percent of students who passed class 12 board examinations. Now, it is almost 98 percent of the students who pass. I am aiming for 100 percent result and individual subject hundred percent scores as well. Last year, my students got a perfect score in commerce and accountancy and that was a big achievement [Line 115-118, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

A veteran teacher notes,

This school makes us come. The achievements are many here. More than 80 percent of our students have gone to engineering colleges and other vocational courses after 12th. I also taught in another government school in a very poor rural district. There, it is only about passing the class 12 examination. But here, teachers and the heads have worked with the parents and students and they have got admission into colleges after 12th [Line 150-154, IT 1. Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

While Nilgiri still faces many challenges, Headmaster Ramu says that over the years it has developed and taken lot of efforts to provide quality education to this community. He notes that the school's achievement has attracted parents 20 kilometers away to get an admission for their children here. A teacher says,

Students come from other areas also, 3-4 kilometers and more than that. Some are even 15-20 kilometers away. They come by bus. They leave home by 7 am and come here and it takes close to 40 minutes to travel. They come for that distance. They want to come here to get higher scores. So parents believe in us and also want to send them here [Line 211-214, IT 1, Teacher 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Ramu notes,

The parents themselves have an attachment towards this school. That is a success. If you look, five years back, lots of students' parents were conductors or laborers. Now, these children, mostly first generation learners, almost 98 percent pass class 12. Most are doing higher studies. That itself creates hope in this community. Also the parents see it and are influenced [Line 217-221, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Parental Background and Occupations

Nilgiri is situated in the northern corner of Suburban District A, 20 kilometers from the district's central zone and 40 kilometers from the nearest urban neighborhood. Teachers and parents describe this school's neighborhood as being an interesting mix of suburban and rural as it is surrounded by number of industries on the main highway and numerous small villages in the interior region. As a result, Nilgiri's parental occupations range from small factory and export company workers to small produce vendors and day laborers. Ramu also notes that a majority of the parents are day laborers. Teachers say,

Some parents are fish sellers, flower sellers, vegetable vendors, and tea stall workers and so on. The responsibility is on the teachers and headmaster. We need to motivate the children and the parents often. They don't know much and we have to constantly tell them and pass along all the information. I keep telling students very often and the messages reach the parents [Line 164-168, IT 1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Parents are also working in the onion factory and other small export companies. Even if they spend one day here, they lose the salary and they are dependent on that money. Many parents are also house helpers. This is the situation here. Because of that, only if they earn they can feed their children [Line 118-121, IT 1, Teacher 5, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Around 90 percent of the parents are not educated and are very poor. Further, around five percent of the students don't have parents. The school insists that the guardian should be an

adult, like grandparents, aunt or uncle. Even if the student has an elder brother or sister in the same school, a legal guardian needs to be available for meeting with Ramu and the teachers.

Here, parents are very poor and educated only up to 10th or something, not more than that. The majority have no education. They don't have a great job or education. There are also a lot of single parents here. We advise parents to support their children as much as possible and listen to the information we provide so they can move on and study more. Most parents do, some don't. The ones who come forward, we can push them along to do better [Line 90-94, IT 1, Teacher 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Parental background details like their address, occupation and contact details are recorded by Nilgiri's staff in their attendance registers. Further, Ramu also brought in a system where the class teachers record more detailed information about their respective class students' parents. This helps them understand the students' home conditions better and thereby, support them better at school. Ramu says,

We know the parental details as they are in the attendance registers and the admission forms register. The registers have some information but we need to go more in depth. We can understand the parent more that way. For example, in one house, we found that the mother was sick and the student used to come late daily. We found out that the student was delivering milk to earn money and support his family. But the child is a good student. If we know that, we can help the child. We should definitely know it. Each and every teacher should know the family history of the student. There are so many reasons why they are the way they are, the depth of the problem can be understood that way. Teachers know it in our higher secondary level. Each and every teacher in our school, at least 20 parents' full history they will know for sure [Line 125-134, IT 7 & 7.1, HM 3, 2011-11-17].

A teacher says,

In the attendance register, we have the parents' names, occupation, address, phone numbers and everything. Sometimes if we have some problems or we want to write down something in addition, we do that. Each and every student's family details we will have. A lot of us maintain that as a practice. If there is a problem of any sort and if the students' sisters or brothers are there, people who study in the same school, we will get the information easily. We should definitely know about their family in depth as it matters in the life of the child in the classroom and their performance [Line 220-226, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Ramu's Vision for Nilgiri

Ramu has 35 years of collective teaching and administrative experience in rural schools across Tamil Nadu. Interestingly, this is the first suburban school which he has led in his career as an administrator. Ramu notes that his ambition to serve in government schools was clear from the very beginning, as early as when he was studying in high school. This continually shaped his desire to strive for his students' academic excellence as a teacher and an administrator.

When I studied in school I used to teach or help a student daily. I was really good in Math, so I used to teach even during the evening hours. I never used to study at home. I wanted to become a teacher and that was my ambition. I completed my undergraduate degree in commerce and graduate degree in commerce, I got a university rank when I finished. Then I became a teacher. From the inception itself, I am producing hundred percent results in my subject and first mark in my subject as a teacher. That fire and passion was always there. I can do anything was my attitude. From there grew my inspiration [Line 90-96, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9]

After the years of teaching in rural government schools, Ramu notes that his vision for academic excellence needed to be extended to a larger population of students from low-income communities. As a result, he applied for administrator positions in rural schools that enabled him to work towards his vision. Drawing from several past experiences as an administrator in a rural school, Ramu notes that he wanted to continue to challenge commonly held notions of government schools. Further, he also says that doing tasks beyond his defined role won him the support of school staff and parents towards achieving his vision. Ramu says,

A government school is not inferior to a private school in any way. I am competing with all private schools around. There are four private matriculation schools which are serving more affluent children. When you see the higher secondary classes here, most students are very poor but getting an overall score of 1000 or more. Even the Tamil language students whose parents are not educated are getting it. I have done it. I want to make this a model school [Line 107-111, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

I wanted to be a role model. I should be the first one coming into the school and the last person to leave the school. So, I am mingling with the students, teachers, staff and parents. I should do all the work. I can sweep, take the classes and do the office work. I can play all

the roles and I still do. That is how everyone should perceive me. I get a lot more support from everyone as I am willing to do anything [Line 125-129, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

Further, Ramu attributes the success of his vision of achieving academic excellence to strong connections with his parent community. By doing so, he notes that he was able to turn around the results of low-performing schools. This in turn got him postings as an administrator in two other low-performing schools, to help turn those schools around.

Whichever school has poor results, I want to improve that. That was my vision. I wanted to turn the school into the number 1 school in the district. In the previous rural school, I made it number 1. When I got transferred to the second rural school, they said they wanted me. From an overall 52 percent score of students, it went up to 82. A student also got the state third rank in that school. In this school, we are district second [Line 31-35, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

Working for rural schools, I understood the importance of connections with the parents and community. To reach my vision, I had to change my method of working with parents according to the situation. In the prior school, there were no absentees. But I still connected with parents on a daily basis. Here, there were lot absentees initially. I have the class 10th and 12th parents' cells phone numbers and I maintain my own diary. I maintain the numbers of weak students and visit their parents at home. If you look at the four boys sitting outside, they are weak and highly irregular and parents' support is needed. The teachers and I have to make sure we reach out to them [Line 48-55, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

As he describes the various steps he took to reach his vision, he notes that the infrastructure still remains a big challenge at Nilgiri. This is something that he wants to improve.

We need more buildings definitely. We don't have benches in all classrooms and some rooms don't have fans. A big part of my vision is to have good infrastructure. For so many students, the toilets are not enough. We don't have janitorial staff also. That is a problem. If you see all this, whatever we have we have to maximize [Line 260-263, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Ramu's Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Ramu strongly believes in parents being involved in their child's education and for the well being of the school as a whole. Putting the child at the heart of parent involvement, he describes his beliefs around the multiple stakeholders' responsibility this way:

For a student to come up in life and do well, parents have to be involved. Parents, teachers and the headmaster have to be involved. The three people are in a triangle, one side teacher, one side parent and one side headmaster. The student is in the center. That is the key. Here, the involvement of parents is higher. They also value the fact that I am calling them and connecting with them [Line 22-26, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Further, he notes that parent involvement is a reciprocal relationship between the school and parents, where the support among stakeholders strengthens involvement.

Teachers also get an immense amount of strength through parents' support. It is a mutual relationship that grows. The teachers also know that the parents put in more effort at home and are aware of the ups and downs of the child. It is easy to motivate the child this way and to push the child in the positive direction [Line 198-201, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

As majority of Nilgiri's parents are uneducated, Ramu notes that educating them about their involvement took some time and consistent effort. Further, he also talks about the positive change and support from the community because of effective advocacy for parent involvement through students and his own involvement.

We advocate through students. If the parents are not educated, they learn so much from the student and the education reaches the parents. So as much as possible we pass messages to parents through students, in the beginning and the end of the academic year. It is an education to parents. So many parents have moved from putting a thumb print to signing their names or writing. I know of children who teach their parents to read and write. That way, their involvement is impacting parents too and the awareness of education only increases [Line 211-216, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

The change from the community is because of parents only. It's like a network. They also see the results and come and see the school. Only when they come and see the school, they know the things teachers and the headmaster are doing. They compare it to other schools. They automatically change. Even without us educating, one parent will educate the other parent. They know the importance of education now. For example, a father who is a lorry

driver realizes only if our children study, they can come up in life. They understand the importance of education and about school. The children also feel that they have to study, they feel that compulsion. So definitely there will be an improvement if everyone is involved [Line 259-267, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Overall, Ramu also believes that the support of Nilgiri's teachers to involve parents has raised the parent involvement levels over the years.

Teachers' cooperation is there fully and that is why I am able to win the support of parents. At the present stage, more than 80 percent of parents are involved. Parents who are laborers are not able to participate in a lot of events at school. We try and meet them over the weekend as it is important for us to stay connected with all parents. Everyone does believe in that [Line 4-8, IT 7 & 7.1, HM 3, 2011-11-17].

Teachers Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Nilgiri's teachers believe that parent involvement is essential to both student and school development. They note that the headmaster and school staff needed to devote a lot of time for that initial push to get parents involved. As most of the parents are uneducated, messages about the significance of education needed to be conveyed frequently. Collectively, they were able to raise parents' awareness of the importance of education and get them more involved. Teachers note:

It is very important for parents to be involved. Only if they come, the students will do well. We are calling the students and parents daily. In government schools, reaching out to parents is definitely more. Only if they come, we will know what the students are really doing. Here the parents are not that much educated, because of that we will call the parents constantly and tell them what they [students] are doing. If they are good students, we will still continue to call them and tell them how they can do better, what is the value of education and what can they do with this education. Through parents sometimes we do this. This is why we reach out so much to them. It is an education for them also and they believe it now [Line 71-79, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Here, we say it again and again. It s some sort of reinforcement. We say how important education is and we use all opportunities to say that. Parents and families also have that awareness now. They tell us that because you have studied, you are working right. If our

children study and go to work, it will be good for them and future generations. They understand us and we know that they think that way too. [Line 206-210, IT 1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Teachers also attribute the increased parent involvement to Ramu's support and direct contacts with parents. Further, they note that his vision for parent involvement is very clear and that drives the teachers and school staff to take it forward. They say,

The headmaster gives importance to all parents. If they come, he will make them sit and talk patiently. That way, it is a goal and vision for all teachers. He leads the way, and we know the importance. It has grown. He is a role model for most of us I think [Line 183-185, IT1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Compared to private institutions, the level of parent involvement is more here. In private schools, parents are well educated and send their children to extra classes after school. On the contrary, in government schools, for sports day and other events, parents come very eagerly. They don't have that opportunity otherwise as they cannot afford to put the child in more classes outside. The connection between the headmaster and parents are strong as he interacts with them in all these events and even visits their homes [Line 238-243, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Further, the huge improvement of Nilgiri's students' results over the years has drawn more parents to school. Teachers also note that parents know the quality of education being provided at this school and thereby, they have become more involved.

Since there are good results now, the parents and families are also listening to us. They think their children will be good here and trust us. For that reason, they prefer our school. Education wise, we don't let students go without studying here. Parents know that when they join our school. They know their children will come out with good marks. They have that kind of thinking. They travel almost 5 to 6 kilometers and come here. They come by bus, cycle, walk and train sometimes. Sometimes parents drop them off. Even some places where buses don't go, they take cycles [Line 117-123, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Parents Beliefs about Parent Involvement

Parents at Nilgiri say that the school has been sensitizing them about the value of education and being involved in their child's education. Further, they say that their children

should receive the education they missed out on and thereby, push them to be more involved in school and at home however they can.

I want to make my children study. My children study so well and are so hard working. I know my children will get some scholarship. We watch TV and read magazines. In that they tell us how valuable education is and the different ways children can move forward. The school itself does a good job of sensitizing parents who are not educated. That is so crucial [Line 86-90, IT 1, Parent 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

In my family, nobody has studied. I want my children to study because I did not study. I don't have enough money to send them to private college. If they can study and become a nurse or a teacher, I will be so proud. They will make the community proud. I can tell people that I did not study, but at least my daughters studied. They need to realize that. Their future will be bright right, that is the main thing. They don't have to depend on anyone. I am more involved as I don't know much and need the school's help [Line 125-130, IT 1, Parent 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

I left studies because in those days people never took education that seriously in our community. Now our children take it seriously. But those days, my parents thought they are girls only, so why should they study more? We should just get them married off. That is how it was those days. I had to listen to my parents. But now I don't want to do that to my children. I want them to follow their heart and study well and come up in life and do whatever they want. In fact that education is important. They need to study [Line 4-9, IT 1, Parent 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Further, parents note that being involved is a type of empowerment for them. They share that the learning they gain through being involved in their child's education and at school is also education for them.

I have not studied at all. I have not seen the face of a school. I was so ignorant. I did not have any information. After being involved, I am learning each day from my daughter and by visiting the school. My daughter taught me how to sign my name. This is what education can do to empower people. I can write my name. Earlier, I used to only put my thumb impression with ink. But she is the one who told me that I need to learn to write and read a little [Line 125-130, IT 1, Parent 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Nilgiri's parents also believe that involvement takes time, but repeated contacts from the school has strengthened the link between the parents and school. Further, they also note that the

responsibility for the success of the child is a shared one and believe that the parents, despite their lack of educational background, have been involved.

Involvement does not happen overnight. This takes time and does not just come from attending one function at school. The teachers of the students who are not performing well call the parents. They [parents] will also see the headmaster. Some parents are so interested and keep coming and talking to the teachers as they don't know much. This school prefers the latter because a connection gets stronger. Some uneducated parents come and fall on the feet of the teachers and headmaster and say you only have to make my children study and come up in life. It is heartening that they want their children to be educated and keep coming back [Line 144-151, IT 1, Parent 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

If the parents come, they can know about the school's advancement and the children's advancement. They should know. There has to be that connection. We should applaud the school for meeting parents every month. The efforts that the school takes are admirable. Not many schools have this positive atmosphere [Line 94-97, IT 1, Parent 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Parent Involvement Practices at Nilgiri

Nilgiri has several parent involvement practices. Headmaster Ramu created a practice visiting parents in students' homes, thereby strengthening connections with them. This affinity affects other parent involvement practices at Nilgiri, thereby constantly reinforcing important messages to parents. Simultaneously, he also created several structures within the parent involvement practices, including Report card day, to boost parent attendance. The following pages of the case describe the parent involvement practices at Nilgiri and headmaster Ramu's actions.

Ramu's Visits to Students' Homes

One of the parent involvement practices that Ramu initiated at Nilgiri was his visits to students' homes. Looking back at his experience as the headmaster of a rural school prior to Nilgiri, he notes the significance of building direct connections with parents.

During my service in the other rural school, I was traveling daily from this neighborhood. If you look at things there, children stay in the railway station and wander away from there. They were not coming to school regularly. They used to sit and talk and go. In the morning,

this is what I did. Before going to school, I used to go near the railway track in my bike. If I see them in uniform or the parents see them anywhere, I had requested them to call me immediately on my cell phone. So that was a system there. Because of that students started coming regularly and the results improved. There began my rapport with parents [Line 79-85, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

Ramu notes that his personal connections with parents were instrumental in improving students' academic success. Given this, he wanted to continue and alter the practice to suit the context of Nilgiri. The school is surrounded by 10-15 small villages and approximately 70 percent of the students are from these villages. In the beginning, Ramu visited homes of parents who did not visit school, especially those of students facing the board examination. Further, he also notes that living locally has made a huge difference in building rapport with the parents. He notes:

Some class 10th and 12th students' parents did not come to school regularly. I took an auto along with a teacher and visited their homes. Because I went as a school head, the parents felt a sense of responsibility. That created a motivation of sorts. Other children noticed it and they knew if the headmaster is leaving, he will come to their homes. The children become more disciplined. They know if they don't come and their parents don't come, I will call them on their cell phone and I will go straight to their house. This is a plus point as it created a bond between me and them [Line 169-178, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Since I have been in this community itself, people know me. I am the face of the school literally. There is a difference between living here and working here versus living here and commuting to another school that is far off. Proximity is good. Now after I came here, even if I go to a market, people are greeting me. The shopkeepers are parents of our students. It is a point of contact [Line 215-219, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9]

Ramu used this opportunity to promote his connections with the parents and community. He took several actions by forming structures around his visits to students' homes. At first, his focus was on visiting the homes of class 10th and 12th students facing the board or public examination, especially the low-performers. The school already had a list of all the parents' names and contact details, but he created a separate log to record additional details of his visits. Since there were 10-15 villages from which the students came, he identified one key person or a

village contact in every village who was a parent. By having this local contact, he could easily connect with the parents in that village or send messages. Ramu says,

In every village, I identified a key person or village contact. If parents of class 10th and 12th students don't come and don't visit, I will call the key person in that village and they will go to the parent's house. This has been a network that I have used. The key person will go there and persuade the parent to visit school. They will automatically come. There are 15 villages in this surrounding area. It is hard for me to be everywhere all the time. So these village contacts are very helpful. When I visit the student homes, the key person from the village sometimes shows me around to the houses [Line 62-68, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Ramu notes that his visits to student homes usually begin when a student is not performing well academically. He usually conducts these visits during the weekend and at times, even after school. He notes that visiting parents at home has been important as he not only discusses students' academic performance of the student with the parents, but also gets to see the home conditions. He notes that these interactions go a long way to motivate the student to perform better and also reminds parents of the importance of being involved continuously to parents.

Ramu notes,

I have visited the students' homes and this is the understanding I gain. I talk to the parents and students. I emphasize the importance of providing healthy food and a good atmosphere for the child to study. I also get to see their home conditions. Sometimes that is helpful for me to motivate the child. I talk to the parents and motivate them to be involved and visit school often. A lot of parents notice this and it trickles down. We need a lot of time and I have to work in my extra time to make these visits. So, I meet them on the weekends with the school office assistant or village heads. We try and meet at least four parents and that makes a huge difference [Line 181-187, IT 7 & 7.1, HM 3, 2011-11-17].

As he describes the purpose of his visits and interactions with the parents, he also notes the significance of tapping other sources of help like a student's elder brother, sister or a cousin who is educated. In this way, he says that he is able to reinforce the same information communicated to parents thereby making sure the student receives all the support possible to study better. He says,

If this student has to succeed, parent involvement is important. You saw the key role they play even though they are not educated. We can steer them to find alternatives too. If the parent is not there, I can still do something. We can get his sister or brother to help. But it takes talking to find out that his sibling is educated. My home visits help in this way. Then, they can meet the class teacher or come directly to me and we can help the student further. It is about tapping all resources that are there to help the student [Line 319-324, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

Ramu says that his visits to students' homes have also been beneficial in numerous other ways, beyond the academic improvement of low-performers. He notes that parent to parent connections have increased within these smaller villages that he visits, and thereby, more parents get motivated to remain involved. He describes some of the benefits of his practice this way:

Since I visit the villages, I am able to build connections with parents. Parents then convey the messages to other parents. They motivate the other people to come to our school. They do that often. In that way, other parents are enthusiastic to visit school. Parents ask each other to come saying "it is our school." That attitude is important and has developed because of this practice [Line 187-191, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-11].

I have a network and I know people now. The usefulness and benefits of this practice is that the student comes to school regularly, parents get sensitized about education and its value, and the parents spread the word about the school. We have a lot of support from the parents this way. They can bring other kids here or pass along the message to other parents. That is a plus point for the school. The parents acknowledge that I visit their homes as a school head and respect them. I don't expect praise, but this has definitely strengthened the connections between our school and the parent community tremendously [Line 202-208, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Sometimes building connections is tough, but it becomes easy over time. People begin to understand the benefits and in our school, the teachers began to take initiatives also. That understanding grows over time. We need a consistent amount of time and one can bring in a change [Line 250-253, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Teachers and parents at Nilgiri talk about Ramu's visits to students' homes as an important initiative that has bridged the school and parent community. Teachers and parents also emphasize the importance of the school head visiting students' homes and the change that it has created among the parent community. Further, parents also note that the importance of being involved in their child's education is reiterated by Ramu's visits.

Compared to other schools, parents here come and see the headmaster directly. That is the uniqueness. The parents believe that they want the students to succeed and they believe in the school. You can ask them yourself. Also, the headmaster makes himself available and visible, which is not the case in other schools. He is present everywhere, visits homes and that makes a big difference [Line 216-220, IT 1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

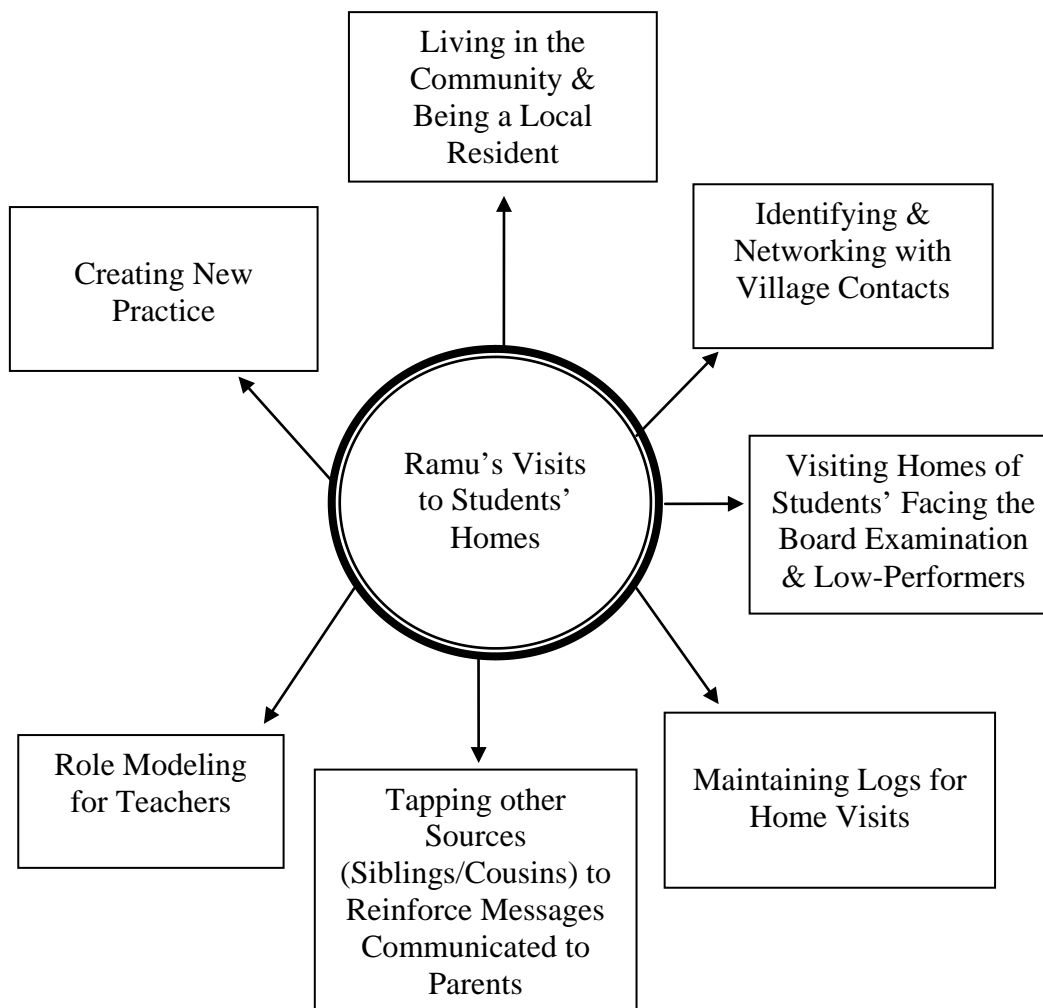
Teachers have not gone to students' houses. But the headmaster goes every week. He is connected to the community since he lives here. He connects with village heads and visits homes. During the exam time, we make the calls to parents. And during public exam time, the HM visits homes all the more since he is aiming for hundred percent results. His steps have shown us the importance of connections with parents and also helped the school and the parent community come closer [Line 109-114, IT 1, Teacher 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-8].

My children should come up in life and do well. Whatever happens, I can go and talk to the HM directly. Since he is in this locality, everyone knows him well. He will patiently stop and interact with all of us. When people hear the sound of the bike, they know that the HM is visiting us. We can hear it. People get very excited that he lives here and has a vested interest in us and our well being. We feel respected when he visits us and that makes us want to be involved more in our child's education [Line 54-59, IT 1, Parent 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

If my son is absent on some days, he [headmaster] has visited us after school to find out what is going on. So he knows everyone living in this area so well. He wants to know why people are absent and what the real issues are. He will get into the heart of the matter and discuss it with us [parents]. If we have not gone and met him or sent a letter, he will call sometimes or in our situation, he has come home. Whoever he sees, he knows the names and he talks to all parents. I think that has brought us closer to the school. [Line 113-125, IT 1, Parent 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

Overall, Ramu drew from his prior experiences of building connections with parents to foster effective relations with Nilgiri's parent community. He took several key actions as a leader which promoted direct contacts with parents. He identified village contacts and networked with them during his home visits; maintained logs of his visits and worked to tap other sources for the well being of the student beyond parents like siblings and cousins.

Figure 18. Ramu's Actions around Visits to Students' Homes



Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

Nilgiri's Parent Teachers Association (PTA) has a long history. Every one of the 10 former school heads had used the PTA for the school's infrastructure development. Teachers and parents note that a story of school heads, teachers and parents coming together defines every compound wall, door and building at Nilgiri. The successful use of the PTA for the school's infrastructure development continued to drive the PTA's goals over the years.

While every government school uses its PTA differently, Nilgiri continued to use the PTA mainly for its school development under Ramu's leadership. Like all other government schools, Nilgiri's PTA executive committee consists of 8-10 parent and teacher members. While the PTA president, vice-president and treasurer are parent members, Ramu holds the PTA secretary post. The executive committee meets four times a year to discuss various issues of school and student development. Further, the executive committee along with Ramu also helps identify and mobilize parent support and volunteers from external organizations for the development of the school and students. Ramu notes:

The PTA executive committee meets yearly four times. For small issues around school development, we meet and have discussions. That building I built, there is water, what are the next steps? Should we do something? We can meet and discuss. All general school development problems, we will discuss and find solutions. For student development, if students have not come, we will call the parent and talk about what we can do collectively. The PTA representative will help. They will approach the parents as the internal voice and tell them that the headmaster called four times, please come and meet him. The support from the PTA is immensely helpful and there is a great change among parents [Line 179-187, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

We also discuss things like minor repair work and other sources of funding for student development. During the PTA meetings, for example, if there is a minor repair work, if something has to be done, we have to take care of it. For example, toilet cleaning and providing the janitors resources. For low-performing children, what can we do through some extra coaching? How much would that cost? For repair work and so on, which external organizations can we tap or are there local politicians who can support? For all of this, parents on these PTA committees are so helpful. Once, a parent who was a painter was identified through the PTA committee. We will give the wages, but he will do the work so

sincerely since he wishes for the welfare of the school. We will promote them and we have identified it [Line 107-117, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Just as Ramu collaborates with the PTA executive committee for school and student related issues, he has also connected the PTA committee members to the identified village contacts through his other home visits practice. This additional action by Ramu helps reinforce the connections with parents across the 10-15 villages through the PTA. Ramu says:

PTA is a bridge between the school and parents. It is a way for the parent community to come to school and visit regularly. I visit students' homes, but when there is a need and I can't go and see the parents directly, the PTA connects with the village representatives. As the parents are coming from different villages, the PTA representatives will go and meet the village contacts. This is like a centralized management system and helps us get closer to the parent community. This important link between me, the PTA executive committee and the village contacts help reinforce important messages that the PTA is working towards [Line 76-82, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Ramu's other actions towards the PTA help its maintenance during the school year. These additional actions create a sequence which enables Ramu along with PTA executive committee to carry forward its goals. Ramu describes those actions:

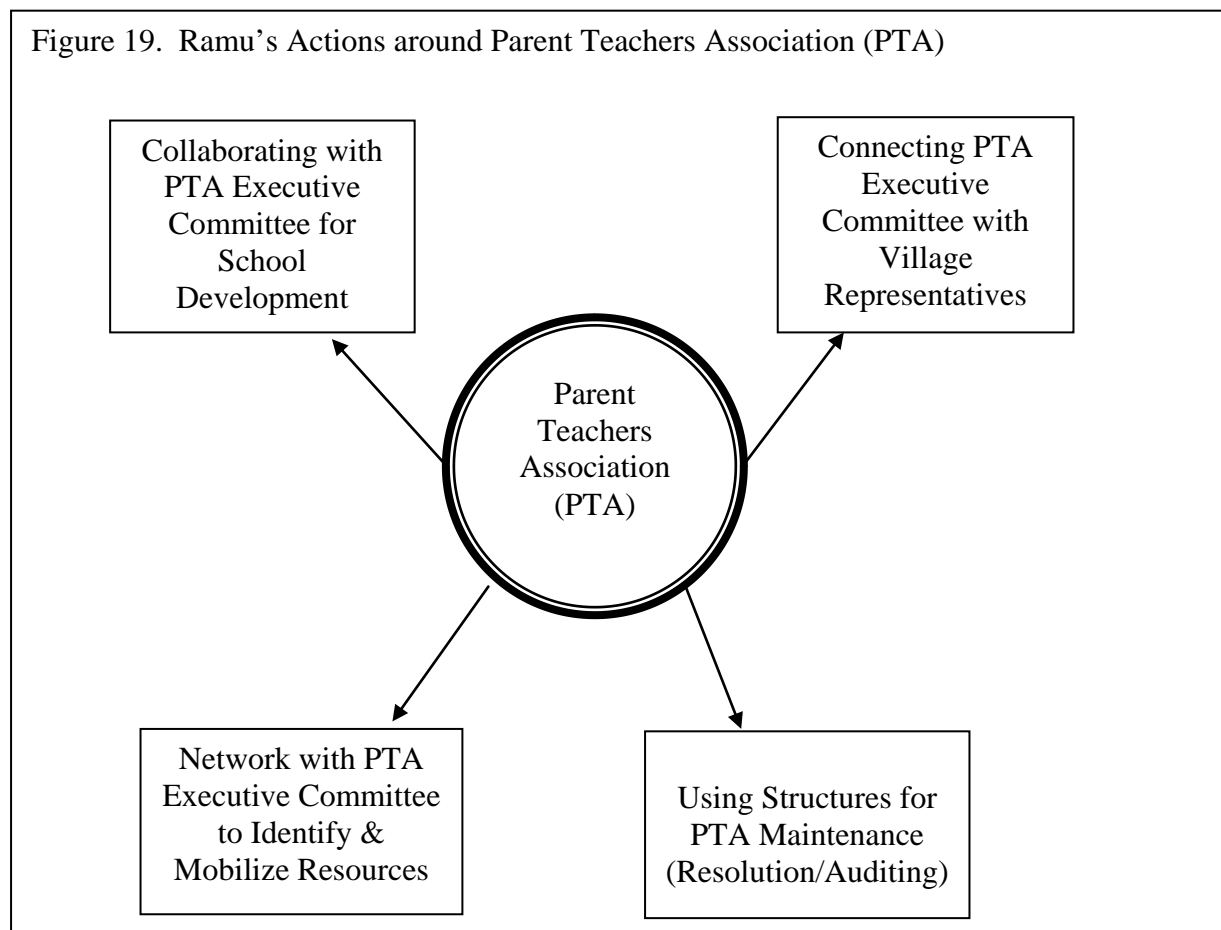
I take several key actions towards the maintenance of the PTA. It is my duty to arrange for the executive committee meetings and set the agenda. We call the executive committee by phone since it's a small number of members. After the meeting, we will pass the resolution, all members will sign and I will execute it. We will utilize the funds and audit the accounts every school year. That is one of my main actions and the PTA president who is the parent will also have to see. I also work to hold the annual general body meeting in which the entire parent and school community participates. These meetings also involve the village contacts as it is an opportunity to connect them to the PTA executive committee members. These actions support the PTA by working with all its members and reinforcing the importance of parent and community involvement [Line 128-137, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

A teacher talks about Ramus' actions and the school development through the PTA. The teacher notes:

This school has the best school name in the community mainly because of the results. We are able to do that after this headmaster took over. Before it got upgraded to higher secondary, the same campus did not have a compound wall and anyone could come in and go. It was not safe. After 2004, the previous headmaster had developed the school little by little. After it became higher secondary, using the PTA, this headmaster did renovation and got parental support. He closed the other gate as it was unsafe and after that, one by one through PTA, he moved everything forward. The development of this school could not have moved forward without the support and direct actions this headmaster provided to the PTA and continues to provide. This has won the trust of the parents and connected us to them more [Line 179-188, IT 1, Teacher 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

To sum up, Ramu has continued to use the PTA towards school development. The extra link that he has created among the PTA executive committee and the village representatives has helped support existing PTA initiatives whilst strengthening the connections among parents. Further, Ramu sustains the PTA's management through the school year by involving all the stakeholders.

Figure 19. Ramu's Actions around Parent Teachers Association (PTA)



Parents' Meet

Parents' Meet at Nilgiri is conducted to foster critical discussions about academics among its parent community. The Meet is conducted after the three main term examinations for parents of students in class 10 & 12 (students facing the board examination). For class 9 & 11, the Meet is held twice a year. Under Ramu's leadership, the Meet is a school goal. Ramu describes the initial action he takes to emphasize the importance of the Meet to his teacher community and the focus of the Meet itself. He says:

Read this, it is in Tamil [shows a memo]. You won't see this anywhere else. I have highlighted whatever I am expecting for the year and what did we do the previous year. Before the school opens, I prepare this detailed memo. This memo has important

information about the importance of parent involvement. The Parents' Meet is a goal and is emphasized here as it brings together the entire parent community [Line 144-148, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

At the Parents' Meet, teachers and parents will talk. I provide the opening message. We address two very important issues through the Meet. One, what we do in school for the academic advancement of the child and how are we doing it? Two, what are they doing at home and how are they doing it? For example, one parents talked about the importance of education and why they should not ask children to work in a job after school no matter how poor they are. When parents bring out these things, other parents will get empowered that they should not do this to their children. These conversations through the Meet move the entire community forward in the same direction; everyone is working for the progress of the child then [Line 54-62, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Planning Meetings

To foster the Parents' Meet at Nilgiri, Ramu plans it through the school year. These structures assist in the communication of academic related messages to parents after several rounds of deliberation. The three steps involved in planning for the Parents' Meet which involves Ramu's actions are: 1) Formal meetings between Ramu and teachers; 2) Informal meetings between Ramu and teachers; and 3) Meetings between assistant school heads and teachers.

The formal planning meetings between Ramu and the teachers involve analyzing student results through the school year. These meetings not only help the subject teachers identify and plan for the year but also help in identifying topics around student academics which are highlighted at the Parents' Meet. Further, teachers are in contact with the parents through the school year and bring several issues that are common to the forefront during these meetings with Ramu.

In the same way, Ramu also has several informal meetings with groups of teachers during the school year. This is done as suggestions are presented by teachers or parents during his home visits practice. Ramu reports that the suggestions that he receives from parents are important and constant contact with teachers help advance discussions for the Parents' Meet further. Ramu also

supports the discussions teachers have with assistant school heads as subject level information that needs to be communicated to parents come up during those meetings. Teachers and Ramu talk about these planning meetings that lead up to the Parents' Meet:

We have formal planning meetings where all subject teachers sit together and talk about various issues. At this time, we talk about issues related to parents. We take those issues to the meetings with the headmaster. We brainstorm topics for the Parents' Meet and decide which issues are common. The headmaster makes sure we talk about the prior parents' meeting and the upcoming ones, so we agree on the issues to emphasize. For example, once we focused on extra coaching during a Parents' Meet [Line 125-131, IT 1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Ramu notes:

I meet with groups of teachers every now and then. Since I interact with parents on a weekly basis, these messages are communicated to teachers. Further, they also have number of messages from parents to talk about. I believe strongly that they [teachers] should know and I should be made aware of the issues that come up between the parents and them [teachers]. The teachers themselves talk and discuss and I do too. They bring forward suggestions during informal meetings and I encourage them to. These help in structuring the Parents' Meet [Line 132-144, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-10].

We also have regular planning meetings with the assistant school heads in which we discuss department level information related to specific subjects. These help us analyze subject level results and take it to the planning meetings with the headmaster. Several key issues have come up during these meetings that have been topics to address at the Parents' Meet, for example, the importance of Math and Science to entrance examinations for college. The more discussions we have, the better we will be in a position to identify important academic level issues to be communicated to parents. This is crucial as most of these parents are not educated [Line 147-154, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Developing the Parents' Meet

In addition to the several planning meetings in which the Parents' Meet is discussed, Ramu focuses on developing the Meet further by collaborating with the PTA and village parent representatives. Since the PTA and village representatives are already involved in several school and student development activities, involving them creates a shared effort towards involving parents and families. Ramu talks about his actions in fostering these connections:

We decide the topics to address at the Parents' Meet during our planning meetings. After that, I draft an invitation letter for all parents, which is sent to the students' homes through the respective class teachers. I also invite the PTA executive committee members and village contacts personally as that increases connections with parents locally. The ongoing presence of the [PTA & Village Contacts] members also help in the positive movement of other initiatives that we are working towards [Line 213-218, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-11].

Since I started involving the PTA in the Parents' Meet, their support has been constant every year. For example, at one Parents' Meet, we talked about the teachers who had used some innovative teaching methods to increase student achievement. The parents spoke at the Parents' Meet about them and the teachers shared their views. The PTA executive committee got some additional funding for building a classroom for teaching and learning activities and talked about this during the Meet. Because of this, the idea that it is "our school" comes into play. These connections have promoted that common vision [Line 119-126, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

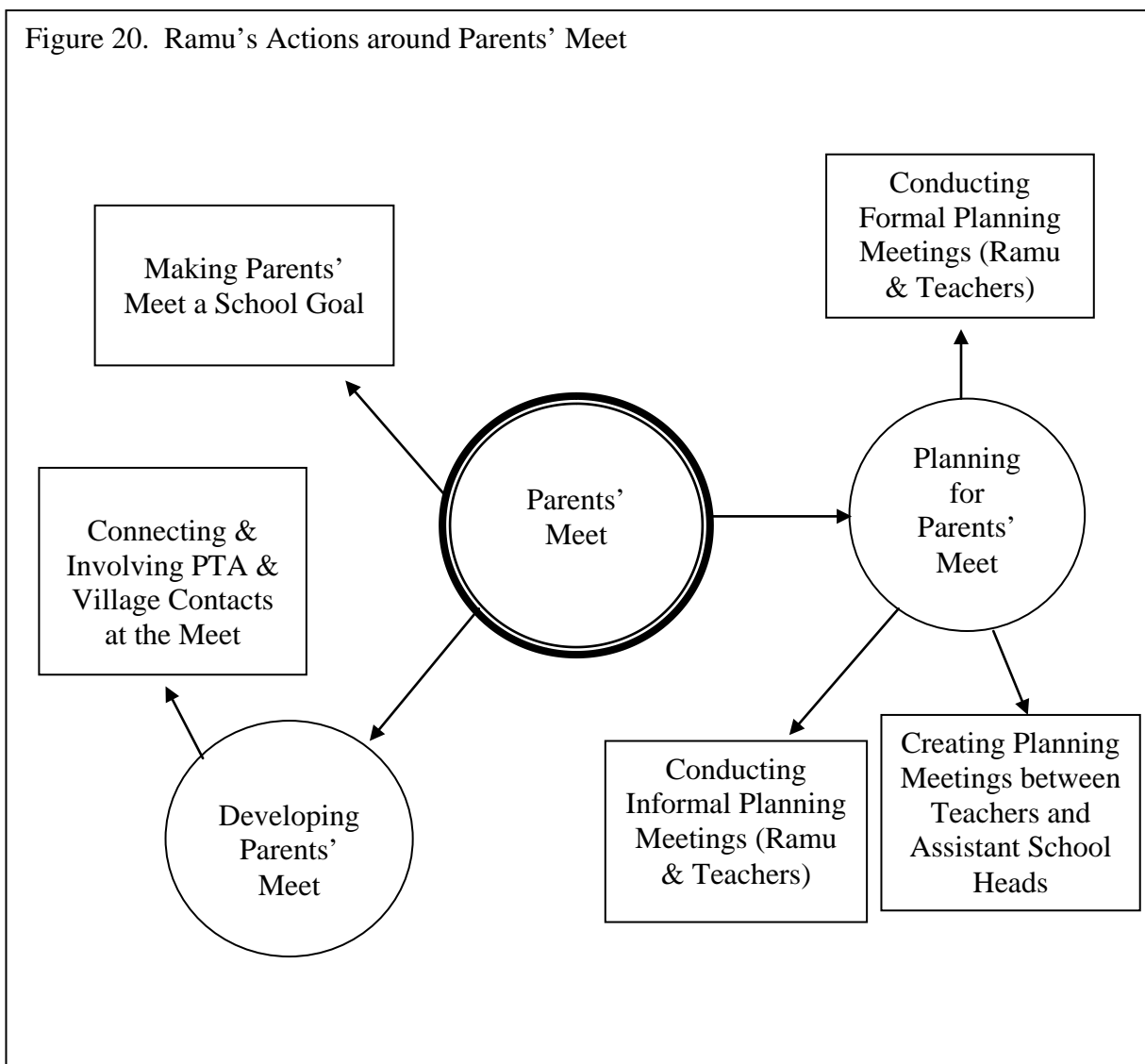
Parents and teachers note that Ramu's management of the Parents' Meet has increased the attendance of parents over the years. Furthermore, it has created a space in which parents and teachers can freely voice their views around student academics. Parents note:

I have attended all the Parents' Meets. The headmaster always makes us feel welcome and I have been in touch with all the teachers also. The point is we all should take interest and that expectation from the headmaster and the school was very clear to us. It is not a one way relationship. They are doing good for our children, so we should participate and take interest. In the Meet, they will tell us about issues that collectively impact all children. So that is good. We also get to interact with so many parents under the same roof and exchange thoughts. This forum does not make me feel like I am uneducated as I believe my views are respected too [Line 67-74, IT 1, Parent 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

During the Meet, they will tell us that our lack of education does not matter in the child's education. The children have to study well. It raises our awareness and this headmaster has taken all steps to make us feel that we can do something for the progress of our child. All parents come for the Meet. They will advise us what to do. They will highlight success stories. I also interact with other parents and that is a good opportunity as we are all day laborers and that is not possible otherwise [Line 61-66, IT 1, Parent 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Overall, Ramu has made Parents' Meet a goal and plans the Meet over the school year. He uses different opportunities in formal and informal ways to gather topics to address at the Meet. He also promotes department meetings between the teachers and assistant school heads in which more ideas are created for the Parents' Meet. Also, he involves the PTA executive committee

and the village contacts at the Parents' Meet, boosting their visibility and finding more opportunities for connections with parents.



Open Day or Report Card Day

The Report card day at Nilgiri provides an opportunity for Ramu and the teachers to interact one-on-one with parents about their child's academic performance through the school year. At this school, the Report card day is conducted after the three main term examinations (quarterly, half yearly and final). While all parents of students facing the board examination (class 10 & 12) are required to attend, only parents of low performers are called in for the Report card day from class 9 & 11.

Ramu fosters parent connections through the Report card day and reinforces messages that were communicated through the Parents' Meet (another practice that is grounded around student academic performance). For example, Ramu changed the structure of the Report card day by holding it on a weekend, if necessary. This flexibility allows parents, especially those dependent on their daily wage to support their families, to have an additional time slot to visit school. A teacher talks about Ramu's action on this structure change:

Parents have strengths. The HM's visibility due to living in this community helps. Functions in school and teachers' cooperation also improves involvement. To make the relationship stronger with parents, the headmaster changed the Report card day to accommodate all parents' needs. Here, both parents usually work as they are very poor. Nobody is free in this area. One of the parent's needs to come and meet the teachers and sign the report card. But that one hour is something they find so hard to spare. For us, those interactions are valuable. The headmaster brought this idea to keep the Report card day on weekends if needed and we all supported that decision. It is only once a term and we can come in on a weekend if needed. This helped the parents a lot [Line 240-257, IT 1, Teacher 3, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

As a result of this action, the Report card day has seen more parent participation. During the Report card day, class teachers and subject teachers interact with all parents of the students facing the board examination while Ramu interacts with parents of the students who are low performers. This action strengthens his existing home visits practice in which he also focuses on

meeting the parents of student low performers. Ramu talks about the Report card day and how messages are reinforced across practices. Ramu says,

If we stop with the Parents' Meet alone, the information won't get reinforced. So we use different opportunities right. We say it during Parents' Meet, we will say it when they meet me independently during my home visits. We give the same information in different ways such as providing them a positive environment to study and participating as much as one can despite their educational background. That is powerful. That gets reinforced. It will strengthen our relationship with parents also and I have seen it in many situations. We have to say it two or three times but it makes a difference in finding solutions and the progress of the student [Line 69-74, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

A teacher notes,

We meet parents individually and discuss the students' academic performance during the Report card day. They are failing this way, why are they getting good marks in this and not in that. We will appreciate the students who are getting good marks, like 90 and 80 percent. We will encourage them to get better marks in the final public exam. The headmaster supports us to take our time and highlight everything in detail and connect with parents beyond the Report card day. He himself visits homes as well and we learn a lot from him [Line 132-138, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

Students' Meet & Rank Holders' Parents

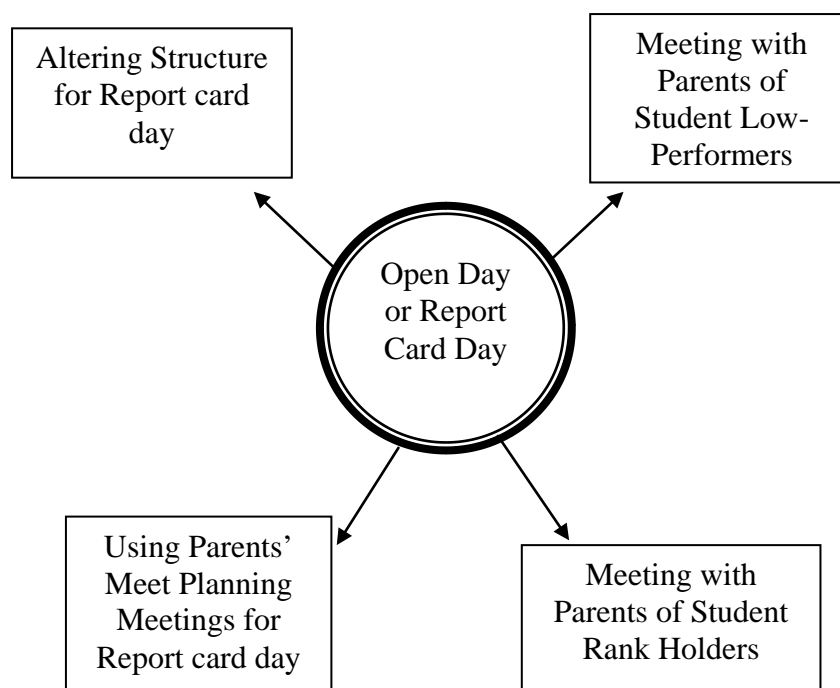
Just as Ramu focuses on meeting with parents of student low-performers, he also meets with parents of rank holders from classes 10 to 12. Rank holders are those students who secure the top three marks in each class. This connects with his overall vision for the school to raise academic excellence through strong connections with his parent community. He talks about the importance of his actions around meeting with parents of rank holders. He notes:

I also meet the parents of student rank holders. These are 10th and 12th parents. I have done it separately. The first, second and third rank holders parents come and see me. In every section there are 3 rank holders, and I stay in touch with almost 40 parents that way. That day also you saw, the person who is working in an insurance company. Today also one girl and parent came. They come straight and meet me individually. They come and tell me how they are preparing for the exams and if we can offer any help from the school. I also speak to them on the phone and visit their houses during exam time. For 2-3 years, I

was only going to student low-performers homes. But I wanted to begin meeting rank holders' parents and encouraging them [Line 154-162, IT 7 & 7.1, HM 3, 2011-11-17].

Overall, Ramu changed the structure of the Report card day to accommodate parents' needs and increase their participation. Further, the planning meetings between Ramu and the teachers for the Parents' Meet helps in the conduct of Report card day, since for home visits, especially meeting with parents of student low-performers are tied to the Report card day, he ensures reinforcement of messages. In addition, meeting with parents of rank holders helps motivate them to keep performing better.

Figure 21. Ramu's Actions around Report card day



Parents Attending National Functions at School

Functions and events like Independence day, annual day and sports day are given a lot of importance at Nilgiri as a way to connect with parents and families beyond student academics. Ramu and the teachers interviewed reported that the context of Nilgiri being surrounded by 10-15 villages makes for a greater communal celebration at these events. It gives the school a chance to reach out to the community and celebrate successes of the school and its students. One of the first actions that Ramu took as a headmaster was to install a large board for displaying the photographs from these events in the school. He talks about this action:

Look at the photos, did you see it? [Ramu points to the board of photographs]. I installed it and you will see photographs from all events. This is a symbol and showcase of our successes across various events. It motivates our teachers and students to conduct a better event the next year and for parents to continue their support and cheer for their children. They all appreciate it. If you take the Independence day, even a private school would not conduct the event for an entire day. We celebrate one whole day. I give a lot of importance to functions as it is a good way to connect with the parents and to showcase the students' talents in arts. Here, all parents come. Full school will come, along with full strength of teachers. That is an achievement here [Line 148-154, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-9].

Preparing for Functions

This achievement in parental participation in all functions and events at school resulted from extensive planning. Planning includes preparing the agenda for the functions, creating invitations and reaching out to various participants and the parent community. Ramu says:

My assistant school heads will prepare all the invitations and circulars. The AHMs write it and I proof read. I give them the guidance and support. I have also created something where I appreciate the teachers, students and parents involved in the school assembly. That encourages others to step forward and find more creative things to do at events like the annual day. This has boosted participating among all students, it is like a competitiveness in a positive way [Line 284-289, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

The main way we reach the parents is by phone. For annual day, printed notices are sent to everyone through the class teachers for example. I encourage the teachers to follow up with the parents to make sure they receive the notices and are willing to participate in the events.

This constant encouragement makes a difference as teachers believe in the importance the parents play and parents also value the role the school plays [Line 137-141, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Further, Ramu also talks about the flexibility of the holding events during public holidays if needed and his participation at these events.

For example, the Republic day and Independence day are government holidays, so everyone can attend the function at school. On other days, they would lose their wages, so we are sensitive. We combine it with a public holiday. If we do this, they will come and they will see the function and their children perform. So I keep all those functions for one day to attract the parents. If we keep it that way, the parents will come eagerly to see the children. That is also a good meeting. Did you ask the parents who the headmaster is? All of them will say they know me. That they should know. That is the most important aim for me. That visibility should be there. If you look at the school, most schools, the students don't know who the teachers are, who the headmaster is. That is sad. The headmaster has to talk to all teachers and all students and the parents. Those connections are important for us to collectively work [Line 92-102. IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

A parent and teacher talks about participating in the functions and Ramu's display board.

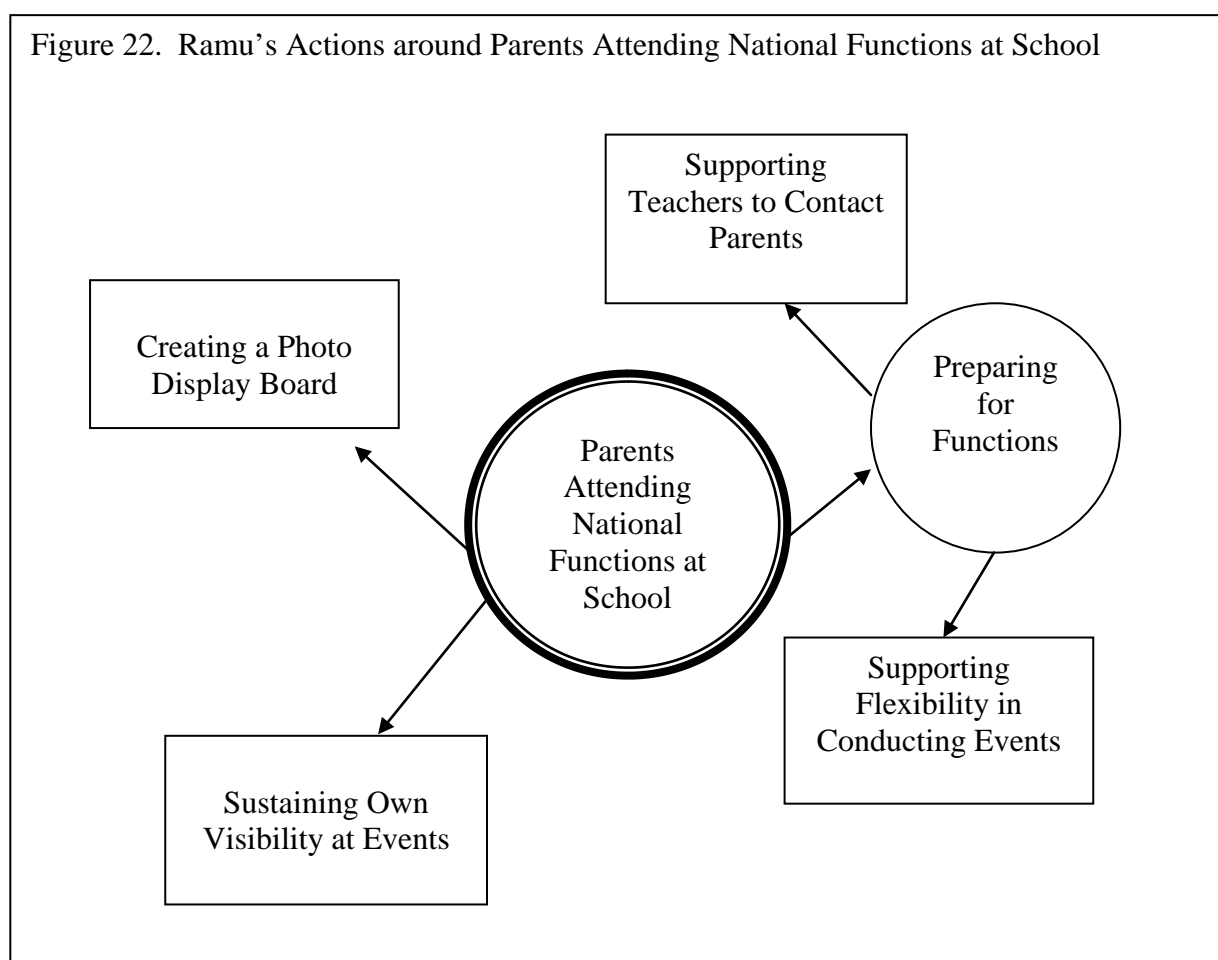
The parent notes:

There are so many functions and general programs like the literary day, sports day, quiz day also. All these are opportunities for interaction with other parents also right. Wherever there are programs, some parents come to encourage. The children also know that and get motivated. You can see all the photographs on the big display board which was this headmaster's idea and he stands in front and encourages all of us at these events. That makes us come back again to school [Line 75-80, IT 1, Parent 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

The teacher notes:

When parents come to functions, it is an opportunity for the headmaster and teachers to interact with them. Also parents talk and share successes and failures, which is healthy. Every opportunity we get is a point to contact; we seize all those points to connect. That is so important and the headmaster supports that completely through his own actions. For these parents, this is an outlet for them to see and learn how their children are performing. Some parents don't have the thought to take leave. But here if they are housewife and so on, they feel this is our school and our function, they take that pride. [Line 183-189, IT 1, Teacher 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-9].

In sum, Ramu created the display board to showcase photographs from various functions and events. This board in turn helped motivate teachers, students and parents in different ways. The functions and events celebrated at Nilgiri provides parents an opportunity to see their children perform and exhibit various talents. Further, they are able to interact with Ramu and the teachers at these events in an informal way. As reported by the teachers and parents, all these interactions also continue to create a healthy exchange of successes and drawbacks and how to collectively work for the progress of the school and students.



Communication

At Nilgiri, Ramu supports phone communication for several reasons. They include: 1) tracking student absentees; 2) follow up on academic performance; 3) other student related issues that arise and 4) establishing connections with hard-to-reach parents. Ramu encourages teachers to contact the parents on their cell phone as much as possible. Teachers talk about his support of the cell phone for overall communication:

All parents have teachers' cell phone numbers. They can contact us directly and they do. Teachers also call parents on their cell phones. Both are encouraged by the headmaster. The cell phone is such a big boon these days which was not there before. They are day laborers and there is no other way of reaching them. For this reason, the cell phone is a useful communication mechanism.[Line 97-101, IT 1, Teacher 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-8].

Student Absentees

Ramu has created a requirement that parents of student absentees must be contacted on the first day they are absent. He requires teachers to contact parents on their cell phones and inquire the reason for the absenteeism. They are also required to talk to the parent with the report card in hand when they visit school to inform teachers about the child's absence. The teachers also write down notes of that parent visit. This way, they are able to identify long absentees. Ramu himself meets with parents of students who are absent more than one week at school. A parent talked about Ramu's use the phone for this reason and his own time to meet with parents of long absentees. The parent notes:

If the child is absent for one day, the parents are called in. They are so responsible. They advise us. They call us and ask us questions in detail. Why was the child absent? They will immediately take the report card or rank card and see what marks my child is getting and write down about our visit in the attendance register if the child is not performing well. It will alert them. We also go. I have a cell phone and the teacher calls me herself. That connection is important. If my children take long leave, like my daughter did not come to school for five days as she was unwell, we had to meet the headmaster directly [Line 29-35, IT 1, Parent 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

Adolescent Training

Ramu also encourages information gathered from the adolescent training sessions to be passed on to parents. Every year, these outside trainings that include various health and behavior related topics are attended by a few teachers and students. Ramu encourages teachers to discuss this when parents visit school to meet them or if they call. Ramu says,

For the last five years, our school higher secondary teachers all have attended the training in a rotation. I keep sending teachers and students all the time for that. I encourage them to communicate the information to the parents who come as its relevant for their child. All this is a part of developing people [Line 8-11, IT 6 & 6.1, HM 3, 2011-11-15].

Developing Home Conditions & Learning at Home

Ramu also encourages teachers to communicate to parents about developing home conditions. These include talking to parents about food and nutrition and television usage among other things. Teachers report that Ramu talks about these issues at the planning meetings. Since Ramu visits students' homes, he is able to highlight the living conditions of many of his school's students. This insight also gives teachers an idea of issues to raise with parents. Ramu notes:

My visits to students' homes is an advantage as I am able to get a view of some students' living conditions. I discuss that with the teachers. All teachers pass on messages to parents about TV usage and setting aside a few hours for their children to study without too much noise. Most of these students live in very poor conditions, so whatever they can do is a bonus. We have not developed printed materials, but verbal messages are given constantly and I encourage that every time I meet teachers [Line 32-37, IT 1, HM 3, 2011-11-11].

A parent says,

I don't give my children any housework. We are very poor, but I have understood through the communication from school that additional work at home hinders the study time of my children as they are writing their board examination this year. My husband can read and write Tamil so he can help them. But I am not in a position to help them unfortunately. So I sit with them and do not allow them to watch TV and make food. Whatever support I can do physically, I will do that. They [children] will come home, wash their hands and legs and eat and sit for a while. They will share what they learned in school. I am interested in hearing as I have not had the opportunity to learn and do everything they did. So I will

listen keenly. After 6, they will study. I will not ask them or interrupt in between and ask what and why. They will keep the books and learn. They will ask my husband if needed. The school, teachers and the headmaster have supported us by informing us ways to help children at home even if we are not educated [Line 39-50, IT 1, Parent 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

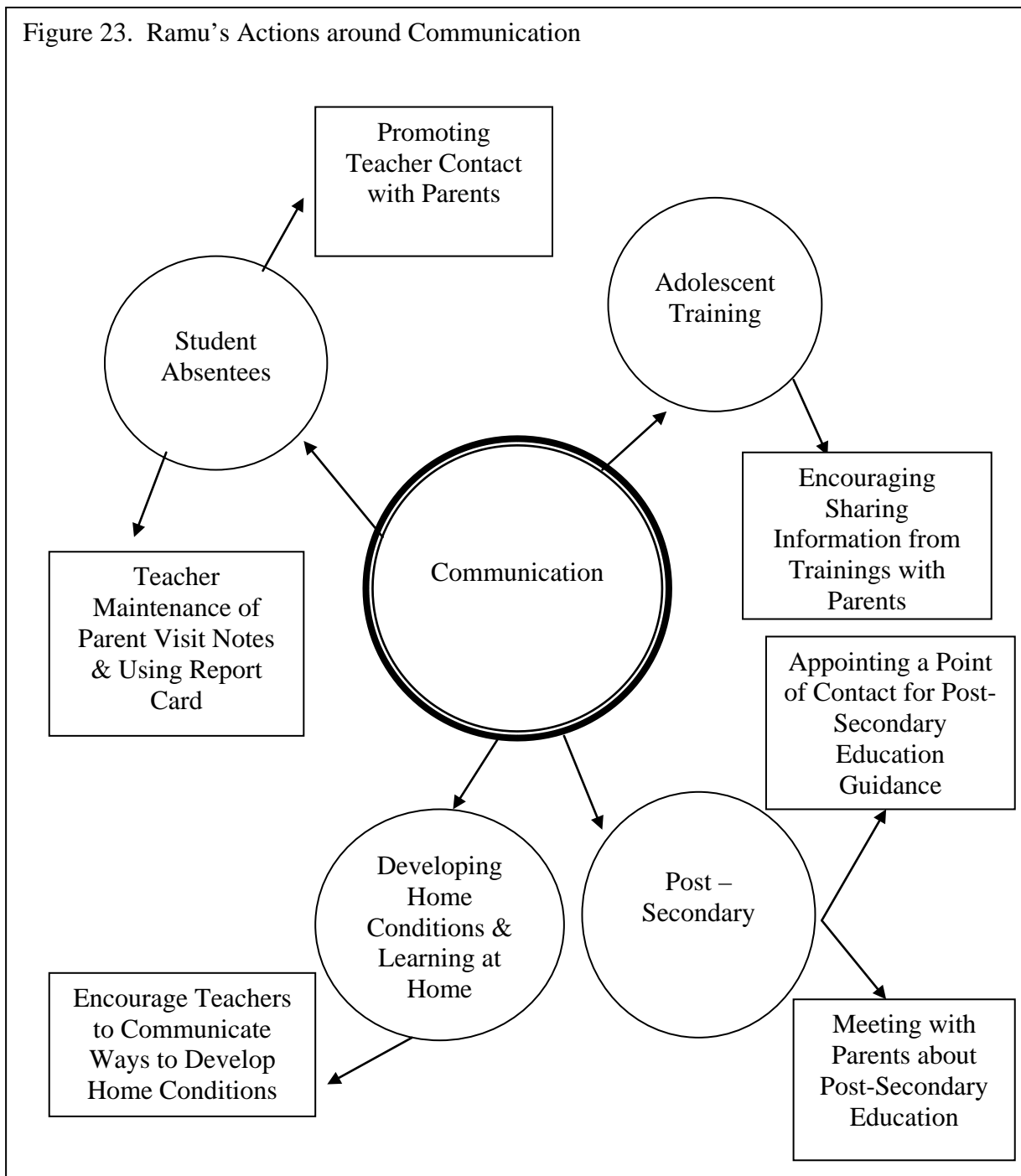
Post-Secondary

Ramu has also created a requirement where one teacher is appointed as the main point of contact for counseling parents about their child's post-secondary education (college education). This teacher is available once a week to meet with parents and provide them with suggestions on next steps like college entrance examinations and sources of funding. Ramu is also available to assist the appointed teacher every year to provide guidance to students, especially the class 12 students, on post-secondary options. A parent talks about Ramus' support:

The headmaster provided guidance to my daughter about the classes she should take based on her strengths and what she could do after class 12. Although I am not educated, I still sat down for those discussions in the school. Even for my son, he is now advising. Most students from this school have gone to college. That is such a proud thing. So many of my daughter's friends are teachers now. We are in touch with the other parents and it's such a big deal for the school [Line 42-47, IT 1, Parent 2, Nilgiri, 2011-11-14].

The parents will come and talk to the Physics teacher as she is the appointed person for career counseling this year. She will guide the students and work with the parents to connect them to other sources of information. She has all the brochures. The cut off details will also be provided by her for Engineering entrance examinations. This system works well here and we are glad the headmaster initiated it as we are able to help the students for their future. The parents are not aware of many things and it is important that they get equipped with all the information as much as possible [Line 211-217, IT 1, Teacher 1, Nilgiri, 2011-11-8].

Figure 23. Ramu's Actions around Communication



Ramu's efforts and leadership to visit students' homes and develop parent connections has increased parent support in various practices at school. Teachers and parents reported that this leadership has had an effect on the way parents perceive school and their own involvement in their child's education and progress.

CHAPTER 7

VAIGAI SCHOOL

Developing Parent Relations: from Vasu's Parent Journal & Phone Diary

Located approximately 40 kilometers from the center of Urban District A is Suburban District B. Crossing a main highway on the southern side of Urban District A and several overcrowded towns, one reaches a landmark in Suburban District B. Through the pedestrians and two-wheeler traffic, the huge metal gate of the main rail station in Suburban District B is visible. Walking for a kilometer on a muddy and uneven surfaced lane alongside one of the main streets bordering the rail station, you cross a barren intersection to reach the entrance of Vaigai Government Higher Secondary School. While the school's sign is small, one cannot miss noticing the massive *banyan* tree from the entrance. The school staff notes that many discussions took place around this old tree since the school started and its deep roots signifies the many years of joint effort between the school, parents and the community to develop the school. In 2015, this school will complete 50 years of serving this community.

As you enter the school grounds, the first small building on the left is headmaster Vasu's office. It is 8 AM and he is seated in a small space, surrounded by posters displaying the school's achievements on one side and metal cabinets displaying trophies and documents on the other. As he greets parents and interacts with them, he takes a few minutes to record the positive highlights of his conversation in a parent journal. Further, he uses a color coding scheme in his phone diary with parent contact information to foster those parent connections.

A teacher notes,

I have worked in this school for 20 years and seen a number of school heads. The present school headmaster has really shown us through his various actions how powerful it is to involve the parents and the community for the success of the student and school. He not only interacts with the parents daily, but also shares with the teachers about his positive interactions with parents. That awareness has pushed the teachers to be more connected with parents over the years. We know that these connections will only grow in this school [Line 154-158, IT1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Vaigai's History

Vaigai's school history dates back to 1965 when the school opened to serve a community that had been identified as one of the most educationally backward regions in Suburban District B. For the first 12 years of the school's existence, there was hardly any development within the school or outside. A parent of a current student who is a resident of the neighborhood and was enrolled in this school herself talks about those former years. The parent says,

I was born here, lived here all my life and studied in this school. When the school started in 1965, only a few huts surrounded the school. This was not even a rural neighborhood. There were mango farms all around. This was a mud road and only cow and buffalo carts could go. Very rarely, one bus used to stop about 5 kilometers from here. If we miss that bus to go to the nearest city, we have to walk another 5 kilometers. We used to live on a single meal since we could not miss school and walk a lot to buy food. For children, this school was a boon back then. For us who lived through these years, we know that this school changed this neighborhood in the last three decades and the inscriptions of achievements on the founding stone are testimony to that [Line 74-82, IT 1, Parent 2, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

The developments that took place in the school from the late 70s and in turn, around the community itself, did not come very easily. The school lacked the entire basic infrastructure like classrooms, blackboards, benches, chairs, drinking water and restrooms in its initial years. The low student enrollment and student achievement were larger issues that had to be fixed to resolve the infrastructure issues as the funding the school received was directly connected to enrollment.

This school got recognition in 1963 and was a high school serving students up to class 10 until 2008. It was upgraded to a co-educational higher secondary school in 2009, serving students up to class 12 with Tamil as the medium of instruction. Since its inception, every

headmaster has collaborated with the parents and the community to develop infrastructure. For example, one headmaster worked with the parents and community in the late 80s to convert the street leading to the school into a main road. The bus facilities were approved by the local town because of that. Otherwise, the children would walk three to five kilometers to the nearest bus stop. In the 90s, there was another headmaster who worked with the parents and community members to raise money to construct classrooms and restrooms [Line 84-91, IT 1.2, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

As headmaster Vasu highlights some of the key developments led by prior school heads, he also describes the sustained connections with the parents and community over the years. One of the biggest challenges which he faced when he took over as the school head in the 2000s was low student enrollment. The year he joined the school, the total student enrollment in the high school was only 500.

I conducted an enrollment campaign every year from the year I joined Vaigai school. I am a local resident. So, I went into the hamlets with the teachers and campaigned for education and enrollment. I had to create an opportunity to move with the public and parents and community. I used that to bring in more awareness about education for almost five years. I also talked about my vision for the school with parents. This was the way I got a link into the community and was able to build a rapport with parents and also boost the student enrollment. This year I have enrolled 102 students in the 10th standard and 110 in the 11th standard. We have close to 1000 students in our school today [Line 25-33, IT 2, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

Just as the increase in student enrollment was an important part of Vaigai's history, headmaster Vasu also talks about the developments in infrastructure and students' academic performance. While there are still numerous challenges in the school's infrastructure, it has been among the top 5 higher secondary schools in Suburban District B for its overall student achievement. Headmaster Vasu said,

We are emerging towards the celebration of the school's golden jubilee and we still don't have classrooms for some students. There are 17 classrooms available, but we still have some students sitting outside to study. Through the SSA [government scheme] program, we have now been sanctioned three more classrooms which will be ready this year [Line 1-5, IT 1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

The results were average when I took over the high school as there were a number of one subject and two subject failures. I began interacting with the teachers more and we had results analysis reports prepared. In turn, the teachers interacted with parents during the report card day and parents meet. Teachers also visited the hamlets and worked with the parents. I encouraged that a lot as we needed to work with the parents to boost the results of the students. The home conditions of these students were very poor and we needed to provide parents instructions to help their children. We slowly achieved state average and now we are one of the high performing schools at the higher secondary level. It took us many years of interactions and collective effort. We are now headed in the right direction [Line 37-45, IT 2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

This increase in student academic performance in the last few years has attracted students from other neighborhoods to join Vaigai. Further, the school staff and parents also talk about the impact that the school has created in the community over the years. Headmaster Vasu notes,

Almost 100 students come by bus daily and most of them come from 5 to 7 kilometers away to attend school here. The bus stop is near the school itself and can be approached through the school entrance on the other side. Although this school has been there for 50 years, the transformation from what it was to what it is today is huge. Students from here have joined different vocational courses and engineering programs and we are so proud of that [Line 190-197, IT 1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

A parent says,

People lived in huts earlier around this school. The place has changed so much. We still need more infrastructure facilities, but it will only improve here after. The prosperity has come because of the school. Parents are more aware of the value of education and we can now do things collectively with them. The prosperity comes through imparting quality education. The former PTA head is a former student and all former students come back and ask the headmaster what they can do to make this a model school. That drive will help us as parents to be part of the history going forward [Line 91-94, IT 1, Parent 2, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Parental Background and Occupations

Vaigai school is situated in Suburban District B and is bordered on the north side by Urban District A and on the other sides by three bigger suburban districts. The districts that surround Suburban District B provide most of its people their work. Suburban District B is also

well connected by rail and road to its neighboring districts which are well-known for both their industrial estates and agricultural areas. While Vaigai is situated in the heart of Suburban District B with several buildings and offices, other interior areas of the district still consist of plantations and farms. Those areas are still developing.

Most parents from this district commute to the neighboring districts to either work in industries as day laborers or in the agricultural estates. The school staff note that more than 70 percent of the parents fall within this category. The other parents work within the district as vegetable vendors, fish sellers, painters or in other small technical jobs that include electricians and plumbers. Headmaster Vasu says,

I will take out the admission register and show you the parental occupations. If you see, the majority are *coolis* workers who earn daily wages. They travel to other districts as the industries can provide them those jobs. Some are building construction laborers as the urban district A has many jobs in that area. The rest of them live and work in this locality and are very poor still. Some still struggle for their daily food [Line 149-153, IT 2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

A parent says,

We had to work all day as a *coolis* [day laborer] 20 years ago and we used to earn only Rs 4 (5 cents). That is how much I used to earn. Like that we struggled. Now *coolis* income has gone up. I have no education and cannot work in other places. Now we can earn at least Rs 5,000 (90 dollars). We are a family of 4 and still live in one room as that's all we can afford. I hope through my children's education, they can go to college, earn well and live a better life [Line 70-75, IT 1, Parent 2, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Vaigai's parent population is mostly not educated with a college degree. The school staff note that more than 70 percent of the students are first generation learners while the rest typically have either of the parents who are educated up to class 10 or 12. Headmaster Vasu, through his own initiative, has recorded some of these parental details in his parent journal. He also keeps a

parent phone diary specifically for parents of class 10 and 12 students who are facing the board examination. A teacher notes,

Most parents are not educated. The awareness that their children should study is there. The headmaster and teachers in this school ask the children to pass on the education they receive to parents. A number of students come back and tell us that they ask their parents to read with them. They also tell us that they somehow try to write and we see it when they collect report cards. The school makes an effort now to take that awareness to the parents [Line 109-114, IT 1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Headmaster Vasu says,

A number of students have single parents. Through my practice, I have made it a point to meet with all the class 10 and 12 parents. They come and talk to me every other week and I make notes in my parent diary. This is important as they should feel that they can help their children at home even if they are not educated beyond school. These connections matter as most of them are not educated [Line 158- 162, IT 2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

The school staff also notes that some parents had sent their children to work during school days. The awareness of education imparted to parents and the importance of continuous attendance at school over the years has changed them. Despite that, headmaster Vasu notes that he still continues to personally speak to parents about not pulling children out of school for work. He also says that he was able to identify some parents through his parent diary and journal who could work part-time at the school. This was one of the ways he could help parents and keep few children away from doing small jobs. A teachers says,

Earlier, some children used to do small jobs in the morning. They used to help their mother or father deliver paper or milk packets in houses. We had to speak to parents several times at various occasions like the report card day and parents meet about not sending their child out to work. They will shed tears that they don't have enough money. That is the home situation. Things have changed since headmaster Vasu started speaking to parents of class 10 and 12 students directly. He makes sure that those children don't work before or after school. Parents fully understand now that the child's education gets disrupted and that the board examinations are crucial [Line 216-223, IT 1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Headmaster Vasu says,

A number of parents in this community are day laborers. So, there are parents who are painters, plumbers and electricians. We have documented the occupations of parents. This year, I was able to find a parent who is a painter who could do some work for the school. If the children's parents can do the job, we increase their earning. I was also able to find a part-time janitor this way and it was a parent who was almost going to get her child to drop out of school due to low earnings [Line 117-122, IT 2.1, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

Vasu's Vision for Vaigai

Headmaster Vasu's strong connections with parents and the community come from his past experiences as a teacher. This influences a large part of his vision for Vaigai. Having worked as Chemistry teacher in rural and city schools for 20 years, he talks about his postings and how he was able to turn around the academic achievement in one particular school. From the beginning, he says that his vision was clear. He wanted to work to enroll and educate all children from low-income families in a quality school environment with good infrastructure and teaching and learning facilities. His vision was enhanced by his connections with parents and families.

I was posted as a teacher in 1980 in a very poor district. In my early years as a teacher, I used to travel to the interior villages in that district and meet with the parents as I was a local person. The village people really loved the school and come forward to help as the infrastructure was so poor. Parents volunteered to even chase the cows from the school premises and brought milk and snacks for the children after school. I tried to use innovative methods to teach Chemistry other than rote learning. I was motivated to do this after school and the parents would support me and their children. This showed me the value of parent links, despite their having very little or no education. A few years later, I was posted in another rural low-performing school. I worked in that school for 10 years and got them a hundred percent result in Chemistry where every student passed. The district presented me with an award for that [Line 206-216, IT1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

I continued to work to provide quality education to children from low-income families through interacting with parents and the families in the villages during my teaching days. I spent a lot of time doing this outside school hours. I knew that the awareness had to be taken to them. The importance of education needed to be reinforced through the school. I used to try and highlight achievements of children to parents and also try and enroll more first generation learners in our school. Back then, not everyone knew the value of involving parents but through my interactions, I knew that their support is critical to a

child's first enrollment in school and the well-being of the child. This became my continuing vision [Line 167-173, IT 1.2, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

After 20 years as a Chemistry teacher, headmaster Vasu was offered an administrative post in the research and monitoring division. He notes that he accepted this post as his vision to reach and serve more children from low-income communities could be broadened. Here, he was able to observe more schools and the facilities with teaching and learning and infrastructure and make recommendations to the government. He says,

I had worked for more than 20 years as a teacher and it was time to do something more with my vision. The research wing was a good post as I could observe more schools and also liaison with researchers. I worked on a major project around creating result analysis reports for schools and that made me more aware of the importance of data. After a few years in the research division, I was promoted and asked to take on the post of a school head. This was my chance to implement my vision [Line 32-37, IT 1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

As a result of his promotion, Headmaster Vasu took up the role as Vaigai's school head. He used his past experiences to implement different aspects of his vision for Vaigai school which include improving enrollment, academics and infrastructure. One of the vehicles he used for working towards his vision was his connections with parents and the community. At the very beginning, he campaigned among parents in the hamlets surrounding the school for increasing enrollment and building connections with his parent community. He describes other aspects of his vision for Vaigai in this way and also shows a letter that he drafted to send the state and central education departments. The letter highlights headmaster Vasu's vision on education for the first generation learners and the collective responsibility of the school, families and the community in serving these students. He says,

We had to do several interventions for academic achievement in this school and still continue that. I will show you the result analysis report. Since I was in research, I was able to analyze the results over the years with the help of the teachers. We were able to

identify students who were not performing well in one subject or two subjects and give them more support as that could bring down the overall school results in the final 10th and 12th board examinations. Using data effectively and analyzing it was a vision that I had which is hardly taking place in public schools. This is critical as students can miss the medical seat or engineering seat by a few marks. Parents also need to be made aware of this and we do that through the report card day and our personal interactions with parents from 10th and 12th standard. For some of these children who are so poor yet so hard working, our report analysis makes a big difference [Line 218-225, IT 1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

The other vision I have is bringing in quality infrastructure. Children cannot sit under the trees and study in the heat. We need more classrooms and restrooms in the school. This school is still Tamil medium and the only way we can bring in English medium is by improving the infrastructure. There is a desire among the parents and students to bring in English medium as the students need it for enrolling in college, vocational courses or taking up jobs. The PTA is very supportive in improving the infrastructure in the school and bringing in English medium. With collective support from the parents, teachers and the community, we are hoping to bring this vision to life [Line 15-21, IT 1.1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

Vasu's Beliefs on Parent Involvement

For headmaster Vasu, the importance of parent and community involvement is shared with others through his own past experiences and practices. He talks about several interactions during his days as a teacher and as a research administrator. Specifically, he describes an out of school children camp where he met parents and families in villages for an entire year to enroll more children in school. He believes that experience shapes his strong commitment to parent involvement. He also notes that Vaigai's parents' awareness about the importance of education over the years and their support has led the school to high academic performance in the district. He says,

We don't have a mission statement but I want to create one and include parent involvement in the mission statement and in the school stage in the main grounds. I think it's important that we think of Vaigai's history and how the parents and community played a critical role in developing the school and how the school played a role in developing the community. We need to emphasize the belief that the school, parents and the community together can grow the school to success [Line 41-46, IT 2.1, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

Headmaster Vasu says that he had to reach out to parents in the beginning a number of times to get them to visit the school. Since Vasu is also a local resident and part of the community, he was able to meet a number of parents outside of the school context. Further, he believes that many teachers played a key role in involving parents through their home visits. All these interactions combined increases parent involvement at Vaigai.

[The] majority of Vaigai's parents are not educated. If the parents come, they will get confidence to be involved and believe that they can help their child at home and the school. Some parents don't come because they can't lose a daily wage. Our school makes an effort to reach out to parents in many ways to work around this issue. Teachers visit parent's homes, parents visit school at different points and I reach out to parents myself. In fact, the 10th and 12th parents come and meet me. I live locally so I am part of the community for more than 10 years. If I am able to get involved with the community and be involved with these parents in that way, these children will come up. They will also achieve confidence. They will believe that a local community person is the school head who will take care of the children well [Line 142-150, IT 2.1, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

Teachers Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Vaigai's teachers also talk about positively engaging the parents and the community for the growth of the child and the school. They attribute the shift in involvement over the last few decades to the school's efforts in reaching out to parents in multiple ways. Noting that number of major developments in the school and the community happened in tandem over the years, the parents in the community are more drawn to the school. Further, they also share that headmaster Vasu's initiative to make parent involvement a vision has changed the outlook of many teachers and parents themselves. One veteran teacher says,

Earlier, there was high involvement of parents only in the city public schools. They will come all the time. Other rural and suburban public schools had very low involvement. Even we used to have only 30 percent involvement a few decades ago. Initially, we required them to come especially when dealing with long absentees or students who are not performing well academically. That slowly changed over the years. The belief that involvement matters does not happen overnight. We took many steps and the headmaster worked for more than a decade trying to bring parents on board. The local teachers were supportive in visiting students' homes. The parents saw the change in the community and

the achievements of students. Everything together shaped the belief that involvement matters [Line 39-48, IT 1, Teacher 3, Vaigai, 2011-11-22].

Parents are well involved now. The community has joined hands, so it's much better now. The SSA scheme [government scheme] has changed things for the elementary school and changed the mindset for all parents. It is really education for all and the interior village people have come together. Also this is a chance for us to go express our concerns about children to the village people through this scheme. This chance has given parents an opportunity to come in and we are able to talk more. We can talk to parents from all levels and to the children together [Line 74-79, IT 1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Teachers also believe that practices to involve parents and the awareness about education needs to be constant. The school's prior parents' meets have highlighted success stories of other children and also invited parents to talk about their involvement. This was done to reinforce that the school believes in the parents and also respects and values them, despite their educational background. As one teacher says,

Parents have to come to school during the parents' meets and we talked about their involvement. We wanted to do this to reinforce that belief that their involvement matters. Some government schools in the city have this as they have more educated parents. Here not even 10 percent are educated unfortunately. They need to feel valued as they can contribute in so many ways to the child and to the school [Line 235-239, IT 1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Parents Beliefs on Parent Involvement

Vaigai's parents' awareness about their involvement in their child's education and for the development of the school is high. They share that their beliefs on involvement were strengthened due to the awareness of the importance of being educated that the school imparted. Further, the parents also believe that their involvement helps them to educate themselves in small ways. Parents say,

Education is important for our children and nothing can be done without that. If they don't have it, they will have to do household jobs like me. Even for household jobs, you need education. I don't have that. If I want to read the local bus number and pay a bus fare for our commute, we need to have some basic education. Without that, I have to ask the next person which city this bus is going to. That basic empowerment is not there still

among many parents. If we have studied, we can be aware of a lot of things. For our children, even for a basic company job, they want to know if they have studied up to 12th standard. We are educating our children and participating in everything despite not knowing much. Our children can do well and stand on their own feet in the future. I am learning from my children now to read and write. I am learning now as it is never too late right? [Line 75-85, IT 1, Parent 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

We regret not knowing so many things. My child is in class 12 in this school and he shows us how to use a bank account and fill forms. Most of the children from these hamlets go only to this school. The next generation in this community will be educated. The parents are very aware of this and want to make them study. They don't want them to earn *cooli* wages or beg somewhere. That can be possible only with education. We need to be involved and believe that this school will do the best for our children [Line 106-111, IT 1, Parent 2, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

This strong belief among parents did not come easily. The school made a lot of effort to connect with the parents. Those opportunities and better school performance created a positive change among the parents.

My child wants to become an IAS officer and serve the government because of this school. He has a dream because of this school. He is so fired up. His goal is to become a district collector and come back and build classrooms for other public schools so more kids like him can study. That deep thought came into his mind only because of this school. It would not have struck him otherwise. They instilled that in him that anything can be achieved. The school reached out to me so many times and talked about his dreams. I know that he has to study hard. I visit school often to meet the teachers and the headmaster, so I know what I can do to help him at home. I try and work day and night to provide him good meals, so he can work towards his dream [Line 61-69, IT 1, Parent 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Parent Involvement Practices at Vaigai

Vaigai's parent involvement practices are spearheaded by headmaster Vasu's practice around maintaining a parent contact diary and journal. He initiated a system and created this practice which strengthens other parent involvement practices at the school like visits to students' homes by teachers. The other practices at Vaigai include the parent teachers association, parents' meet, report card day and communication with parents for various academic

and non-academic reasons. The succeeding pages of this case describe these practices in detail and headmaster Vasu's actions fostering these practices.

Vasu's Parent Contact Diary & Journal

One of the parent involvement practices that Vasu initiated as a school head was his parent phone diary and journal. He describes the rationale for this practice around some of his past experiences and interactions with parents as a teacher. Highlighting two particular past incidents on the impact of maintaining a parent contact diary and journal, he shares that the connections with parents take time and effort to shape. As a teacher, he was able to recognize the importance of maintaining contacts and recording conversations to develop parent connections during visits to his students' homes. He says,

When I was the teacher, I maintained a parent diary when I traveled to the villages to meet with parents of my students. I learned a few important lessons there. I recorded the parents' details like name, contact number and occupation. I also recorded few highlights from my conversations with parents. The first lesson that I learned was that I was able to reconnect with parents when I visited them again in their homes. Conversations are easily forgotten. This would not have been possible without my writing down those highlights. I could follow up with them about the child's progress. I shared these ideas with other teachers in the school I worked. I wanted them to understand my rapport with parents and the importance of this rapport, even more when parents are not educated. The awareness had to be taken to them. I understood through my own journal about the home conditions of my students and was able to reach out to parents more. I learned about the power of this action as a teacher for the success of my class students [Line 87-96, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

During my interactions with parents, I also found the need to connect with other subject teachers to get more information about the student. I tried to develop a symbol system in my diary for reminders and follow ups. I used a double asterisk mark for follow up with other subject teachers with a note on the side. I also used to color code for the follow up contacts with parents. I wanted to be more effective with my practice, so I don't miss any connections. I saw the power of the diary when it came to a student's parents who needed to be contacted multiple times as he was a long absentee. The student was excellent in academics but was not regular to school since the parents used to take him away to work. I met multiple times with the parents and recorded those conversations. I was able to convince the parents about the child's academic performance and that he can go places. Finally, the child came to school and finished school second. This incident

reinforced my belief in the parent diary as it helped me for my own recollection and keeping those parent contacts going for the child's progress [Line 164-176, IT 2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

Drawing from his past experiences of using the parent diary and journal, headmaster Vasu wanted to continue this practice on joining Vaigai as the school head. He notes that on joining, one of the first actions he took was to record contact details of class 10 and 12 parents in his phone diary. He wanted to begin with the class 10 and 12 students as they are the ones who would appear for the board examinations. Simultaneously, he met with at least 5 to 10 parents every Saturday to interact and build connections. He talks about his actions for setting up the practice at Vaigai. He notes:

I collected all 10th and 12th parents' details initially and recorded them as they are the students facing the board examinations. I collected nearly all 200 parents contact details. During my meetings with class teachers and subject teachers, they would bring up certain names of students who are not performing that well in class academically or not behaving properly. I used to go back to the diary and contact those parents. I have spoken to all of them definitely. I also dedicated time to meet with other parents of class 10 and 12 students on Saturdays as some parents felt that was the day they could come and not lose their daily wage. I was able to meet 10 parents at least every Saturday. The teachers saw me doing it and they were more encouraged to meet with parents and continue the interactions [Line 116-125, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

I not only collected the parent details, but also continued to have a place where I note the conversations with them. This was something I had learned during my teaching days and wanted to continue as it was effective. I continued to have a marking system [shows the researcher the diary]. If I put two red crosses, that means the follow up needs to be done with the parent as soon as possible. I would have got this information from the teachers and I write a note near it. If it's two green crosses, it means that it's a positive interaction with the parent and something to highlight to other teachers. If I put two blue crosses, it means that it's a parent who could speak at the parents' meet or function about his or her own experiences. If I put two yellow crosses, it means it's a parent who could do some part-time work for the school to earn some extra money. I also have notes near the symbols and highlights of my conversations with the parents. That matters as I will know more information and the context of the conversation [Line 130-141, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

Headmaster Vasu shares that he has been continuing this practice up to the present and encouraged teachers to build positive connections with parents. His other important action for this practice includes supporting the local teachers to carry out home visits to meet with parents before the parents' meet (described more in the parents' meet section). He notes that he was able to underscore the importance of home visits to teachers from his own interactions with parents through his parent journal. Since a number of his conversations with parents required further action through his notes, he would speak to parents again and also encourage the respective class 10 and 12 teachers to visit the homes if needed. Vasu also notes that being a local resident and living in the community helped to strengthen his connections with his parental community. A teacher talks about his actions:

The HM is very involved with parents. He has all the class 10 and 12 parents' contact information and occupations in his diary. His conversations with parents on Saturdays have been so regular. His efforts to interact with parents continually have helped the teachers understand the importance of parent connections. He uses his diary to highlight conversations with us during meetings and we have followed up with a number of parents ourselves for academic related issues. I think it is important for us to visit the homes if needed and local teachers are doing that. For the other teachers who cannot visit, we have other opportunities like the parents' meet, report card day and our phones to keep our links with the parents. Every action is important [Line 154-162, IT1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Headmaster Vasu talks about the impact of his actions:

Some people ask me how I have the time to keep my interactions with parents going. Since I have a structure in place, I am able to continue this important practice. Through my actions, I was able to help many students at this crucial stage in their life. That is why I feel that this is one of the strongest practices that I have learned from in the past and that I continue. I can think of many examples of my interactions with parents. For example, I was able to interact with parents of some students who were very rebellious. I needed to meet them a number of times and talk to the students separately. I found through those interactions that their home conditions were shattered. In some cases, I was able to continually encourage top performers. Even in this case, the parents were struggling economically, so they could not send the student for extra classes outside. I was able to help some students like that through extra coaching after school. If parent involvement needs to be there, we need to reach out a lot. Once they see us taking the

effort and see their child doing well, they will automatically start involving themselves more [Line 194-205, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

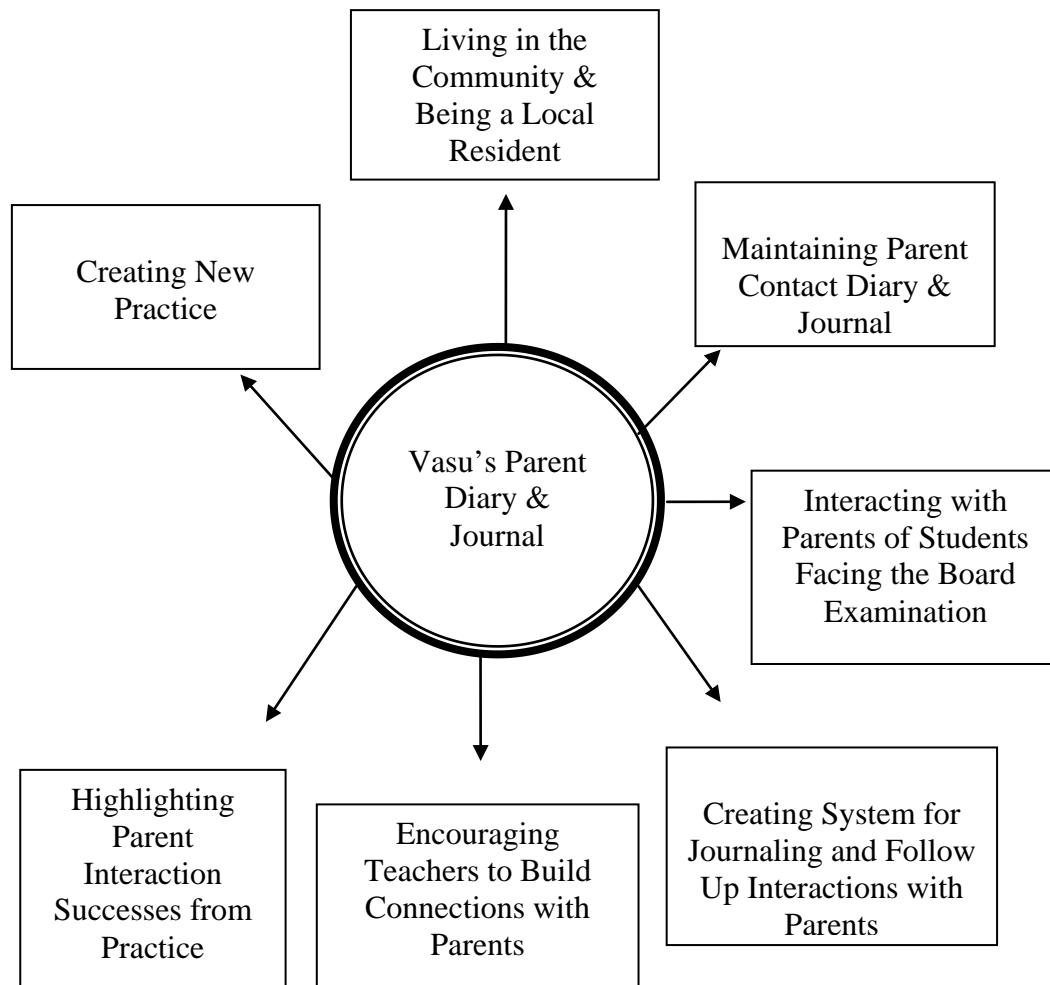
Vaigai's parents also talk about their personal interactions with headmaster Vasu through his practice and how their own relationship with the school has improved as a result of those interactions. Parents say,

If a student misbehaves, the headmaster will catch them and call the parents. He has all the numbers of parents and writes note in detail. If you go and ask him, he will say correctly what the issue is as he writes down notes about the students in class 10 and 12. This has made parents understand the value of these interactions with the school head. In my child's case, the headmaster reached out multiple times as she was one of the top performers in the class. She is now in engineering school. With my son, he is not performing that well. I have met with the teachers several times so he can improve and met with the headmaster to follow up [Line 141-149, IT 1, Parent 4, Vaigai, 2011-11-23].

I have seen three headmasters in the past. This HM is a local resident. His strong connections with parents and the community have increased the overall achievement in this school. His interactions with us have made many parents realize that they need to be involved in the child's education and school affairs. Parents need to be educated about that importance. That is such a big change, even for a parent like me. I am not educated and I would have been aloof if I was not reached out to. At least now I know that the school head and teachers are there to help and can make me understand what I need to do to help my child. We need to keep the dialogue going [Line 40-47, IT 1, Parent 3, Vaigai, 2011-11-22].

To sum up, headmaster Vasu initiated a practice around maintaining class 10 and 12 parent contact information. Further, he continued to journal about the conversations that he had with parents and encouraged teachers to follow up with parents as needed. His actions included creating a structure for himself to keep the interactions with parents going through the school year and a system of writing notes and color coding in his journal. This helped him capitalize on the positive interactions and follow up on the ones that needed more attention. His actions have not only encouraged teachers to interact more with parents, but also increased the awareness among parents to be more involved in school.

Figure 24. Vasu's Actions around the Parent Contact Diary & Journal



Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

Vaigai's Parent Teachers Association (PTA) works to improve the school's infrastructure (classrooms, restrooms, benches and chairs) and teaching and learning by bringing parents and teachers together. Although the PTA has been there since the school's inception, the school staff note that the recent actions taken by headmaster Vasu over the last five years have resulted in rapid infrastructure development at Vaigai. Further, the steps taken by headmaster Vasu to connect the PTA with the village education committee (VEC) helped strengthen connections with the parents in the community. Although the VEC committee is primarily for elementary school, headmaster Vasu brought together members from the PTA and VEC committee for executive committee meetings. In doing so, he was able to draw from both sources to benefit the school and students. Headmaster Vasu talks about the initial actions he took towards the PTA's organization. He says,

The PTA has been there right from the inception. I came in 2005 and one of the first things I did was to make sure that the executive committee involves everyone that it is supposed to. With the help of the prior elected body, we elected the new PTA executive committee members that included teachers and parents. We formulated a resolution and the new PTA executive committee was formed. This was important as the composition of members determines the success of the PTA [Line 2-7, IT 5, HM 4, 2011-11-23].

The PTA and VEC can complement each other. I wanted the VEC and PTA executive committee members to attend meetings together as both teams are working for the same cause which is the development of the school and its students. That will create more transparency and we can collectively develop ideas. This will help strengthen the connections between the parents, teachers and the community itself for the development of the school and students [Line 10-15, IT 5, HM 4, 2011-11-23].

Along with setting up the organization of the PTA, headmaster Vasu also collaborated with the executive committee members of the PTA and VEC to develop the school's infrastructure, student academic performance and the other teaching and learning initiatives. The

PTA executive committee consists of 8 members, of which 4 are parents. The PTA head is also a parent member. The VEC committee includes parent members from the community, as well as teachers, and is led by the local village *panchayat* leader. Headmaster Vasu holds the PTA and VEC executive committee meetings monthly at Vaigai. He explains how these collaborative efforts promote developments at Vaigai:

One of the main things we are still struggling with is infrastructure. We met with several private companies after executive committee meetings to raise money for our school's infrastructure. We were able to get 800 benches for our students. We are now working towards getting three more classrooms. Once this basic infrastructure development is completed, we can begin setting up our computer lab and other laboratories. The parents are enthusiastic and want to help. The VEC committee public participation helps to get the community involved [Line 136-144, IT 1, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

I have also made an effort to involve the executive committee in the students' academic performance. We have presented the result analysis reports to the parents and explained the after-school extra coaching for low performers. We plan to make the same presentation to the parents at a PTA general body meeting since all parents will be present. It is important for them to know the steps the school and the teachers are taking to improve students' progress. We found this to be successful during one-on-one interactions between teachers and parents who don't have much education. Many of them [parents] said that this increased their awareness about what happens in the school and that they need to be more involved in whichever way possible. So, we know that the PTA and VEC members can also help promote this awareness among the parent community. It is all a collective effort in the end [Line 25-37, IT 5, HM 4, 2011-11-23].

Headmaster Vasu also participates in organizing PTA general body meetings, which include the entire parent body and which occur twice a year. Each PTA general body meeting is conducted for a purpose. In his first year, Vasu used meeting to focus on the school's enrollment campaign. Aside from going into the neighboring hamlets with the teachers to campaign for the school's enrollment, he also used the general body meeting to help promote awareness among Vaigai's parent body. This academic year, he says the meetings will focus on empowering parents about the incentive programs:

This year, we want to highlight the incentive programs that could benefit children. For example, the government introduced a program which will help prevent dropouts in class 10. The government has provided a small incentive amount to students who complete class 10 and 12. This amount will earn an interest of 10.5 percent which they can use for college. This may not solve the problems of dropouts completely and, fortunately, we don't have that many dropouts in our school. But this program will motivate the students to complete class 12. We also want to communicate to parents about the importance of college education and also invite some parents to speak [Line 60-69, IT 2.1, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

Given the achievements of the PTA and VEC, headmaster Vasu supports the move to celebrate successes. He says that successes are not often celebrated in public schools and it's important for this parent community to feel appreciated. Collaborating with the new PTA head, Vasu has organized the first celebratory get-together for the executive committee. He plans to give a speech highlighting the positive developments through the PTA and VEC over the years and also invite parent and teacher members to talk. He notes:

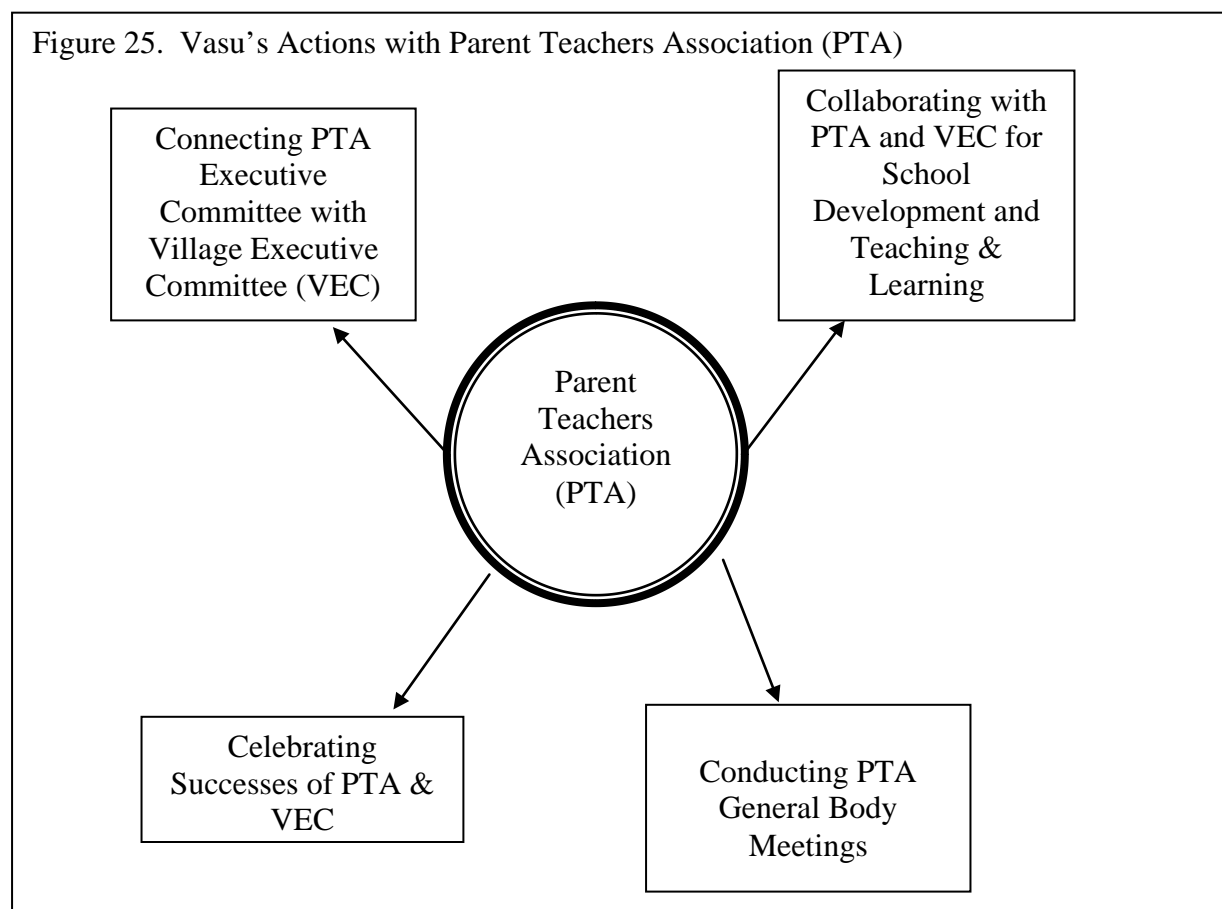
I think it's important to celebrate achievements of the PTA and VEC. After all, they are working for this school and students. We do have a financial crunch, but it is important to do something small every year as it's important to motivate the committee. The parents of most of these children are laborers and are not educated. This gesture will make them feel more valued [Line 153-157, IT 1.2, HM 4, 2011-11-18].

A parent PTA member says:

There is so much that this school still lacks in terms of infrastructure. We need more classrooms and labs. We need to clean the bushes and we need more restrooms. We are working to think through these and find solutions. The PTA has found new meaning under this head's leadership. Our collective actions have shown us that this is not just another committee but something of meaning. [Headmaster Vasu] respects all our suggestions and wants our contributions to grow the school and students [Line 100-105, IT 1, Parent 3, Vaigai, 2011-11-22].

In sum, headmaster Vasu has been able to develop the school's infrastructure further through connecting the PTA and VEC. Further, his using the PTA's general body meeting to reach important messages to parents has helped increase awareness about several important

issues. The inclusion of celebrations to laud the achievements of the PTA has encouraged parents and teachers to be more involved.



Parents' Meet

The Parents' Meet at Vaigai focuses on students' academic performance. The parents' meet is conducted thrice every academic year, before the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations. At Vaigai, the parents' meet was not a popular practice. But headmaster Vasu encouraged teachers to visit students' homes to promote its importance. Further, while Vasu used his parent diary and journal practice to strengthen his connections with Vaigai's parents, he also supported the teacher visits to students' homes to grow positive connections.

Planning for Parents' Meet

Headmaster Vasu talks about reviving the parents' meet and planning for it along with the teachers every academic year.

The response to the parents' meet was poor initially. That prompted me to request the local teachers to visit students' homes before the parents' meet and motivate them to come. I have gone along with some of the teachers. The teachers know the hamlets and that is helpful. This increased the number of parents attending the parents' meet [Line 57-61, IT 2.2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

I meet with the teachers to plan for the parents' meet before the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations. We discuss the focus of the parents' meet and the issues we want to highlight. Since most of these children are from very poor backgrounds, the focus for the parents' meet for the last two years was developing home conditions. The children need a positive environment for studying. We were able to motivate parents to share their experiences on developing positive home conditions. This was very powerful. This year, we want to use the parents' meet to provide more information about the importance of higher education [Line 2-12, IT 7, HM 4, 2011-11-28].

Teachers Visits to Students' Homes before Parents' Meet

Headmaster Vasu began motivating teachers to visit homes of students who were either the low performers, high performers or absent from school for a long period. The teachers would also use these visits to continue to promote the parents' meet and to attend it before the three main exams. Headmaster Vasu says,

We have found that when teachers go to individual houses, it strengthens connections with parents. I encouraged them to visit students' homes so they can strengthen their own connections with parents and also promote the parents' meet and being involved in school. One of the parents narrated this story about a teacher visit to their home and how it impacted them during a parents' meet last year. The parent said he was compelled to pull his son out of school to earn extra money as the family was struggling. The teacher visit changed what happened. The teacher talked about how the entire community was educated now and how his son could study and become an engineer. The parent also said he didn't know the value of education until he saw his son repair a pipe that brought drinking water to his neighboring huts in the hamlet. This, along with the teacher visit, made him [parent] bring his son back to school. Today his son is in engineering school on a scholarship. This story was so powerful that teachers and parents wanted to connect

more. I support that as their [teachers] rapport is as important as my rapport with parents [Line 13-27, IT 4, HM 4, 2011-11-22].

A teacher who is a local resident talks about her visits to students' homes before the parents' meet and headmaster Vasu's support for this practice:

Headmaster Vasu has always supported us to meet parents over the weekend. He meets with parents of class 10 and 12 students on Saturdays. He conducted a camp once by putting a tent in a hamlet and inviting the local parents to speak to us. He always says we should approach parents and motivate them to come to school. There were two other local teachers like me who continuously met with parents last year after the headmaster motivated them. They do it because they live locally, but more teachers need to do it. We visited students' homes and learned about their home conditions. We motivated the parents to attend the parents' meet and participate in school functions and events. I think we have learned a lot from the headmaster through interactions with the parent community [Line 29-39, IT 1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

By going to students' homes, we learn different things. I am able to understand the home context of the child which is good. We call the parents to the school for the parents' meet. For the last 5 years under this head's leadership we have worked hard to build connections with parents. We know our students inside out. The headmaster encourages us to go. The relationship with parents is growing because of all this [Line 161-166, IT1, Teacher 1, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

Collaborating with PTA and VEC for Parents' Meet

Since the PTA and VEC executive committees also work towards developing the school infrastructure and academic achievement of Vaigai's students, headmaster Vasu involved them in the parents' meet. He involved some of the PTA members in planning the parents' meet. Further, the PTA and VEC executive committee members were also invited to participate in the parents' meet before the three main examinations (quarterly, half yearly and final examination). By doing so, he notes that he was able to strengthen connections between the parent and school community further. Headmaster Vasu says,

I am always looking for ways to connect the different practices and strengthen them. Because the PTA members also work to improve students' academic achievement they

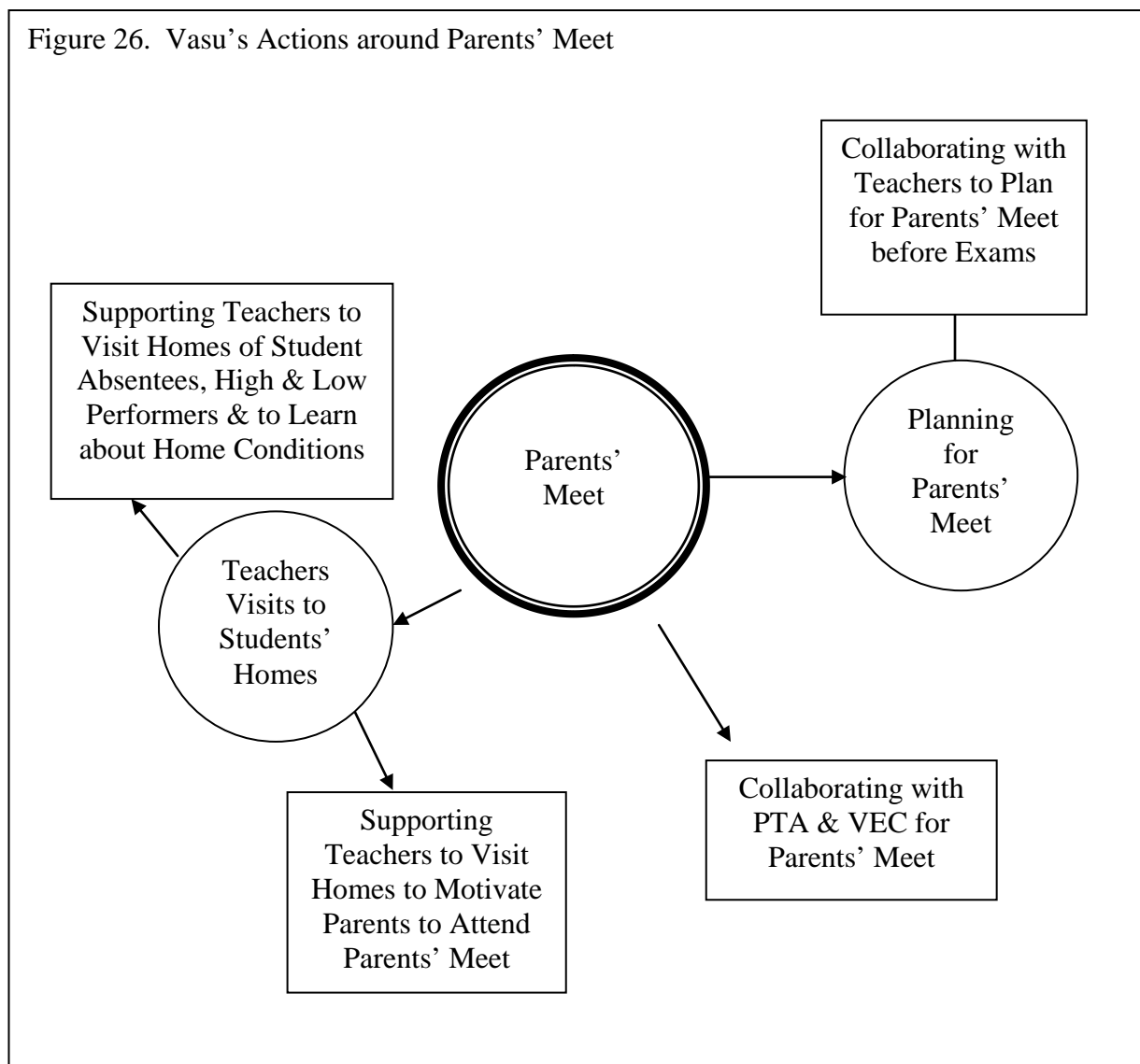
should be connected to the parents' meet. That will help reinforce the other initiatives they work for among parents and teachers [Line 2-5, IT 8, HM 4, 2011-11-29].

Parents also talk about their involvement at the parents' meet and how that strengthens their relationship with other parents. They say,

Although I am not educated, the school has reached out to involve us. The teachers visited our house and the headmaster invited me to participate in the parents' meet. This was never the case before. This is important because I want to be involved and know how well the school and she [daughter] is doing in academics. Also, there are things that are important to know such as free programs and other avenues for higher education for my daughter. I need help from the school to learn about all this. My daughter knows a lot, but when I interact with other parents I also learn how to help my daughter find scholarships and so on. My lack of education limits what I can do for my kids, but I want to make an effort since the school reaches out so much [Line 60-69, IT 1, Parent 2, Vaigai, 2011-11-21].

In sum, headmaster Vasu has used to the parents' meet each year to highlight student academics to the parent community He collaborates with the teachers to plan for the parents' meet. By getting the PTA and VEC committees to attend the parents' meet, he creates multiple networking opportunities for the school's growth and development. Further, his support for teachers' visits to students' homes has increased parent interactions.

Figure 26. Vasu's Actions around Parents' Meet



Open Day or Report Card Day

At Vaigai, the report card day is conducted after the three main term examinations (quarterly, half yearly and final) as a way for teachers and headmaster Vasu to interact with parents about their child's academic progress. This practice is also meant to strengthen the other two main parent involvement practices: headmasters Vasu's parent dairy and journal through

which he interacts with parents and the teachers' home visits. Headmaster Vasu talks about the report card day:

In the report card day, we give parents information about their child's progress and they collect the report cards. It is a way for parents to visit school and interact with the students' teachers and me. I interact with class 10 and 12 parents as these students are facing the board examination. Further, I talk to them over the weekend and journal about it. I think we need to use all opportunities to connect [Line 65-70, IT 2.2, HM 4, 2011-11-19].

We need to educate the parents on the students' progress continually. The report card day helps teachers to provide parents with specific information on the students' strengths and weaknesses. If the child fails in one subject, they have to concentrate on improving that. Parents are not educated and they need to be constantly told about the importance of each subject and scoring high marks. The teachers and I prepare the result analysis reports along with report cards. We meet parents individually and provide all information so they can help their child better [Line 3-10, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

Planning for the Report card day

Headmaster Vasu takes two important actions for planning the report card day at Vaigai.

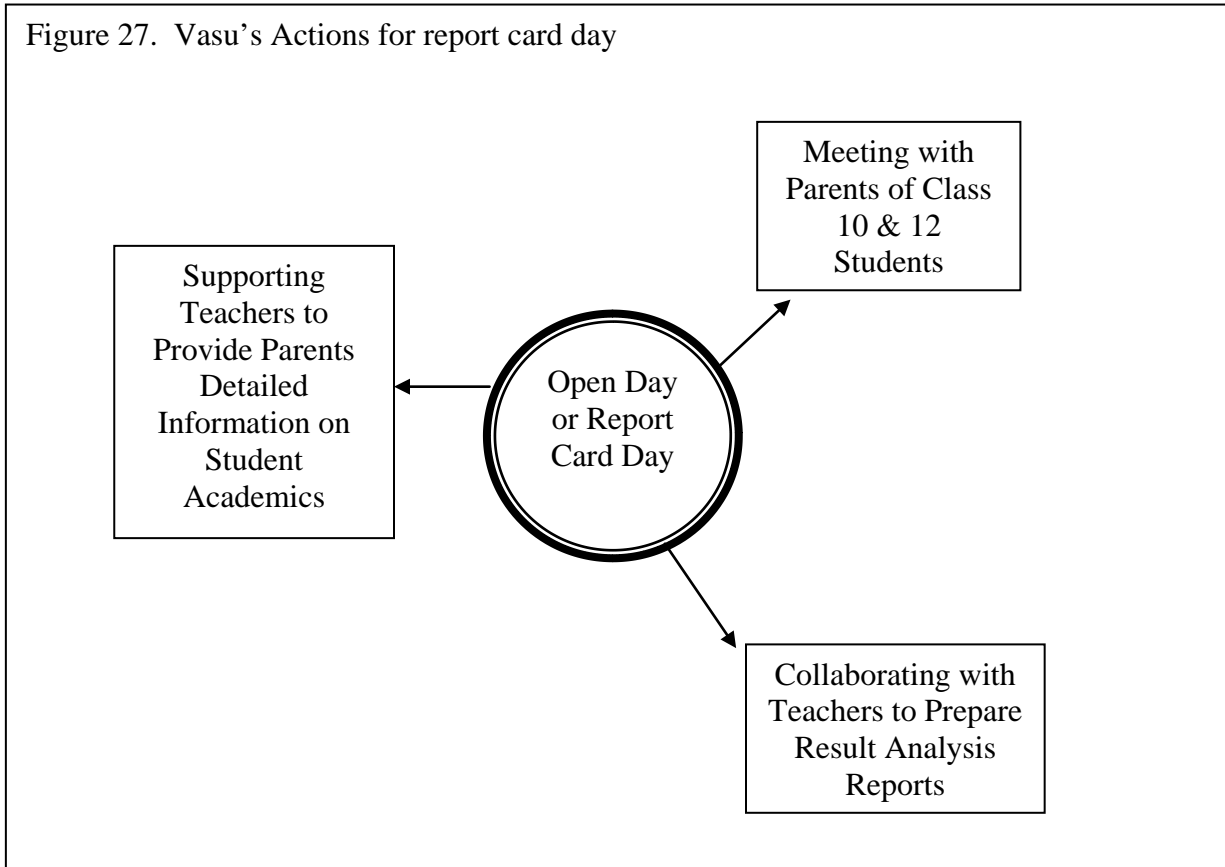
First, he collaborates with the teachers to prepare the result analysis reports after the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations. These reports help the teachers provide an overall perspective into how Vaigai's students are performing in academics as compared to other schools in the district and state. Second, headmaster Vasu also helps the teachers draft a list of instructions to provide parents for the report card day. This list focuses on subject or curricula instruction or extra coaching for certain subjects. Headmaster Vasu explains:

I meet with teachers after the three main exams to prepare the result analysis reports. This is helpful as all teachers keep the analysis in hand during the report card day. We have improved our overall student achievement in the last few years and that needs to be presented to the parents. They need to understand where our school's students stand in the district and the state. The result analysis also provides the teachers a view into certain subjects we need to focus more on. I work with the teachers to draft all this [Line 177-183, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

Parents of 10th and 12th class students need to know about the minimum pass marks in theory and practical examinations. Parents need to know why the marks are important for the child's future. Why should they pass the exams? What is the future if they pass? They should learn this during the report card day. I expect teachers to ask parents about their

own jobs and how they help their child at home. To plan for report card day we usually draft the points or instructions to be communicated to parents [Line 2-10, IT 6, HM 4, 2011-11-24].

In sum, headmaster Vasu collaborates with teachers to plan for the report card day by drafting the result analysis reports and specific instructions on academics to be provided to parents. Further, he also uses the day to interact with parents of class 10 and 12 students, to strengthen his own parent diary and journal practice and grow connections with his parent community.



Parents Attending National Functions at School

At Vaigai, national functions like Independence Day and school functions like the

Annual day and Sports day are celebrated. The entire parent body and community are invited to attend these functions as a way to celebrate the successes of the school and students together.

Further, the PTA and VEC executive committees also participate in these functions. Headmaster Vasu talks about the importance of these functions to network with parents and the actions he takes to conduct these functions every academic year. He says,

It is important to celebrate the Independence Day and the other functions like Annual day and Sports day at the school. This is a chance not just to highlight and celebrate the school's achievements but to connect with parents. I encourage the parents and teachers to speak at these functions. I present a very short address, but invite a few parents and teachers to share stories of their interactions and achievements. I find that it motivates the other parents and teachers to be more connected. This has become a tradition over the years under my leadership. We don't publish a newsletter or magazine since we don't have funds, but these stories would be the first to appear if we did [Line 67-76, IT 6, HM 4, 2011-11-24].

Headmaster Vasu has created a teacher and parent committee to plan the functions at Vaigai. Every academic year, this committee identifies speakers and plans the agenda for the various functions. Headmaster Vasu has identified many parent speakers through his own parent journal. Since he is part of the committee, he has been able to share this information to identify parent speakers at these functions. He says:

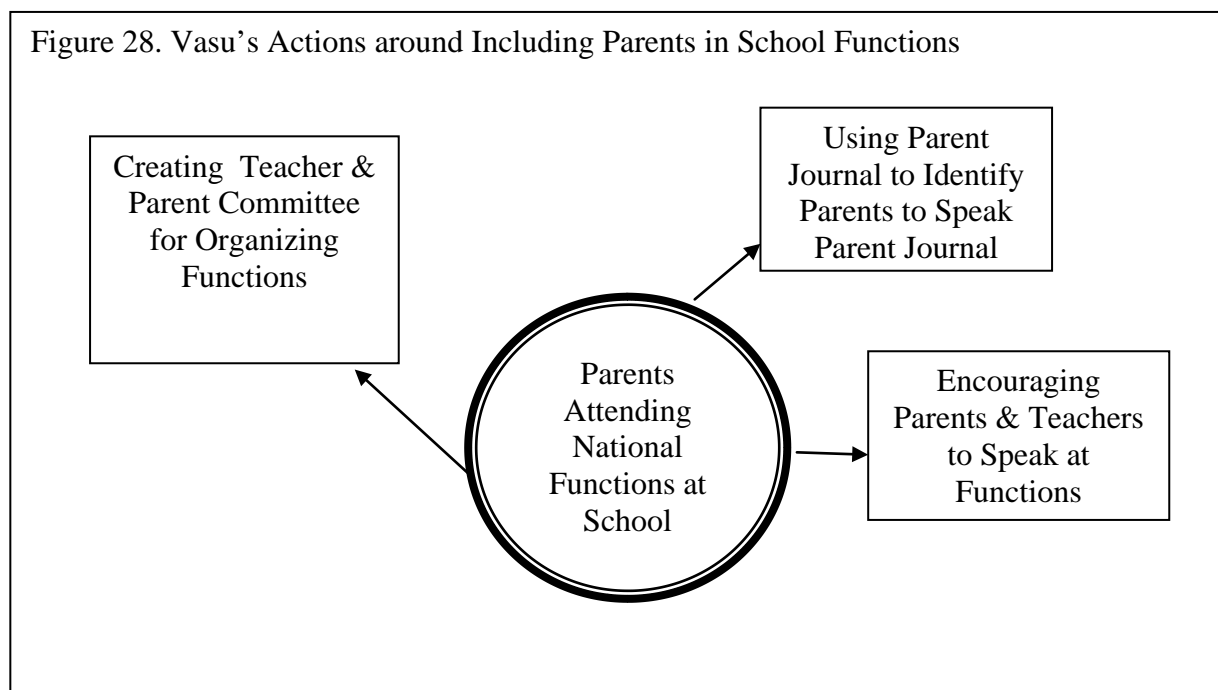
We have a committee of teachers and parents for organizing functions at Vaigai. It is important to involve parents wherever possible and this is one of the ways. I participate in these meetings at the beginning of the academic year. Some parents in the committee have even motivated other parents to join. Although we don't have space for more parents in the committee, many parents have come forward to help at the functions. These celebrations are important, just as we have begun celebrating the PTA achievements [Line 72-78, IT 3, HM 4, 2011-11-21].

A parent at Vaigai talks about the involvement:

For functions, all the parents and community members participate. It is already a tradition in any village, for people to come together and celebrate together. I think it's the same tradition that is there at Vaigai. The headmaster makes it grand and makes sure all the parents participate. We have heard stories from parents about their involvement and

about their children's achievements. This in turn motivates us to speak and makes us proud about this school and students [Line 86-91, IT 1, Parent 3, Vaigai, 2011-11-22].

In sum, headmaster Vasu has created a system where teachers and parents plan for the functions every academic year. Through his own parent journal, he identifies parents who could speak at these functions and motivate other parents and teachers to highlight successes.



Through his practice of maintaining a parent contact diary and journal over the years Headmaster Vasu has shown that relationships with parents can be built and strengthened over time by sustained effort. Through headmaster Vasu's support Vaigai's teachers have continued their home visits. All the other practices under his leadership have developed the connections with the parents and community at Vaigai over the years.

CHAPTER 8

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The preceding chapters presented the individual qualitative case studies of Kaveri, Palani, Nilgiri and Vaigai schools. As proposed in this exploratory research study, each of the former chapters described the parent involvement practices taking place at the school and provided details about the school head's actions towards fostering new and existing practices. This chapter presents a cross-case analysis which summarizes leadership actions across the school heads and draws comparisons to answer the research questions this study has proposed, namely: 1) how do government (public) school headmasters or headmistresses in the state of Tamil Nadu, India foster parent and family involvement? 2) how do they initiate and support parent and family involvement practices in the school? and 3) what are the similarities and differences across schools?

This cross-case chapter is divided into three sections: 1) an analysis of leadership actions across the unique parent involvement practices initiated and supported by each of the four school heads 2) an analysis of leadership actions across the common parent involvement practices supported by each of the four school heads, and 3) a brief summary of other contextual factors that surround the leaders actions in fostering parent involvement in these schools.

This study employed three conceptual frameworks as to inform data collection: Epstein's (1995) framework of the six major types of parent involvement; non-traditional aspects of family involvement (Lopez, 2001 & Mapp, 2002); and Leithwood's (1996) model of basic leadership actions. Although categories from the frameworks provided a window into examining practices and specific actions and context shaping these practices, the openness to emerging themes from the data represents this cross-case analysis.

I. Leadership actions across the unique parent involvement practices

The four schools heads in this study are headmistresses Jaya and Latha and headmasters Ramu and Vasu. Each has fostered parent and family involvement at their school by initiating and supporting a practice through a set of specific actions. In doing so, each leader's actions promoted certain types of engagement which helped sustain the practice and develop it for the benefit of the students and the school. For that reason, these sets of practices became a pathway for reaching specific goals around fostering parent and family involvement and ultimately improved student achievement.

Table 5 below lists the various leadership actions across each of the practices initiated by the school heads. The table also portrays common engagement patterns across each of those actions that the leaders use to foster parent involvement. The next few pages analyze actions across those practices and describe similarities of each engagement pattern.

Drawing from past experiences to shape practices:

The school heads created these four practices: 1) Jaya's Morning Welcome 2) Latha's Direct Contacts 3) Ramu's Visits to Students' Homes and, 4) Vasu's Parent Phone Diary & Journal. One of the first similarities across the four school heads was their connection to a past parent involvement practice that triggered them to create a new practice.

Headmistress Jaya drew from her past experiences as a teacher and administrator to forge personal connections with parents and families among low-income communities. She created her morning welcome ritual at Kaveri school to foster direct interactions with the parents and families. Similarly, as a teacher in a government school, headmistress Latha met daily with

parents before and after school to discuss student progress. As an administrator, she wanted to continue those practices by maintaining an open door policy and answering the phone at Palani school which in turn improved parent relations.

Headmaster Ramu as an administrator encouraged students to attend school by visiting the nearby railway station. He built connections with parents and promoted student success by providing his cell phone number to parents. He wanted to continue those personal interactions at Nilgiri school by visiting students' homes. In the same way, headmaster Vasu as a teacher had maintained a parent diary and journal during his visits to parents' homes in the villages. From that experience, he learned about recording the conversations and following up with parents, and networking to build connections further. This prompted him to create his parent phone diary and journal at Vaigai school.

As reported in the individual cases, this characteristic among the school heads underscores their belief in involving parents and thereby supporting all the other existing practices at the school.

School heads' unique practices and common engagement patterns:

Headmistresses Jaya and Latha and headmasters Ramu and Vasu created their own parent involvement practices at the schools that included: 1) Jaya's Morning Welcome 2) Latha's Direct Contact 3) Ramu's Visits to Students' Homes, and 4) Vasu's Parent Phone Diary and Journal. As described in the individual case studies, the school heads utilized various actions (see Table 7) to shape each of those parent involvement practices within the context of their schools.

Across the four schools, the various actions that the leaders used to shape these practices led to similar types of engagement. In turn, the practices became a vehicle to nurture parent involvement. The types of engagement were: 1) Promoting Visibility 2) Building Personal

Relationships 3) Promoting Student Achievement 4) Bolstering the Importance of Parent Participation 5) Reinforcing Parent Connections to Teachers, and 6) Creating Opportunities for Networking. Each is described below.

Promoting Visibility

Across the school heads' unique practices, one common pattern was promoting their own visibility among the parents. The four heads believed that their own visibility would help increase parental involvement. Headmistress Jaya made sure that she was the first to enter and last to leave school. She made this action a daily routine in her practice because she wanted to further her own visibility among parents and connect more with them. Similarly, headmistress Latha's practice of answering the school phone herself promoted her own visibility as a school head and connect more with the parents and community.

For both headmasters Ramu and Vasu, the action of living in the community and being a local resident increased their visibility among the parents and community. Headmaster Ramu reports the advantages of proximity to school and that the local shopkeeper and vegetable vendor they meet every other day are parents of his school's students. By living in the neighborhood, he connected daily with many parents beyond school. As a local resident, headmaster Vasu also talked about the importance of being known in the community which helped strengthen his connections with parents. For all the leaders, increasing their own visibility among their parent community and, more importantly, being available to them on a daily basis, was critical in advancing parent involvement.

Building Personal Relationships

Another pattern which was similar across the school heads actions was the desire to build personal relationships with their parent community. While the entire practice itself, for example headmistress Jaya's morning welcome, was based on the need to develop strong parent relations, certain actions within focused specifically on growing relationships. Headmistress Jaya created a structure for student drop off and pick up. The primary goal was to increase safety for girl students, but the practice also promoted interactions with parents. Parents could interact with her during student drop off and pick up and forge personal relationships while building a sense of welcome at Kaveri school. Likewise, headmistress Latha built personal relationships with parents by maintaining an open office policy. There were no set schedules for parents to visit her and she encouraged formal and informal feedback during events like the PTA and parents' meet.

Similarly, headmaster Ramu took particular actions within his practice around student home visits to build personal relationship with parents. Firstly, he visited the homes of students facing the board examinations and low-performers to motivate them, interact with parents and understand their home conditions. By networking with key contacts across the villages, he visited more homes in the weekends. Further, he often wrote about his interactions in a log to be able to find meanings in those connections. For Vaigai school's headmaster Vasu, it was his system of journaling from which he worked to build the personal relationships with parents. He met with parents on Saturdays and used a system of symbols in his journal to grow those connections. He not only logged the follow up interactions needed with the parents but also encouraged teachers to talk by using one of the symbols in his journal. In addition, he used the successful interactions to build more parent relationships. For all the leaders, growing personal

relationships did not happen suddenly. They needed to take several conscious actions and make a consistent effort through the course of the school year to keep building connections.

Promoting Student Achievement

Just as building personal relationships with the parent community was a common pattern among the four school heads, promoting student achievement through their connections was also reported. Headmistress Jaya created opportunities to connect with parents of students facing the board examination during her morning welcome ritual. Kaveri's students facing the board exam came to school before and after for extra coaching. Headmistress Jaya interacted with the parents to emphasize the importance of their academic achievement. The open office policy of headmistress Latha encouraged the teachers to discuss any student academic related concerns that needed to be highlighted to parents. If there were academic issues that the teachers could not address, Latha would call the parents to meet in her office.

Headmaster Ramu began his student home visits to forge connections with parents to improve the academic success of Niligiri's students. Through his actions, he met with parents of students who were not performing well academically, learned about their home conditions and urged parents to be more involved. He also networked with students' siblings or aunt and uncle who were more educated to reinforce the support they can provide the student. Headmaster Vasu recorded all the class 10 and 12 students' parents contact information and also followed up with parents of the students who were low-performers. He also encouraged teachers to visit homes of students who were not performing well and had a system of journaling to keep track of those conversations.

Bolster Importance of Parent Participation

Through their practices, the school heads also strengthened the importance of participation among the parent community. This became a common pattern among all the four schools heads. During headmistress Jaya's morning welcome practice, she developed parent-to-parent connections through interactions. Many parents who stopped by to see her before school or after school interacted with one another more often. More importantly, her interactions also created more awareness among parents towards education and their participation in the general well-being of their child. Headmistress Latha also promoted the importance of participation when parents visited her in her office.

Headmater Ramu's visits to student homes in the villages made families feel important and valued. One of the reasons he did that was to create a sense of enthusiasm among parents and sensitize them about the value of education. The importance of parents' participation trickled down to other parents who were motivated to reach out to more parents. The action of visiting homes therefore became a means to deepen the parent relations and existing participation. Similarly, headmaster Vasu also highlighted positive interactions with parents during various events. These successes from his interactions became a way to excite more parents to be involved.

Reinforcing Parent Connections to Teachers

While the school heads took several actions to bolster importance of parent participation, they were also working towards a common end to reinforce parent connections to teachers. Role modeling and encouraging teachers to build connections with parents were specific actions that the school heads took to achieve this. By coming early, leaving late, and interacting more with parents, headmistress Jaya reinforced to teachers the importance of direct parent connections.

Teachers also witnessed that the education background of parents did not necessarily limit their involvement. As headmistress Jaya reached out to parents and several positive changes were taking place, teachers also began reaching out. Similarly, headmistress Latha also created the importance of the parent connections to teachers through involving them. They were given the opportunity to handle something related to parents and bring the concern to Latha for further action. Again, there were no set times for teachers to bring those concerns to her table. The entire spectrum of actions, although time consuming, reinforced the meaning of parents' involvement.

Headmaster Ramu visits students' homes in villages to meet parents and they come to see him directly. There was no better way for him to show the importance of parent connections than making this action a habit. This underlying message was clear as teachers used their cell phones to make calls to parents and found ways to bridge the school and parents further. Headmaster Vasu encouraged teachers to visit homes as a way to reinforce parent connections. He not only involved them in parent follow ups from his journal notes, but also reinforced that every journal symbol and every contact matters during teacher meetings.

Creating Opportunities for Networking

The four school heads all created opportunities for networking. Through the morning welcome, open office policy, home visits and parent journal, these leaders navigated ways to network with parents, teachers and the community. They did this for student and school growth. Headmistress Jaya used the space in the morning to interact with parents and teachers and find connections. She believed that by challenging conventional job roles of the school head and being approachable on a daily basis was a way to build opportunities to network. Headmistress Latha connected with many people from the community just by answering the school phone.

Headmaster Ramu identified key contacts across the villages to network with the local community. By doing so, parents were more involved in the school and he could easily connect with more parents through them. Headmaster Vasu found ways to connect teachers to parents and vice versa through his marking system in the diary. He found opportunities to network more through that action of putting two yellow crosses to reach out to parents who could work part-time or two red crosses for the teachers who gave additional information about the parents.

This analysis of the unique parent involvement practices initiated by the four school heads shows how their actions contributed towards achieving certain goals. While those goals around parent involvement were similar across the school heads, the channels to attain them were different. Each school head used their practice to help shape the goals which helped foster parent involvement in their respective schools.

TABLE 7

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around their unique practices and similarities across themes

School Heads Actions around Unique Parent Involvement Practices	Patterns	Promoting Visibility	Building Personal Relationships	Promoting Student Achievement	Bolster Importance of Parent Participation	Reinforcing Parent Connections to Teachers	Creating Opportunities for Networking
Jaya's Morning Welcome							
First to Enter School & Last to Leave		*	*				*
Structure for Student Pick Up			*				
Interactions with Parents of Students Facing the Board Examination				*			
Creating Parent-Parent Connections					*		
Role Modeling for Teachers						*	
Latha's Direct Contact							
Create an Open Office Policy			*	*	*	*	
Answer School Phone		*	*				*
Role Modeling for Teachers						*	
Ramu's Visits to Students' Homes							
Living in the Community & Being a Local Resident		*					
Identifying & Networking with Village Contacts			*	*			*
Visiting Homes of Students' Facing the Board Examinations & Low-Performers				*	*		
Maintaining Logs for Home Visits			*				*
Tapping other Sources (Siblings/Cousins) to Reinforce Messages Communicated to Parents				*			*
Role Modeling for Teachers						*	
Vasu's Parent Phone Diary & Journal							
Living in the Community & Being a Local Resident		*					
Maintaining Parent Contact Diary & Journal			*				*
Interacting with Parents of Students Facing the Board Examination			*	*			

School Heads Actions around Unique Practices	Patterns	Promoting Visibility	Building Personal Relationships	Promoting Student Achievement	Bolster Importance of Parent Participation	Reinforcing Parent Connections to Teachers	Creating Opportunities for Networking
Creating System for Journaling and Follow Up Interactions with Parents			*	*			*
Encouraging Teachers to Build Connections with Parents						*	
Highlighting Parent Interaction Successes from Practice				*	*		

II. Leadership actions across the common parent involvement practices supported by each of the four school heads

Just as the leaders took specific actions around their unique parent involvement practices to foster parent involvement, they also took several actions around the common parent involvement practices across the schools. The common parent involvement practices across the four schools include: 1) Parent Teachers Association (PTA) 2) Parents' Meet 3) Open Day or Report Card Day 4) Communication and 5) Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School. While some of these practices at the four schools had a different underlying purpose for fostering parent involvement, the leaders' actions to support them were similar in many ways.

Leithwood's (1996) model with three basic categories of leadership practices guided this study: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning organization. While these categories broadly shaped analysis of the leaders' actions, the data also revealed more complex factors that led to fostering parent involvement. Across all the common practices in the schools mentioned above, the four leaders navigated their actions around certain channels that would help sustain the practice. These included: 1) continuing an existing practice 2) creating structures

for the practice 3) providing support and 4) identifying resources. Also, the leaders used strategies to strengthen their direct connections with parents through these common practices, reinforced messages across practices, and reformed the practices as needed.

The following pages outline these key categories and the other factors that shaped these leaders' actions. The differences in actions are also noted. Tables 8 to 12 below list leadership actions across each common parent involvement practice.

Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

Headmasters Ramu and Vasu and headmistresses Jaya and Latha continued the existing Parent Teachers Association (PTA) practice to bridge the parent and school community. While Kaveri, Nilgiri and Vaigai schools' PTA existed from the schools' inception, Palani's PTA had to be renewed when headmistress Latha took over the school. The schools' PTAs focused on promoting school development that included infrastructure issues, student development, academics, and enrollment. The four school heads defined specific structures and provided continued support to develop the practice, identify resources, and reform the practice (see Table 8). By taking these actions, they were able to develop the PTA in order to bring the parent and school community together; provide parents a platform to voice their concerns; and give parents opportunities to be involved in student academic and school development discussions.

Leaders defined or maintained the structures for the PTA practice in several ways. Headmistress Jaya conducted PTA executive committee elections or the process of member nominations once in three years. This was a set structure. Jaya was involved to make sure parents from different fields were well represented in the executive committee and that its formation was free of any political tinge. Jaya was also involved in leading PTA executive committee meetings and general body meetings. Involving herself in framing agendas provided her an opportunity to

set goals and stress the value of varied discussions among the parents and teachers. Further, she also did this to advocate the need to provide parents a platform to voice their views on academics and school infrastructure. This promoted constructive conversations among the school and parent community. Headmistress Latha also restored the executive committee meetings in the beginning and helped motivate parents who usually didn't participate to voice their views in general body meetings. Both heads found that providing the space for parents to have an equal voice is important in developing parent relations.

Headmaster Vasu created a structure to select themes for PTA general body meetings. In his first year, he used the enrollment theme in the PTA general body meetings to reinforce his student enrollment campaign at various hamlets. This year, he plans to empower parents to learn more about various opportunities for students. This is also reinforced by teachers during parent visits to school. He focused on this as he felt the need to empower parents who are not educated on various avenues for their children. As part of their PTA structures headmistress Jaya and headmaster Ramu reviewed PTA documents (resolutions) in order to promote more transparency of funds.

The school heads also provided various forms of support to develop and sustain the PTA practice. For example, headmaster Ramu and headmaster Vasu connected the PTA with the village representatives and village education committees (VEC) respectively. By involving the village representatives, Ramu reinforced messages already presented to parents and also made them feel part of the school community by engaging with the PTA. Vasu wanted more ideas to be generated from parents and community and he felt that connecting the PTA and VEC will help accomplish that. In addition, headmistress Latha and headmaster Vasu also promoted the importance of celebrating the successes of PTA and VEC. Latha did this to showcase the PTA

revival and the benefits of parents and teachers working together. Vasu did this as he felt that more celebrations in public schools would energize parents and teachers working in the PTA and VEC.

Just as the school heads supported the practice, they also helped identify resources. The four school heads used various networks to mobilize support for the PTA and advance school development. They wanted the executive committee and the larger community of parents to be involved in finding solutions to improve the schools' infrastructure.

- Bridging the school and parent community
- Promoting equal representation of parents from different fields in the PTA
- Developing a PTA free of any political bias
- Stressing the value of varied discussions among parents and teachers
- Advocating the need to provide a platform for parents to voice their views
- Providing space for parents to have an equal voice in school and student affairs
- Empowering parents who are not educated on various student incentives
- Promoting transparency of PTA funds
- Generating more ideas and making the village representatives part of the school community
- Finding solutions for school and student development by networking with the larger community
- Energizing parents and teachers and showcasing collective achievements through celebrations

TABLE 8

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around Parent Teachers Association (PTA)

School Heads Actions around PTA	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
<i>Continuing Existing Practice</i>				
Continuing Existing Practice	*	*	*	*
<i>Defining Structure</i>				
Creating PTA Executive Committee	*	*		
Leading PTA Executive Committee Meetings	*			
Leading PTA General Body Meeting	*			*
Framing Agendas	*			
Using Structures for PTA Maintenance (Resolution/Auditing)			*	
Checking PTA Documents	*			
<i>Providing Support</i>				
Connecting PTA Executive Committee with Village Representatives			*	
Connecting PTA Executive Committee with Village Executive Committee (VEC)				*
Showcase PTA Successes		*		
Celebrating Successes of PTA & VEC				*
<i>Identifying Resources</i>				
Collaborating with PTA for Student Development	*		*	*
Collaborating with PTA for School Development	*		*	*
Collaborate with PTA to Network with External Organizations for School Development		*		
<i>Reforming Practice</i>				
Restoring Monthly PTA Executive Committee Meetings		*		

Parents' Meet

In contrast to the PTA, the Parents' Meet at the four schools is particularly focused on fostering critical discussions with parents about students' academic performance. At Kaveri school the practice has existed for the last 20 years and strengthens the PTA. Palani school has group meet for parents of students in classes 9 to 12; several meetings during the school year focus on specific topics decided by the parents and teachers. Both Nilgiri school and Vaigai school conduct the meet for parents of students facing the board examination (class 10 & 12) thrice a year and for classes 9 & 11 twice a year.

Under the leadership of Jaya, Latha, Vasu and Ramu, the parents' meet is rooted within several structures (see Table 9). Through these structures, the heads promote importance of ongoing student result analysis to identify topics for parents' meet. They also build teacher committees to help generate ideas for parents' meet. Further, the school heads also promote important issues like making parents feel respected despite educational differences; promoting the importance of stories in growing the parent relationships; and encouraging teachers to visit students' homes to strengthen parent connections.

Headmistress Jaya used the PTA executive committee meetings and the result analysis meetings between her assistant school heads and the teachers as a precursor to generate topics for the parents' meet. Headmistress Latha also encourages the identification of specific discussion topics for the parents' meet including the importance of education, limiting TV, nutrition and hygiene. But headmistress Latha do this through a specific structure of teacher committees. The committees are divided by their class (9-12) and led by their respective assistant headmistresses. When they meet and review student progress through result analysis after the quarterly, half yearly and final examinations, they identify topics for the Parents' Meet. Latha also works with

the individual teacher committees and at teacher meetings to create specific agendas for the Parents' Meet. In addition, she setup a structure for an initial orientation meeting to welcome the parents and lay out the school's expectations to parents.

Both headmistress Jaya and Latha used different ways to approach the Parents' Meet, but overall they did this as they wanted to promote the meet as a broader forum to reach messages on all factors that relate to advancing student academic performance. They also wanted other leaders and teachers in the school to lead and take ownership in identifying relevant topics for parents.

Just as the other two heads, headmaster Ramu also used several important structures to advance the parents' meet. He has also set up result analysis planning meetings between assistant school heads and teachers to identify subject level information and key topics for parents' meet. Those topics are discussed with him later during the result analysis planning meetings. Further, Ramu has several informal meetings with teachers to discuss the suggestions he receives from all the parents during his home visits. In contrast to headmistresses Jaya and Latha, headmaster Ramu added this additional layer to the structure to advance the parents' meet. By doing this, he wanted all stakeholders to provide inputs for advancing discussions at the parents' meet. Particularly, he wanted to bring back the voices of parents from all his home visits to the planning meetings with his teachers to bring more meaning to the parents' meet. Headmaster Vasu also plans for the parents' meet during his meetings with teachers but has a set structure to identify topics around the theme for the parents' meet. Since parents are from poor backgrounds, he used the meet to highlight topics around home conditions that impact academics and this year, on the importance of higher education. By identifying and using set themes, he also motivated parents to share their experiences. He did this to motivate other parents and showcase powerful examples of how a small change can impact their child's achievement.

The four school heads also provide various support actions to advance the parents' meet. Headmaster Ramu and Vasu involve the PTA and village representatives in the parents' meet since they are connected with them through their own home visits and parent journal practices respectively. They also do this as it connects practices, increases connections with parents locally and helps create a shared effort towards involving parents in school and student affairs. Further, headmaster Ramu supports the parents' meet in a way that parents get to share their views and success stories. He does this to make the parents feel that their ideas are respected despite their educational differences and also use the power of stories to motivate other parents. Headmaster Vasu also involves the PTA and village education committees in the parents' meet to strengthen practices and use collective force to advance connections between parents and school. Further, Vasu also motivated teachers to visit homes of students who were either low or high performers and encourage those parents to come for the parents' meet. Vasu does this to draw more parents to school and foster connections between teachers and parents.

- Promoting the meet to advance discussions about all factors that relate to students' academic performance
- Engaging other leaders and teachers at the school to direct and take ownership in identifying relevant topics for parents
- Soliciting inputs from all stakeholders for advancing discussions at the parents' meet
- Bringing back the voices of parents from home visits to find topics of meaning to the parents'
- Motivating parents to showcase stories and powerful examples of small changes that can impact their child's achievement

- Increasing connections with parents locally to create a shared effort in school and student affairs
- Making parents feel that their ideas are respected despite their educational background
- Connecting leaders from other practices to the parents' meet to use collective force to advance connections between parents and school

TABLE 9

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around Parents' Meet

School Heads Actions around Parents' Meet	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
<i>Continuing Existing Practice</i>				
Continuing Existing Practice	*	*	*	*
<i>Defining Structure</i>				
Preparing for the Parents' Meet	*			
Result Analysis Meetings with Assistant Headmistresses & Teachers	*			
Structure for Parent Registers & Encouraging Individual Teacher-Parent Connections	*			
Creating Parents' Orientation Meeting & Planning with Teachers		*		
Structure for Teacher Committees & Collaborating to Frame Parents' Meet Agendas		*		
Encouraging Specific Discussion Topics for Parents		*		
Conducting Formal Planning Meetings			*	
Creating Planning Meetings between Teachers and Assistant School Heads			*	
Collaborating with Teachers to Plan for Parents' Meet before Exams				*
<i>Providing Support</i>				
Participating in Group Parents' Meet		*		
Connecting and Involving PTA & Village Contacts at the Parents' Meet			*	
Collaborating with PTA & VEC for Parents' Meet				*
Supporting Teachers to Visit Homes to Motivate Parents to Attend Parents' Meet				*

Open Day or Report Card Day

In contrast to the Parents' Meet, the Report card day promotes interactions between class teachers, subject teachers and parents after the main examinations (quarterly, half-yearly and final). The leaders have integrated the report card day with various other practices to suit their context. Kaveri has meetings with parents of low performers after monthly tests and mid-term exams. Palani's report card day is strengthened by existing teacher-parent connections that Latha had already setup during the school year. Nilgiri's report card day provides an opportunity for Ramu and the teachers to interact with parents about their child's academic performance. At Vaigai, headmaster Vasu's parent diary and journal and the teachers' home visits is strengthened further by the report card day through more structures interactions. See table 10 for the summary of the leaders actions around the report card day.

Headmistress Jaya and headmaster Vasu both collaborate with class teachers and subject teachers to prepare result analysis reports for the report card day. Headmistress Jaya makes use of a structure for teachers to use their mark registers for these discussions and identify students who are not performing well and need more support. She does this as the teachers' registers have detailed information on the parental background and that helps to ensure an informed discussion at the report card day. Headmaster Vasu has a structure of collaborating with teachers to prepare result analysis reports. Contrary to headmistress Jaya, he drafts a list of instructions to provide parents on the report card day that focuses on subject level information. He takes this action as they have found a need to educate parents on the students' progress continually.

Headmistress Latha continues to use her teacher committees to plan for the report card day. She holds discussions on focus areas for the report card day after her assistant heads work with their teachers. In addition, she takes a different approach towards the report card day by

personally reviewing and signing report cards of students facing the board examination. She does this to personally review student low-performers and meet with their parents. Ramu also altered the structure of the report card day to conduct it on a weekend if parents working on a daily wage are unable to attend. He took this action of flexibility to allow deeper understanding for parents' economic situations and also help grow the relationship between school and parents based on this understanding. Similar to headmaster Ramu, headmistress Latha also provides flexibility but requires parents to meet with teachers and sign the register if they miss the report card day. She does this to make parents believe that the school is making every effort to reach out to them about their child's performance.

In addition to specific structures to foster the report card day, the leaders also provide support and direct contact with parents. Headmistress Latha encourages teachers to send positive messages to parents beyond academics by writing comments on the report card. She supports this as she believes that parents from low-income communities need to have opportunities to understand the talents of their children beyond academics. Similarly, headmistress Jaya also supports teachers to provide parents information about students strengths in sports and arts.

The school heads also foster the report card day through their direct contacts with parents. Headmistress Jaya and Latha meet with parents of low-performers and students facing the board examinations. They conduct these interactions with the teachers on the report card day to motivate the parents to help the students to perform better. Headmaster Ramu uses his direct contacts on the report card day to strengthen his home visits practice. He meets with parents of students who are low performers and high performers. He does this to have continuity in practices and also enhance his overall vision for the school to raise academic excellence through strong connections with his parent community

- Continually educating parents on students' progress
- Ensuring informed discussions with parents on the report card day
- Allowing flexibility in the conduct of the report card day to cultivate a deeper understanding for parents' economic situations
- Providing opportunities for parents to ask questions on students' academics
- Providing parents from low-income communities an opportunity to understand the information on students' strengths beyond academics
- Motivating parents to help the students perform better
- Making parents believe that the school is taking every effort to reach out to them about their child's performance
- Connecting with other practices to create stronger bonds with parents

TABLE 10

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around Open Day or Report Card Day

School Heads Actions around Open Day or Report Card Day	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
<i>Continuing Existing Practice</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Defining Structure</i>				
Report Card Analysis with Assistant Headmistresses, Class Teachers & Individual Subject Teachers	*			
Report Card Analysis during Teacher Committee Meetings & Teacher Meetings with Latha		*		
Reviewing & Signing Report Cards of Students Facing the Board Examination		*		
Altering Structure for Report card day			*	
Using Parents' Meet Planning Meetings for Report card day			*	
Collaborating with Teachers to Prepare Result Analysis Reports				*
<i>Providing Support</i>				
Encouraging Teachers to Send Positive Messages to Parents Beyond Academics		*		
Supporting Teachers to Provide Parents Detailed Information on Student Academics	*			*
<i>Reforming Practice</i>				
Requiring Teachers to Meet with Parents Unable to Attend Report Card Day		*		
<i>Initiating Direct Contact</i>				
Meeting Parents of Low Performing Students	*			
Meeting with Parents of Students Facing the Board Examination		*		*
Meeting with Parents of Student Low-Performers & Rank Holders			*	

Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School

At the four schools, parents attend various national functions including independence day and republic day celebrations and other events like the school annual day and sports day. The leaders use these functions and events as opportunities to connect with parents. In addition, some parents also volunteer to accompany students to a sports tournament or help organize other events during the school year.

Headmistress Latha, Jaya and headmaster Vasu use specific structures to identify parent volunteers and promote participation at various school events. Headmistress Latha uses teacher committees to rally parent volunteers. Teachers inform the assistant school heads about potential parent volunteers for sports, outside competitions, exhibitions and cultural programs. The most senior teacher for each subject area leads the events specific to their expertise and plans with headmistress Latha. She also uses the PTA to draw volunteers from the community. Latha does this to make parents who are not educated feel that they can make a difference and that they have something to unique to offer to volunteer to help the students and school. Similarly, headmaster Vasu has a structure of teacher and parent committee to plan functions at Vaigai. The committee collectively plans for the events for the academic year. He also uses his parent journal to identify parent speakers for events to share their experiences of connections with the school and successes of their children. He takes all these actions to provide an important role for parents in organizing events and to motivate other parents to participate.

On the contrary, headmistress Jaya uses the PTA committee to identify parent volunteers. She also asks the teachers to use their bio data books to identify parents who can assist teachers in various events or the school's development. Parents who are laborers have been able to volunteer to accompany the physical training teacher to district, zonal or state level sports

tournaments. Jaya does this to make parents who are willing to come forward feel valued about their small contributions towards the school which helps develop positive connections with them.

Just as structures for identifying parent volunteers is important to achieve certain goals, the school heads also support parent volunteering and participating at events in other ways. One thing that headmaster Ramu did was install a large board for displaying photographs from all events at Nilgiri school. Being one of the first actions he took as a school head, he wanted to stress the sense of community among all stakeholders. As Nilgiri is surrounded by villages, he wanted to take advantage of the context of communal celebrations and ways to remember these celebrations. He took this action to make the photo board a symbol of success and motivation for parents and school to come together for various events every year. Further, Ramu also supported teachers to follow up with parents to participate in events.

- Providing a role for parents in organizing school events
- Making parents feel valued and that they can make a positive difference through volunteering
- Tapping into parents' unique abilities to help the school and students
- Showcasing symbols of event success and shared celebrations at school
- Identifying parent speakers to share their experiences of connections with school and successes of their children

TABLE 11

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School

School Heads Actions around Parents Volunteering & Attending National Functions at School	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
<i>Continuing Existing Practice</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Defining Structure</i>				
Structure to Recruit Parent Volunteers		*		
Creating a Photo Display Board			*	
Creating Teacher & Parent Committee for Organizing Functions				*
<i>Providing Support</i>				
Collaborating with PTA to Identify External Organizations to Volunteer		*		
Supporting Teachers to Contact Parents			*	
Supporting Flexibility in Conducting Events			*	
Encouraging Parents & Teachers to Speak at Functions				*
<i>Identifying Resources</i>				
Using PTA & Teachers to identify Volunteers	*			
<i>Initiating Direct Contact</i>				
Sustaining Own Visibility at Events			*	
Using Parent Journal to Identify Parents to Speak Parent Journal				*

Communication

In addition to the PTA, parents' meet, report card day and parent volunteering, the four schools also use different forms of phone and in-person communication to reach out to parents. These include: communication with parents about academic issues, behavioral issues, extra-curricular activities, long absentees, post-secondary education, developing the home conditions, teen development and connections with hard-to-reach parents. The school heads use structures including developing check points for parents and appointing a point of contact at the school for guidance on post-secondary education to carry out communication. In addition, they also help the teachers set goals and encourage use of cell phone for contacting parents regularly.

Headmistress Jaya created a structure where she works with class teachers and individual subject teachers to create check points for parents to support learning at home and developing home conditions. She stresses the importance of developing awareness among the parents who are not well educated. She does this regularly to help Kaveri school's teachers get in touch with parents and increase parental awareness about small actions they [parents] can take to help their child at home and in turn, perform better at school. Similarly, headmistress Latha also requires teachers to communicate ways parents can develop home conditions. In the context of Palani school, this was very important as many children were pulled out of school to work at one point. Latha also does this as she wants to make parents believe that they can develop positive home environments for their children.

While headmistress Jaya and Latha work with their teachers to pass on messages to parents, headmaster Ramu takes advantage of the first hand information he gathers while visiting students' homes. He is able to talk to parents himself and also uses the information gathered for discussions with teachers. He supports them to provide messages to parents on home conditions

and adolescent development like health and behavior related topics. He does this as most parents live in very poor conditions and need to be given some information on providing children meals on time and creating a conducive environment for learning as best as they can. He has found that this makes a difference.

While communicating to parents on home conditions is important, headmaster Ramu also created a structure to appoint one point of contact at the school for guidance on post-secondary education. This teacher at the school is available for parents who need guidance or information on college education. He also makes himself available for providing guidance. He took this action as parents were not aware of the many avenues for post-secondary education their children can benefit from. This was needed to equip them with the knowledge about those avenues, so children can access vocational courses or regular colleges. Similarly, headmistress Jaya also supports teachers to provide parents information on post-secondary education during special coaching before and after school.

The school heads also encourage their teachers to use various forms of phone contact with parents to strengthen their direct connections. Jaya motivates teachers to contact parents on their cell phones to discuss any academic concerns. She does this to build ongoing conversations with parents on student academics and strengthen other practices like parents' meet and report card day that are focused on academics. Headmistress Latha also encourages teachers to contact parents by phone and is available for teachers through her open door policy to discuss issues with parents. Similarly, headmaster Ramu also supports the teachers to contact parents on their cell phone. Even if the parents are poor, most of them have a cell phone and can be contacted easily. He requires teachers to contact parents of student absentees and log the parents' visits to school. He does this as he thinks that parents need to be kept in the loop about absentees and the school

needs to reach out to them, especially in the cases of class 10 and 12 students. Further, the hard-to-reach parents need to be called regularly and motivated to come visit school. Meanwhile, headmistress Jaya meets directly with parents of student absentees in class 10 and 12. She does this for students facing the board examination as she believes that parents need to know the importance of daily attendance and curriculum missed by the student. She also uses the PTA executive committee to visit homes of long absentees. Jaya also helps teachers set goals for communication with parents during teacher meetings and is available to talk to teachers for solving issues or concerns with parents.

Apart from academics and home conditions, headmistress Latha encourages teachers to contact parents about sports. There is a big push in Palani school for sports as it gives students an advantage for college admissions. She supports the teachers to continually call and encourage students' parents about the importance of sports. For the same reason, she created the drum clap ritual during prize distribution at the school assembly and to welcome parents. Latha notes that this is done to create a sense of welcome at the school for parents and to celebrate the student successes when parents are around.

- Increasing parental awareness about actions to help their child at home and in turn, perform better at school
- Making parents believe that they can develop positive home environments for their children
- Providing information on creating a conducive environment for learning to parents who are economically disadvantaged
- Equipping parents with knowledge on post-secondary education avenues for their children

- Keeping parents in the loop about the importance of daily attendance and curriculum missed
- Communicating the importance of sports for post-secondary education admissions
- Creating a sense of welcome at the school and celebrating student successes around parents

TABLE 12

Cross case analysis: school heads actions around Communication

School Heads Actions around Communication	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
<i>Continuing Existing Practice</i>	*	*	*	*
<i>Defining Structure</i>				
Developing Check Points for Parents	*			
Appointing a Point of Contact for Post-Secondary Education Guidance			*	
<i>Providing Support</i>				
Encouraging Phone Contact & Use of Cell Phones	*	*	*	*
Helping Teachers Set Goals	*			
Assisting Parents in Options for Post-Secondary Education	*			
Encourage Teacher-Parent Contact for Sports		*		
Welcome Parents to School Assembly for Prize Distribution & Drum Clap		*		
Encouraging Sharing Information from Trainings on Adolescent Development with Parents			*	
Encourage Teachers to Communicate Ways to Develop Home Conditions		*	*	
Supporting Teachers to Visit Homes of Student Absentees, High & Low Performers & to Learn about Home Conditions				*
<i>Identifying Resources</i>				
Support towards Identifying Resources	*			
<i>Initiating Direct Contact</i>				
Meeting Parents of Absentees	*			
Answer School Phone		*		
Meeting with Parents about Post-Secondary Education			*	

Teacher-Parent Connections

While the school heads found ways to strengthen teacher and parent connections through various ongoing parent involvement practices, headmistresses Jaya and Latha particularly promoted two things. Headmistress Jaya learned the value of parent data books to record parents' background information from a veteran teacher during one of the teacher meetings. She encouraged all the teachers to try this practice by recording details about their students' parents' backgrounds. Although the mark registers had some information, this provided a more structured place to record details. She encouraged this practice as teachers could understand the parents' background more as sometimes, it has a profound impact on how students are in class or perform in school.

For this, headmistress Jaya also supported an old structure of moving the same class teacher with a cohort of students from classes 9 to 10 and 11 to 12. She supports this as it helps foster important teacher and parent connections for two years consecutively. It also increases the familiarity between parents and teachers.

Just as headmistress Jaya supports the use of data books to foster teacher and parent connections, headmistress Latha used the student ID card system to build positive connections. Just a year after she took over as school head, she introduced the ID cards as a way to keep the records of parents accurate and also provide a quick way of identifying a student when they are traveling by bus. This was also introduced so subject teachers who would not have access to other class attendance registers could easily find parent or guardian information on the student ID. She created a structure where class teachers verify the students' parents' details during the parent orientation meeting at the beginning of the school year. Further, the class teachers make sure all the students wear the ID cards at the morning assembly and, if not, wait until parents

bring them. This structure has increased the importance of ID card to parents and to teachers.

Subject teachers also meet parents at different points in the day. Latha encourages the teachers to keep the mark registers when they meet parents. This way, they can continually refer to the academic performance of the students when they interact with parents face-to-face.

Headmistress Latha also encourages class teachers to emphasize the importance of parental involvement to students during their first class period. She does this as she believes that students need to know the importance of parental participation at home and school. This way, the students can motivate the parents to participate more and reach out to school.

- Supporting teacher and parent connections
- Understanding parents' background and the impact it has on students performance in class and school
- Ensuring accurate parent background information for ongoing teacher and parent connections
- Promoting the benefits of parent involvement to the students as a way for them to motivate their parents to visit school
- Ongoing reference to parents about student' academic performance

III. Summary

The preceding sections of the cross-case (section I and II) presented an analysis of leadership actions across the unique and common parent involvement practices initiated and supported by the school heads, and how those actions fostered parent involvement. In doing so, the answers to the main research questions in this study were addressed. This section attempts to highlight two things in order to summarize the research findings: 1) contextual factors across the schools, and 2) a broad summary of the four leaders' actions in fostering parent involvement.

Contextual factors

The following contextual factors around school heads' gender and girls' school versus co-education schools were not part of the research questions. However, they are important to answer as the study is focused on parent involvement practices at these schools and the leaders' actions in fostering those practices.

In this research study, Kaveri and Palani schools were led by women leaders while Nilgiri and Vaigai schools were led by male leaders. This did not appear to influence parent involvement practices at the school or their actions in supporting them from the data collected and analyzed. The teachers and parents also did not report gender differences of the leaders as influencing their [leaders] actions to foster parent involvement practices.

Kaveri and Palani schools serve girl students while Nilgiri and Vaigai schools were co-educational schools serving both boys and girls. This specific context also did not appear to have an influence on the parent involvement practices taking place at the schools or the leaders' actions in fostering those practices. All the practices that sought to foster parent relations at these schools were similar for the boys and girls with no differences found or reported.

Summary of leaders' actions in fostering parent involvement

Leaders' role in fostering parent involvement

As described in the previous sections of the cross-case analysis, the leaders at the four schools in this study carried out specific actions to foster parent involvement. At each of the four schools, the leaders initiated one parent involvement practice of their own which not only influenced and strengthened other existing parent involvement practices but also induced a new sense of meaning around parent relationships among the school staff. In this very context of creating the four unique practices (morning welcome, open office, home visits, parent journal), the leaders were the protagonists or central figures. In their role, they promoted their visibility as a leader, built personal relationships with parents, promoted student achievement, bolstered importance of parent participation, reinforced parent connections to teachers and also created multiple opportunities for networking.

As central figures in these practices, the leaders drove some of those critical goals around fostering parent involvement. At the same time, those goals were anchored to the larger practices in the school like the PTA, parents' meet and report card day in which the leader not necessarily the central figure. In this sense, the leaders' used their role as much as possible to rally staff and parents around the importance of school and parent connections for advancing student achievement and school growth. Teachers and parents interviewed for this study talked about the leaders' roles in the context of practices they initiated and the change they brought:

At Kaveri school:

There is so much change. Parents are willing to come forward and their education and background has nothing to do with it. The HM's support is crucial and all teachers feel so supported. The parents also see the HM directly involved daily, so that increases involvement definitely [Line 264-267, IT 1, Teacher 3, Kaveri, 2011-10-18].

At Palani school:

The school welcomes everyone. Sometimes when a school gets a great name, people just rest on the success. Here, they don't give up on us until we come around and meet them. The school's strength is huge, but every student is important to them. The teachers and HM has encouraged my daughter and helped me a lot. We have changed ourselves for this school [Line 67-71, IT 1, Parent 3, Palani, 2011-10-31].

At Nilgiri:

Compared to other schools, parents here come and see the headmaster directly. That is the uniqueness. The parents believe that they want the students to succeed and they believe in the school. You can ask them yourself. Also, the headmaster makes himself available and visible, which is not the case in other schools. He is present everywhere, visits homes and that makes a big difference [Line 216-220, IT 1, Teacher 4, Nilgiri, 2011-11-11].

At Vaigai:

I have seen three headmasters in the past. This HM is a local resident. His strong connections with parents and the community have increased the overall achievement in this school. His interactions with us have made many parents realize that they need to be involved in the child's education and school affairs. Parents need to be educated about that importance. That is such a big change, even for a parent like me. I am not educated and I would have been aloof if I was not reached out to. At least now I know that the school head and teachers are there to help and can make me understand what I need to do to help my child. We need to keep the dialogue going [Line 40-47, IT 1, Parent 3, Vaigai, 2011-11-22].

Just as the four leaders played the central role through the parent involvement practices they initiated, they took a collaborative approach with the other parent involvement practices (PTA, parents' meet, report card day, parents' volunteering and the communication initiatives). The analysis of those practices in section II above clearly show the leaders fostering the practices by creating certain structures and providing various forms of support. As leaders, they promote the importance of those practices through their direct presence but take a distributed approach to their leadership by building the capacity among the assistant school heads, teachers and parents to guide practices. As a result, the other existing parent involvement practices in the four schools that are working to improve student and school outcomes are the collective actions of multiple persons (leaders and teachers). Here, the leaders were not the central figure but among the other

leaders and teachers trying to influence positive parent connections. They took some intentional actions around the broader practices to promote goals around parent involvement. However, the practices they initiated (morning welcome, open office, home visits and parent journal) were linked to other broader practices (PTA, parents' meet, report card day) at the schools to strengthen connections with parents in all ways possible. See Table 13 below for few examples of actions taken by other leaders and teachers in fostering parent involvement.

TABLE 13

Cross case analysis: examples of distribution of actions across common parent involvement practices

Examples of Distribution of Actions across Common Parent Involvement Practices	Headmistress Jaya	Headmistress Latha	Headmaster Ramu	Headmaster Vasu
Connecting the VEC & Village Representatives with PTA			*	*
Teacher Committees for Parents' Meet & Report Card Day Planning		*		
Planning Meetings between Teachers and Assistant School Heads			*	
Teacher Visits to Students' Homes				*
Teacher & Parent Committee for Organizing Functions				*
Point of Contact for Post-Secondary Education Guidance			*	
Encouraging Phone Contact & Use of Cell Phones	*	*	*	*
Subject Teachers to Keep Mark Registers during Parents Interactions		*		
Subject Teachers to Talk about Parent Interactions during Department Meetings		*		
Teachers Maintaining Parent Bio Data Books	*			
Class Teachers Promote Importance of Parent Involvement to Students		*		
Teachers to Provide Parents Detailed Information on Student Academics	*			

Sustainability of parent involvement practices

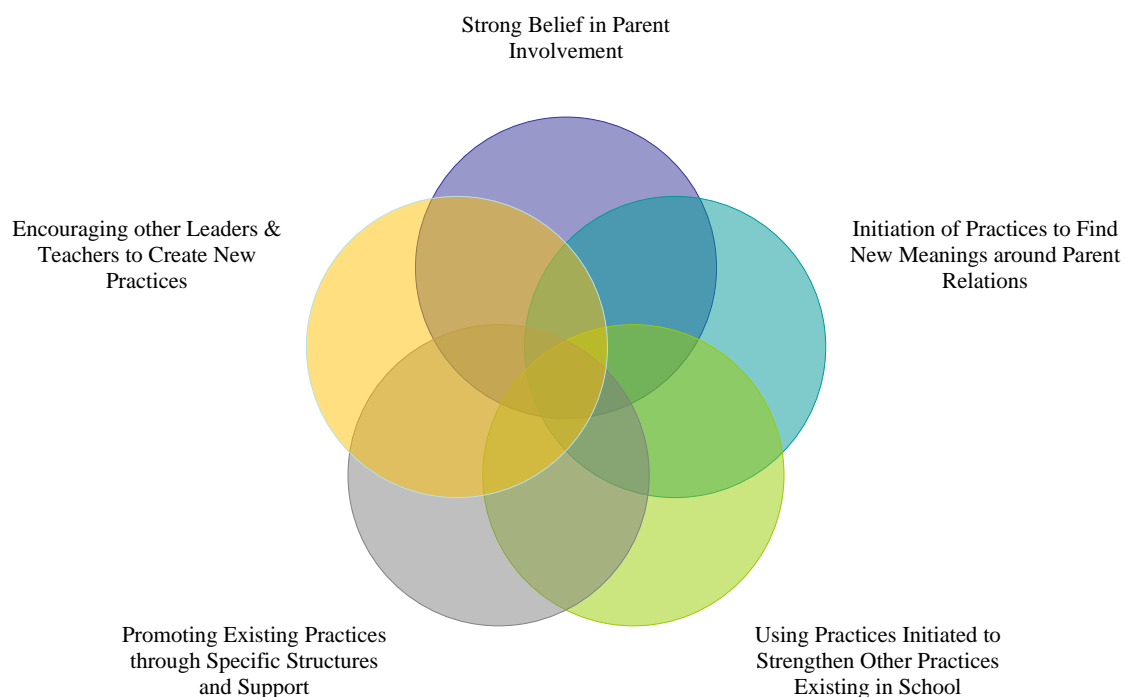
One of the other important themes of the leaders' role in fostering parent involvement was the sustainability of practices at the four schools. The actions that the leaders took over time through their own initiation of practices and support provided to existing practices went beyond a checklist of action items to build school and family relationships. The continuum of the leaders' actions to foster parent involvement in these schools (see Figure 29 below) involved the following: 1) strong beliefs in parent involvement rooted in past experiences 2) initiation of practices to draw new meanings for parent relations 3) using practices initiated to strengthen broader practices existing at the school 4) promoting existing practices through specific structures and support and 5) encouraging teachers to create new practices. By engaging in these actions, the leaders were able to sustain the practices for the benefit of the students and school.

The four schools in the study are considered high-functioning government schools especially with regard to their student academic performance. However, the lack of infrastructure facilities and funding that these four schools face are similar to any other government schools. In addition, the context of high-stakes testing in these government schools pushes more leaders to forge connections with parents and families to educate them about the importance of their child's education.

Through the four cases in this study, it is clear that the leaders were not solely fostering connections with parents to achieve top percentages in the state high-stakes testing. They were building these connections to create a sense of community between the school and parents. They did this by empowering parents, giving them a space to voice their views, energizing parents and showcasing collective achievements, soliciting input, making parents feel their ideas are respected, using collective force from the community, making parents believe in parent

involvement, tapping into their unique abilities, and making them feel valued, among others. As described in section I and II, all these are important attributes that the leaders were after through engaging in various practices. In these four schools, all this led to a shared belief that allowed for both school and student growth. Given this, these schools are models to learn from for fostering effective parent relations.

Figure 29. Continuum of overlapping actions in fostering parent involvement



CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter briefly summarizes the purpose and design of the study and summary of findings. Further, the chapter also outlines the importance of the study and its connection to the existing literature on parent involvement and leadership. Finally, implications for further research and practice are also discussed.

This exploratory qualitative cross-case study sought to better understand the leadership practices and actions of government (public) school headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent involvement in Tamil Nadu, India. This study was carried out in Tamil Nadu, India as the context is unique for several reasons as outlined in Chapter One.

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and has one of the largest public school systems. The government of India through various programs continues to work toward universal elementary and secondary education for students in Grades K-12. Further, the secondary education program recommends certain state guidelines for parent and community involvement. The guidelines emphasizes involving parents of the minority students to bridge socio-economic and cultural barriers, especially in places where the parents are not inclined to continue their children's education. In addition, the cultural context of Tamil Nadu and India and various local parent involvement practices initiated by the school heads made for an interesting and significant backdrop for this study. Since the school heads' practices in fostering parent involvement was the primary focus of this exploratory study towards filling the literature gap in the U.S. and India, several implications arise for further research and practice.

The cases selected for this study were four schools across one urban and two suburban districts in the state of Tamil Nadu. The cases were chosen based on a combination of school and

school heads' characteristics that included high performing schools, parent involvement practices, and initiatives taken by the heads in fostering parent and family involvement, among others (see pg. 60). This selection criterion guided the review of documents with schools' overall pass percentages and obtain recommendations of headmasters and headmistresses who engage in positive parent involvement practices. Since the cases selected were located in both urban and suburban districts in the state, it provided for an interesting perspective on the leaders' actions in fostering parent involvement within that specific context.

The research questions that guided this qualitative study were: 1) How do government (public) school headmasters or headmistresses in the state of Tamil Nadu, India foster parent and family involvement? 2) How do they initiate and support parent and family involvement practices in the school? and 3) What are the similarities and differences across schools? While the first research question was broad, the second question was particularly chosen for this study as the existing research base lacks in in-depth studies of principals' actions to support parent involvement. Therefore, this exploratory study was proposed to examine deeply the principal-led initiatives and support to various parent involvement practices and to help fill a gap in research literature.

To accomplish this, the study used detailed interviews, oral questionnaires, field notes, contextual observations and documents for reference as the primary data collection sources. Several interviews were conducted with the school headmasters and headmistresses and parent involvement practices initiated and supported by them were probed. Further, focused semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of teachers and parents to provide a complete perspective on the school heads' practices in fostering parent involvement.

Interviews and field notes were transcribed and coded as data collection was in progress to help focus later interviews. While the categories from two frameworks based on the literature were used as sensitizing elements for the data collection and some analysis, the direct and repeated interpretation of data allowed for patterns to be identified. The qualitative data analysis tool, NVIVO, was used for coding interviews for the first case initially, but it hindered the subsequent process of making sense of data. For that reason, the software was not used for the remaining cases.

The research findings are summarized as follows. The four school heads in this study fostered parent involvement at their schools by initiating and supporting a practice of their own design. This included: Jaya's Morning Welcome at Kaveri school, Latha's Direct Contacts at Palani school, Ramu's Visits to Students' Homes at Nilgiri school and Vasu's Parent Phone Diary and Journal at Vaigai school. Using various actions, they shaped these practices to achieve certain goals around fostering parent involvement. They promoted their visibility as a leader, built personal relationships, promoted student achievement, bolstered the importance of parent participation, reinforced parent connections with teachers and also created opportunities for networking.

The school heads also took actions and created structures, provided support and identified resources for parent involvement practices common across the four schools. These practices included the PTA, parents' meet, open day or report card day, communication, opportunities for parent volunteering, attending national functions at school, and teacher parent connections. They took these actions to empower parents, emphasize to teachers the importance of parent involvement, improve student achievement and school developments and ultimately building a strong school-family relationship (see Cross-Case Chapter for detailed description).

The practices of the four school heads over time created an array of overlapping actions that helped foster parent involvement. All the leaders exhibited strong beliefs in parent involvement; initiated unique practices to find new meanings around parent relations; used the practices initiated to strengthen other practices existing at the school; promoted existing practices through specific structures and support, and encouraged other leaders and teachers to create new practices.

DISCUSSION

This section relates study findings to the existing literature on principal leadership and parent involvement. It also presents implications for practice and future research.

The literature review for this study focused on the following: 1) literature on school and parent involvement that included parents' motivation for getting involved in their child's education, the multiple facets of parent involvement, and the varying effects of such involvement on students, schools, school staff and parents themselves 2) broad approaches for schools to boost parent involvement extrapolated from the literature and 3) specific studies pertaining to the principal's role in parent involvement.

Background

The literature about school and parent involvement demonstrates that parent involvement benefits children. However, in the vast literature in the U.S, only a handful of studies examined the important role of school principal in fostering parent involvement. These include: Auerbach, 2009; Auerbach, 2010; Brian, 1994; Catsambis, 2001; Chrispeels, 1996; Esther Sui-Chu Ho, 2009; Gareau & Sawatzky, 1995; Giles, 2006; Goldring & Shapira, 1996; Goldring, 1993; Good, 2008; Griffith, 2001; Hands, 2010; Peterson & Ladky, 2007; Richardson, 2009; Sanders &

Harvey, 2002; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Simon, 2004; Thornburg, 1981; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004. Parent involvement studies from which broad approaches were extrapolated for schools also underscore the necessity for school principals to promote parent involvement practices. But the literature has been passive in examining evidence of successful principal-led parent involvement initiatives in the U.S.

Despite this, studies at hand point to strong and stable leadership within the school as a critical indicator in involving parents in their child's education and thereby influencing success and well-being of the child in various ways (Giles, 2006; Griffith, 2001; Van Voorhis & Sheldon, 2004). Literature also shows that strong principal leadership contributes to effective schools. And research linking school leadership to parent involvement is essential because more schools seek to strengthen these connections as a means to improve outcomes for their students (Griffith, 2001).

Having examined the broad domains of parent involvement literature and being aware of the school leadership research, we can draw two broad conclusions: 1) involving parents has positive benefits on a child's education, success and overall well-being; and 2) strong principal leadership within a school is a significant driving force to increase parent involvement and can thereby contribute to a number of positive outcomes for the students and schools.

Connecting Existing Literature to Study

I analyzed four strands of literature surrounding principal leadership and parent involvement: 1) principal behaviors 2) principal perceptions and attitudes 3) principal involvement and 4) principal support.

Existing studies leave no doubt that principals consider parent involvement an essential component for schools (Brian, 1994; Esther Sui-Chu Ho, 2009). Principals are receptive to parent involvement and facilitate and lead parent involvement in school processes (Richardson, 2009). Studies also show that principals' behavior exerts certain amount of positive influence on parent involvement (Griffith, 2001).

The following outlines specifically the connection between the few existing empirical studies around two bodies of literature on principals' support and principals' involvement in parent involvement and the implications it has for the findings of this study.

Principal Support

The two major studies of principals' support were Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) and Simon (2004). Both studies showed how principals' support is important in creating successful partnership practices. Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) found that principal support had a positive effect on partnership program quality across 320 U.S. schools belonging to the National Network of Partnership Programs (NNPS). Simon (2004) also found that principal support is a key attribute to high school practices, regardless of school sector, location and percentage of teenagers receiving free and reduced lunch, or living in single-parent homes. Both studies examined the NNPS program and principal participation, yet neither study deeply probed the level of support provided by the principal.

Flynn & Nolan (2008) investigated the kinds of supports principals provided teachers and parents to facilitate stronger parent-teacher involvement. Findings mostly dealt with technology provided by the school or the district. Van Voorhis & Sheldon (2004) found across the NNPS schools that principals "hold the key to initiating programs and processes. When principals fail to support partnership efforts, teachers may abandon their focus on partnerships and shift their

energies elsewhere” (p. 66). They suggested ways in which principals provide support for partnerships, including setting aside funds and providing time for teachers and parents to meet.

While all these studies point to the positive effect of the principals’ support to parent involvement practices, the types of support and action taken by principals were still unknown. The study that I conducted in Tamil Nadu, India is set in a different context, but deeply probed the questions around types of support and actions taken by principals to foster parent involvement practices at the school. My research found that principals’ support for fostering parent involvement does make a difference and that they employ various forms of support to grow and sustain existing parent involvement practices at the school.

This study shows that headmistresses Jaya and Latha and headmasters Ramu and Vasu used specific actions to support various common parent involvement practices that included: 1) parent teachers association (PTA) 2) parents’ meet 3) open day or report card day 4) communication, 5) parents volunteering & attending national functions at school and 6) teacher-parent connections. These four leaders provided support as they continued an existing practice, created structures for the practice, provided support and identified resources. The school heads strengthened their direct connections with parents through practices, reinforced messages across practices, and reformed the practices as needed.

The empirical studies that were reviewed investigated the principals’ support in relation to the technology supports, allocating funding and providing time for teachers and parents to meet. The present study revealed richer details on the types of support. Further, the types of principal support and level of principal support for every parent involvement practice in the four schools was also investigated.

Principal Involvement

Studies of principal involvement in fostering parent connections included Goldring & Shapira (1996), Griffith (2001), Gareau & Sawatzky (1995), Esther Sui-Chu Ho (2009) and Auerbach (2009). Goldring & Shapira (1996) explored dynamics of purposeful leadership and parent involvement in Israel. The main findings from the four case studies of principals noted that the nature of principal-parent relations seems to be affected by the extent to which parents form the school's community (defined in terms of the school's ideology and value system). This study brings to the fore how principals need to gather support from all stakeholders and embrace a communal partnership.

Studies also show the ways in which principals construct their roles and its impact on the parents and families. Griffith (2001) found that certain roles assumed by principals had an impact on parent involvement. On one hand, he found that the role of reaching out mattered more to minority populations, making them feel more welcome. Similar to Griffith (2001), Gareau & Sawatzky (1995) found that principal beliefs shaped the way they viewed involvement, as enacted in informal phone calls and working to reach agreements on conflicts.

Esther Sui-Chu Ho (2009) found that principals' ideologies and beliefs define their involvement practices in Hong Kong. Auerbach (2009) also found that principals' role construction and beliefs shape their view of parent involvement practices. Auerbach (2009) also points out, "once administrators reach out and show their interest in and commitment to helping families, parents can be your greatest allies" (p. 28).

While all these studies portray different aspects of principal involvement in fostering parent and family connections, none of the studies focused on how they are involved in a range of practices within the school. Goldring & Shapira (1996) highlighted only two practices that

included parent-teacher meetings and principal-parent interactions. While the studies shed light on the importance of principals' beliefs and experiences in fostering parent involvement, none of them illustrated how principals involved themselves in every parent practice at school and how beliefs and experiences shaped practices.

My study attempts to unpack every parent involvement practice by being sensitive to how principals' beliefs and experiences shaped those practices. These four case studies demonstrate that headmistresses Jaya and Latha and headmasters Ramu and Vasu had strong beliefs and connected their personal experiences to different parent involvement practices at the four schools. Headmistress Jaya drew from her experiences as a teacher and administrator to forge personal connections with parents and families among low-income communities. Similarly, headmistress Latha drew from her experiences of meeting with parents daily. Headmaster Ramu continued personal interactions at Nilgiri school by visiting students' homes as he did in the past. In the same way, headmaster Vasu maintained a parent diary and journal during his visits to parents' homes in the villages. From that experience, he learned about recording the conversations and following up with parents, and networking to strengthen connections.

Consistent with literature, all four leaders initiated their own practices drawing from experience. They also supported existing practices around parent involvement because of their strong beliefs. The Auerbach (2009) study argues for the need to probe deeply into how different stakeholders view leaders' efforts to foster parent involvement.

The cases in this study provide a holistic perspective to the principals' actions across all parent involvement practices. It also shows how the parents and teachers viewed and contributed to the leaders' efforts to initiate and support those practices. Prior studies have not explored this important aspect. The views of parents and teachers not only enriched the four case studies but,

more importantly, help clarify the outcomes of the leaders' actions to support parent involvement. This heightened the actions of the leader and also provided an understanding into the complex layers that surrounded those leaders' actions.

Research in India and Tamil Nadu

The key organizations and universities that have engaged in education research in India includes: 1) National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT); 2) Educational Research and Innovations Committee (ERIC); 3) The National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA); 4) The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR); 5) State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and the 6) Centre for Advanced Studies in Education (CASE), University of Baroda.

I reviewed three national journals of education in India, 1975 to date. They are: 1) Indian Educational Review (NCERT); 2) Journal of Indian Education (NCERT) and 3) Journal of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). I found only three studies on some form of parent involvement and none on the role of the headmasters' or headmistresses' actions in fostering parent and family involvement in government schools in India or Tamil Nadu. The few studies I found were on attitudes of rural parents towards child-rearing practices, family environment and achievement of adolescent children of working and non-working mothers, and functions of parent teachers associations in Madhya Pradesh.

Further, abstracts from the NCERT survey of Research in Education series did not touch upon research covering educational administration and parent and family involvement. From the Fifth Survey of Educational Research (1988- 1992), two abstracts addressed secondary school leadership: A study of the characteristics of effective leadership behavior of secondary school principals (p. 1196) and a study of models of efficient and inefficient administration and

management at the secondary school level in Pune district (p.1198). These studies, however, did not discuss actions of headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent and family involvement in public (government) schools.

Given this dearth of research also in India and Tamil Nadu, the findings from this study will help to fill the gap in literature and potentially help educators in the field to impact practice.

SUMMARY

This study points to a dearth of research on the complex layers of principals' actions to initiate and support parent and family involvement practices (both from the literature review conducted in the U.S and from journals reviewed in India and Tamil Nadu). Above I have presented how the findings of my study relate to the existing literature.

Given this, I argue that this exploratory study provides a deeper understanding of principal-initiated and principal-supported parent involvement practices. Findings from the four case studies of Kaveri, Palani, Nilgiri and Vaigai schools also reveal the complex factors that surround the leaders' actions (beliefs, past experiences and context) and perspectives of important stakeholders (teachers and parents).

While the study was conducted in a developing country (India), findings have significant ramifications for practitioners and researchers in the U.S. It is evident that the vital role of the leader is often overlooked in the parent involvement and school leadership literature. However, findings from this study show the significance of the four school heads in fostering effective parent involvement.

I argue that the array of leaders' actions in fostering parent involvement exposed new meaning and understanding around the importance of the leaders' role. The leaders' strong beliefs, coupled with actions to initiate new practices and support existing practices, were

instrumental in developing connections with parents to support student achievement and school growth. I argue that the role of the leader as portrayed in the parent involvement literature needs thorough reconsideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides several key implications for research and practice. First, each case in the preceding chapters highlights the story of a school leader who has effectively fostered parent involvement by initiating and supporting practices. Clearly, the four leaders took deliberate actions and strategies to achieve several goals towards fostering parent involvement and improving student outcomes. School administrators and educators in U.S and India need to carefully consider the importance of the school heads' role in fostering effective parent involvement practices for the achievement of students and the school.

Second, the preceding chapters also highlighted how the four school leaders went beyond a checklist of practices to foster parent involvement. The school context, personal experiences, life context and personal convictions all shaped their practices. Therefore, educators and school administrators need to consider the complex aspects of the leaders' role in fostering parent involvement, all of which gave meaning to the leaders' practices. Gaining more understanding of leaders' actions in this context would help create new meanings for the role of the leader in fostering parent involvement.

Third, despite having very limited resources, the leaders in the case studies found creative ways to effectively foster parent involvement in small but meaningful ways. It was not the magnitude of the practices that mattered, but how several practices were integrated and the collective beliefs of the leaders, teachers and parents in parent involvement for the success of the

students and school. School administrators will benefit from exploring innovative ways to foster parent involvement.

Fourth, the cases were set within the context of parents in low-income communities. The students in these schools were mostly first-generation learners. Studies already show that parents, despite educational background, race, socioeconomic status, family structure and gender, are likely to get involved if the school reaches out. These four cases illustrate that the schools, and especially the leaders, reached out to parents directly in many ways. They tapped into the strengths of parents, created a platform for them to voice their views, made them feel respected and provided several opportunities to involve themselves in their child's education. Therefore, school administrators will find value in developing multiple ways over time to effectively involve parents and make them feel part of the school community.

Fifth, the leaders in all case studies exhibited ways to sustain the parent involvement practices they initiated and supported. School administrators and educators will benefit from finding ways to sustain effective parent involvement practices and thereby building school and parent connections that are long-lasting.

This study points to a need for further research. A lack of research on leaders' actions to initiate and support parent involvement practices led to this exploratory study. The sample size was small, to allow for close examination of the complex factors shaping the leaders' practices. A qualitative case study approach only could achieve that. Therefore, further research should extend this study in the U.S and India, including a quantitative study. For example, surveys of a larger sample can be conducted to explore the actions of school heads across various parent involvement practices. Additional types of leadership actions will come to light.

Additional qualitative studies would yield more insights into exemplary practices of leaders fostering parent involvement. Further research might also measure the various outcomes of the principals' actions in fostering parent involvement on the students, schools, parents and teachers. Since there are very few empirical studies in this vital space, more research is warranted to expand the discourse among educators, policy makers and researchers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Political Map of India

Appendix B: District Map of Tamil Nadu

Appendix C: Research Interview Description Form

Appendix D: Researcher Field Notes Form

Appendix E: Background and Beliefs about Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters or Headmistresses

Appendix F: School Demographics Oral Survey for Headmasters and Headmistresses

Appendix G: School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Survey for Headmasters and Headmistresses

Appendix H: Actions Supporting Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters and Headmistresses

Appendix I: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Teachers

Appendix J: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Parents or Guardians

Appendix K: Sample Consent Form

Appendix L: Notice of Action from IRB

Appendix M: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Survey Permission Letter

Appendix N: Projected Research Timeline

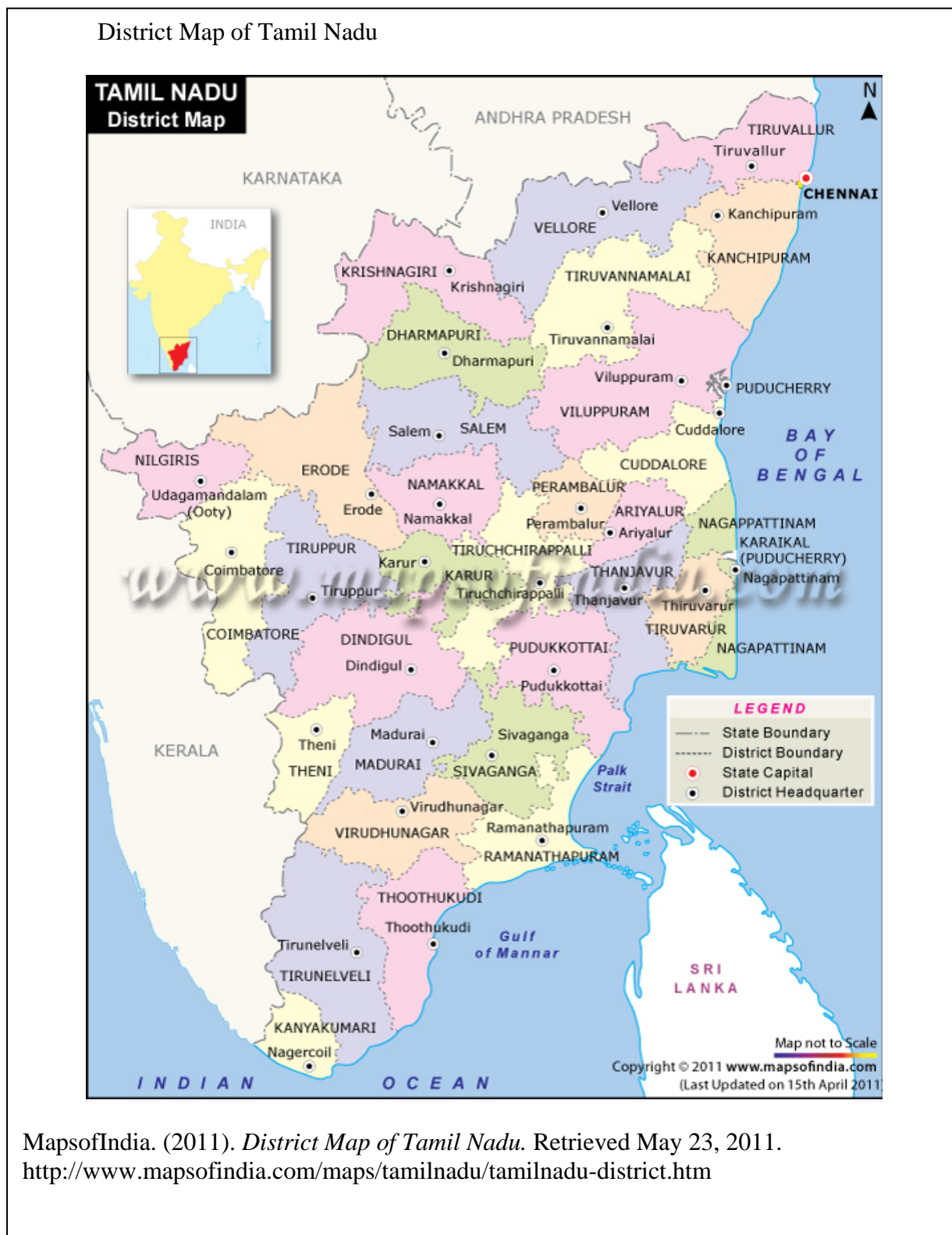
Appendix O: Projected Research Expenditure

Appendix A: Political Map of India



MapsofIndia. (2011). *Political Map of India*. Retrieved May 23, 2011.
<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/india-political-map.htm>

Appendix B: District Map of Tamil Nadu



MapsofIndia. (2011). *District Map of Tamil Nadu*. Retrieved May 23, 2011.
<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/tamilnadu/tamilnadu-district.htm>

Appendix C: Researcher Interview Description Form

Interviewer & Interviewee Description	Interview Number
Researcher Name: _____	<input type="text"/>
Interviewee Pseudonym: _____	
Interviewee Position: _____	
Years in Current Position: _____	
Classes Taught: _____	
School/District Name & Location	
School Pseudonym: _____	
School Location Pseudonym: _____	
District Pseudonym: _____	
Interview Location & Time	
Interview Date: _____	
Interview Location: _____	
Interview Scheduled Start: _____	
Interview Actual Start Time: _____	
Interview Actual End Time: _____	
Audio Tape Description	
Audio Tape File #: _____	
Other Comments	

Appendix D: Researcher Field Notes Form

Interview Description	Field Notes Number
Researcher Name: _____	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>
Interviewee Pseudonym: _____	
School Pseudonym: _____	
School Location Pseudonym: _____	
District Pseudonym: _____	
Interview Date: _____	
Interview Location: _____	
Interview Scheduled Start: _____	
Interview Actual Start Time: _____	
Interview Actual End Time: _____	
What were the successes of the interview? Did you meet the interview goals you set for yourself?	
What were the challenges of the interview?	
Were there any surprises?	
Describe the physical setting of the interview?	
How was the interviewees' body language? Is there something in particular that you noticed?	
Did the interview begin and end as planned? Were there any interruptions or distractions during the interview?	
Did the interviewee raise any questions which need to be addressed before the next interview?	
How did you feel during the interview? Were you comfortable conducting the interview? Was there something which made you uncomfortable?	
What are some things you learned from the field work today?	
What are some things you would like to change to conduct a more effective interview tomorrow?	
Other thoughts/memos	

Appendix E: Background and Beliefs about Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters or Headmistresses

Researcher Name: _____
 Headmaster or Headmistress Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Interview Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am here to conduct an interview about your background as an educator and your beliefs about parent and family involvement practices at your school. This interview will set the foundation for the following interviews on the history of various parent and family involvement practices and your leadership actions in supporting various practices at the school.

As outlined in the oral consent before, I assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. You can choose to withdraw from participating in this study at any time. Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary. Can we now begin this interview?

Background Information

- 1) Tell me a little about yourself. How long have you been an educator? How long have you been a school headmaster or headmistress? What are the different roles you have taken in a school? How long have you been in this current position?
- 2) What inspired you to be an educator?
 - Probe:* Was there an experience in your life which made you want to be a headmaster or headmistress?
- 3) What is your vision for this school?
- 4) Can you describe your leadership style? How do your colleagues at school perceive your leadership style?
 - Probe:* Has that changed over the years? Why so?
- 5) What are some key achievements of this school around involving parents and families?

Beliefs on Parent and Family Involvement Practices

- 6) What are your beliefs on parent and family involvement?
 - Probe:* In what ways have your prior experiences influenced the way you view parent and family involvement now? Do you believe that it is important for a high school or higher secondary school to involve parents and families?

- 7) Is parent involvement a part of your school's written mission or goal?
- 8) What makes your school's parent community unique? What are the strengths of parents that could be tapped into to increase their teen's success in school? What are the weaknesses?
 - Probe:* Do you believe that parent involvement is important for student success and growth in your school? If so, why?
- 9) In what other ways is parent involvement important for the school?
 - Probe:* Can you describe some ways in which parent involvement has had an impact on school, on teachers and on parents themselves?
- 10) What are your views on your teachers involving parents? Do they consider it important to involve parents? How much support do they give to parent involvement?

Appendix F: School Demographics Oral Survey for Headmasters and Headmistresses

Researcher Name: _____
 Headmaster or Headmistress Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Oral Survey Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am a Doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States of America. My specialty is Education Leadership & Policy Analysis. My research study focuses on headmaster and headmistress leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement in Tamil Nadu, India. I will now read out an oral consent form to you which describes the research study purpose, your role in the study, time commitment for the study and confidentiality details.

[Note: Read out Headmaster or Headmistress IRB oral consent form, allowing for the participant to ask questions at any time. Clarify all questions posed by the participant on the study goals and other confidentiality measures. Following this, digitally audio record the oral consent from the participant and then continue with the oral survey].

The oral survey today is about your school's demographics (school, student, teacher and parent or guardian characteristics). This survey should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. For every question I ask you, please indicate your choice. Can we begin this oral survey on your school demographics now?

1. What classes does your school serve?

9th 10th 11th 12th

2. What is the medium of instruction?

Tamil English Both

3. What is the total number of students?

Boys: _____ Girls: _____

4. What is the total number of students classwise?

9th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

10th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

11th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

12th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

5. What is the total number of students with special needs your school serves?

Boys: _____ Girls: _____

6. Does your school serve students from these social categories?

Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe BC MBC Other Caste _____

7. What is the overall pass percentage of students this past academic year?

9th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

10th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

11th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

12th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

8. Do your students qualify for any of the following social welfare schemes?

Noon Meals Free Books Free Uniform Free Bus Pass Free Notebooks

Free Cycle Free Laptops Scholarships Other Schemes _____

9. What is the class size?

1-20 20-30 30-40 40+

10. What is the teacher student ratio? _____

11. What is the total number of teachers?

Male: _____

Female: _____

Total: _____ Vacant Positions: _____

12. What is the highest degree of teachers?

Male: _____

Female: _____

13. What is the teacher attendance rate?

Male: _____

Female: _____

14. What is the total number of non-teaching staff?

Male: _____

Female: _____

15. How many parents or guardians participate in the Parent Teachers Association?

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Guardian (Aunt, Uncle or Grandparent): _____

16. What are the parents' occupations? Note all that apply.

Clerical House Helpers Road Sweepers Watchman Laborer

Driver (Bus, Truck, Auto Rickshaw, Three Wheeled Carts) Vegetable Vendor

Other Street Vendors Religious Workers Politician Others _____

17. What is the student attendance rate?

9th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

10th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

11th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

12th: Boys: _____ Girls: _____

Appendix G: School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Survey for Headmasters and
Headmistresses

Researcher Name: _____
 Headmaster or Headmistress Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Oral Survey Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am here to conduct the second oral survey on your school's parent and family involvement practices. This survey is divided into five sections and should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The five sections in the survey contain questions on 1) parenting and responsibilities of families, 2) communicating and responsibilities of schools, 3) volunteering by parents, 4) parents' involvement in student learning at home and 5) the degree to which parents participate in school decision-making.

As outlined in the oral consent form before, I assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. You can choose to withdraw from participating in this study at any time. Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary. Can we begin this oral survey on your schools parent and family involvement practices now? For every question, please indicate the classes (9, 10, 11, and 12) in which the activity is currently implemented. If the practice is not being currently implemented, please specify "no". At the end of each section, please provide a list of additional activities that your school supports.

TYPE 1 – PARENTING: BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES

Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students, and assist schools to understand families.

Our school:

At Which Classes?

- 1) Sponsors parent education workshops and other courses or training for parents-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 2) Provides families with information on child or adolescent development-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 3) Conducts family support programs with parent to parent discussion groups-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 4) Provides families with information on developing home conditions that
support learning-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 5) Lends families books or tapes on parenting or videotapes of parent workshops-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 6) Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 7) Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families
understand schools and to help schools understand families-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 8) Respects the different cultures represented in your student population-----9 10 11 12 No
 - 9) Are there other activities that your school supports? _____
-

TYPE 2 – COMMUNICATING: BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS

Conduct effective communications from school to home and from home to school about school programs and children's progress

Our school:**At Which Classes?**

- 10) Conducts formal conferences with every parent at least once a year-----9 10 11 12 No
- 11) Provides clear information about report cards and how students earn marks-----9 10 11 12 No
- 12) Parents pick up report cards-----9 10 11 12 No
- 13) Has newsletters/school paper/flyer/website/notices that includes:
- a calendar of school events-----9 10 11 12 No
 - student extra curricular activity information-----9 10 11 12 No
 - classes and subject matter information-----9 10 11 12 No
 - school volunteer information-----9 10 11 12 No
 - school policy information-----9 10 11 12 No
 - samples of student writing and artwork-----9 10 11 12 No
 - a column to address parents' questions-----9 10 11 12 No
 - recognition of students, families, and community members-----9 10 11 12 No
 - other information _____
- 14) Provides clear information about subjects or activities in this school-----9 10 11 12 No
- 15) Sends home student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comments-----9 10 11 12 No
- 16) Staff members send home positive messages about students on a regular basis-----9 10 11 12 No
- 17) Notifies families about student awards and recognition-----9 10 11 12 No
- 18) Contacts the families of students having academic or behavior problems-----9 10 11 12 No
- 19) Teachers and administrators have easy access to telephones to communicate with parents during or after school-----9 10 11 12 No
- 20) Teachers and administrators have email and/or a school website to communicate with parents-----9 10 11 12 No
- 21) Has other ways to communicate with parents _____
- 22) Parents have the telephone numbers and/or email addresses of the school, principal, teachers and counselors-----9 10 11 12 No
- 23) Conducts an annual survey for families to provide reactions to school programs and share information and concerns about students-----9 10 11 12 No
- 24) Are there other communication activities that your school supports? _____

TYPE 3 – VOLUNTEERING: INVOLVEMENT AT AND FOR THE SCHOOL

Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students

Our school:**At Which Classes?**

- 25) Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents,

- and availability of volunteers-----9 10 11 12 No
- 26) Has a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings,
and resources for families-----9 10 11 12 No
- 27) Encourages families to be involved at school by:
- assisting in the classroom (e.g., tutoring, grading papers, etc.)-----9 10 11 12 No
 - helping on trips or at school events-----9 10 11 12 No
 - giving talks (e.g., careers, hobbies, etc.)-----9 10 11 12 No
 - checking attendance -----9 10 11 12 No
 - monitoring halls, or working in the library, canteen, or other area-----9 10 11 12 No
 - leading groups tours, trips or other extracurricular activities-----9 10 11 12 No
 - Other _____
- 28) Provides ways for families to be involved in student learning at home or in the community
if they cannot volunteer at school-----9 10 11 12 No
- 29) Has a program to recognize your volunteers-----9 10 11 12 No
- 30) Schedules plays, concerts, games, and other events at different times of the day or evening so that all
parents can attend some activities-----9 10 11 12 No
- 31) Are there other volunteering activities that your school supports? _____

TYPE 4 – LEARNING AT HOME: INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Involve families with their children in homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions

Our school:

At Which Classes?

- 32) Provides information to families on required skills in all subjects-----9 10 11 12 No
- 33) Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss
school work at home-----9 10 11 12 No
- 34) Provides information on how to assist students with skills
that they need to improve. -----9 10 11 12 No
- 35) Has regular schedule of interactive homework that requires students
to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.-----9 10 11 12 No
- 36) Asks parents to listen to their child read or to read aloud with their child-----9 10 11 12 No
- 37) Provides calendars with daily or weekly activities for families to do at home
and in the community-----9 10 11 12 No
- 38) Helps families help students set academic goals, select courses and subjects,
and plan for college or work-----9 10 11 12 No
- 39) Are there other 'learning at home' activities that your school supports? _____

TYPE 5 – DECISION MAKING: PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives

Our school:

At Which Classes?

- 40) Has an active PTA or other parent organization-----9 10 11 12 No
- 41) Has parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement

- team, or other committees-----9 10 11 12 No
- 42) Has parent representatives on district level boards or committees-----9 10 11 12 No
- 43) Involves all parents to get input and ideas on school policies-----9 10 11 12 No
- 44) Provides information on school or local elections for school representatives-----9 10 11 12 No
- 45) Involves parents in selecting school staff-----9 10 11 12 No
- 46) Involves parents in revising school and/or district subject matter-----9 10 11 12 No
- 47) Are there other activities that your school supports?_____

OTHER QUESTIONS ON NON-TRADITIONAL AND CONTEXT-BASED PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

- 48) Does your school support any other kinds of parent involvement activities which relate specifically to the culture and context of India and Tamil Nadu? Please note all such activities.

Thank you very much for your time and inputs on the School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Survey. Your inputs will be very valuable for this research study. I look forward to learning more about your work around these activities at your school. Have a nice day!

Appendix H: Actions Supporting Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Headmasters and Headmistresses

Researcher Name: _____
 Headmaster or Headmistress Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Interview Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am here to conduct an interview about your leadership in fostering parent and family involvement practices at the school, the history of each practice at the school, and the leadership actions and support you provide for each of the parent and family involvement practice at the school.

The interview has questions on the actions and support that you provide towards each of the parent and family involvement practice currently being implemented your school.

There could be several parent and family involvement practices at your school. For that reason, the actions and support that you provide towards each parent and family involvement practice in your school will be asked at every interview from now on. This procedure will provide me a deeper understanding about every parent and family involvement practice and about your actions and support for each practice.

As outlined in the oral consent before, I assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. You can choose to withdraw from participating in this study at any time. Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary. Can we now begin this interview?

Actions Supporting Parent and Family Involvement Practices

[Note: For every practice identified in the School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Questionnaire, ask the following questions on actions and support provided by the headmaster or headmistress].

11) From the parent and family involvement practices that you identified in the School and Parent Involvement Practices Oral Survey, what is the most successful practice to involve parents that you have used in your school?

- Probe:* How has it been successful in your school?

12) Why was this particular parent involvement practice created?

- Probe:* Who created the practice? How long has the practice been in place at your school?

- Probe:* What is the response to the practice from parents, students, teachers and other administrators? Has it helped to bring the school and parent community closer?

Setting Directions (Goals & Vision)

13) What actions did you take to promote a shared vision for this parent involvement practice among school staff and parents?

- Probe:* What does the process look like?

14) What actions did you take to create school goals around this practice? Describe them.

15) What actions did you take to assist school staff with individual goals around this parent involvement practice?

- Probe:* What does that look like?

16) What actions did you take to encourage successful implementation for this practice?

- Probe:* Describe some expectations that you set for your school staff.

Developing People (Stimulation & Support)

18) What actions did you take to provide staff with individualized support for a practice?

- Probe:* What did that look like?

19) What actions did you take to encourage new practices?

- Probe:* How did you support those?

Redesigning the Organization (Culture & Environment)

20) What actions did you take to include the practice as part of the climate of your school?

- Probe:* Are there traditions and ceremonies that involve parents and families at your school?

21) What actions did you take to create structures such as regular meeting times for this practice?

- Probe:* How did you do that?

Overall Experience

[Note: Use the questions in this section only in the final interview with the headmaster or headmistress].

22) Do you have partnerships with parents and families? In what ways could better partnerships with parents and families help students?

- Probe:* How can better partnerships help your school, teachers and parents themselves?

23) To strengthen existing partnerships, what do you need to know about your students' parents and families that you do not know now?

24) What obstacles do you see in building stronger links between families and your school?

Thank you very much for your time for the interviews on your leadership actions around your schools parent and family involvement practices. Your responses are very valuable for this research study. Have a nice day!

Appendix I: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Teachers

Researcher: _____
 Teacher Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am a Doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States of America. I specialize in specializing in Education Leadership & Policy Analysis. My research focuses on headmaster and headmistress leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement in Tamil Nadu, India. You have been invited to participate in the interview as you are a teacher in this school who has been involved in parent involvement practices. The interview has questions related to the support you receive from your headmaster or headmistress in fostering parent involvement practices. The interview should take no more than 30 minutes.

I will now read out an oral consent form to you which describe the research study purpose, your role in the study, time commitment for the study and confidentiality details. [Read out Teacher IRB oral consent form, allowing for the participant to ask questions at any time. Clarify all questions posed by the participant on the study goals and other confidentiality measures.]

[Note: Following this, digitally audio record the oral consent from the participant and then continue with the interview]. Can we begin this interview now?

Background Information

- 1) Tell me a little about yourself. How long have you been an educator? How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been in this current position?
- 2) What inspired you to be a teacher?
 - Probe:* Was there an experience in your life which made you want to be a teacher?
- 3) What are your beliefs on parent and family involvement?
 - Probe:* Have your prior experiences influenced the way you view parent and family involvement now? Do you believe that it is important for a higher secondary school to involve parents and families?
- 4) Do you believe that parent involvement is important for student success and growth in your school? If so, why? If not, why not?

- 5) What makes your school's parent community unique? What are the strengths of parents that could be tapped into to increase their teen's success in high school? What are the weaknesses?

[Note: For specific practices identified by the headmaster or headmistress, ask the following questions to the teachers on support provided by the headmaster or headmistress].

Setting Goals

- 6) What are your views on the headmaster's or headmistress' actions in creating a shared vision for the practice?
- 7) What support did you receive from the headmaster or headmistress in creating individual goals around this practice?

Developing People

- 8) In what ways did the headmaster or headmistress support you in a practice?
- 9) How did the headmaster or headmistress encourage you to create new practices?

Redesigning the Organization (Culture & Environment)

- 10) Did the headmaster or headmistress make the practice a part of the climate of your school? If so, how?
- 11) Did structures like regular meeting times created by the headmaster or headmistress for this practice help you? If so, how?

Overall Experience

- 12) In what ways could better partnerships with parents and families help your school?
- 13) To strengthen existing partnerships, what do you need to know about your students' families that you do not know now?
- 14) What obstacles do you see in building stronger links between families and your school?

Thank you very much for your time for the interview. Your responses are very valuable for this research study. Have a nice day!

Appendix J: Parent Involvement Practices Interview for Parents or Guardians

Researcher: _____
 Parent or Guardian Pseudonym: _____
 School Pseudonym: _____
 District Pseudonym: _____
 Date/Time: _____

Introduction & Purpose:

Hello, my name is _____. I am a Doctoral student specializing in Education Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States of America. My research study focuses on headmaster and headmistress leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement in Tamil Nadu, India. You have been invited to participate in the interview as you are a parent or guardian who has been involved in school activities. The interview asks about the ways that the headmaster or headmistress or the teacher involves you as a parent in the school. The interview should take no more than 30 minutes.

I will now read out an oral consent form to you which describe the research study purpose, your role in the study, time commitment for the study and confidentiality details. [Read out Parent or Guardian IRB oral consent form, allowing for the participant to ask questions at any time. Clarify all questions posed by the participant on the study goals and other confidentiality measures].

[Note: Following this, digitally audio record the oral consent from the participant and then continue with the interview]. Can we begin this interview now?

- 1) Tell me a little about yourself. What is your education? Where do you work?
- 2) Are you the parent or guardian of the child studying in this school? How long has your child been studying in this school?
- 3) How many adults live at home? How many children live at home?
- 4) What are your greatest concerns as a parent of a teenager?
- 5) How would you describe the social climate at this school?
 - Probe:* Is it welcoming?
- 6) Are you deeply involved in your teen's education?
 - Probe:* In what ways are you involved at home? At school?
- 7) How does the school involve you in various activities?
 - Probe:* In what activities you are currently involved?

- 8) Has the school reached out to you with information on ways you can be involved?
- Probe:* In what ways has the headmaster or headmistress reached out to you? In what ways has the teacher or other school staff reached out to you?
- 9) What school activity that you had participated in has helped your child and you the most, and why?
- 10) What is one thing your family could do to help this school next year?

Thank you very much for your time for the interview. Your responses are very valuable for this research study. Have a nice day!

Appendix K: Sample Consent Form
Headmaster or Headmistress Oral Consent Form
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Title of the Study: The Actions of Headmasters and Headmistresses in Fostering Parent and Family Involvement in Tamil Nadu, India

Dear Headmaster or Headmistress,

You are invited to participate in a research study about government (public) school headmaster or headmistress leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement in Tamil Nadu, India. You have been asked to participate because you are a headmaster or headmistress at one of the government (public) schools in Tamil Nadu, India.

The purpose of the research is to study how a government (public) secondary school headmaster or headmistress initiate and support various parent and family involvement practices in the school. This study will include four to eight government (public) secondary school headmasters or headmistresses in Tamil Nadu, India.

The research will be conducted at the school during non-instructional hours (for example before or after school). Interviews and surveys will be digitally audio recorded. Digitally audio recorded interviews will be heard only by the research team. All digital audio files will be stored in a password protected computer for a period of up to two years, and then destroyed.

What will my participation involve?

If you decide to participate in this research, we will ask you to participate in the following:

1. **Interviews and Surveys.** You will be invited to participate in 10 in-depth, face-to-face interviews and 2 face-to-face oral surveys with the researcher. Interviews and the survey will be conducted in English or in the regional Tamil language or a combination of both. The survey will ask you questions about the school demographics and questions related to your school and parent involvement practices. The interview will be about your background, beliefs on parent and family involvement and your own leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement at the school. The interviews will be conducted at the school during non-instructional hours (for example before or after school). Your participation will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes per interview session and will require 12 sessions. All the interviews will be digitally audio recorded and transcribed. All identifying information will be removed from transcripts.
2. **Documents.** We will ask you to provide the documents used or developed related to your leadership actions in fostering parent and family involvement at the school like school yearly plans or goal sheets. In addition, we will ask you to provide other documents that could be useful for the research study to understand the various parent and family involvement practices at your school.

Are there any risks?

The risks of participating in this research project are small. If the information collected became public for any reason, there is a chance that you may be embarrassed or the relationship between you and your colleagues may suffer. To lessen this risk, we will not reveal any specific information from the interview to other people without permission. Any personal, sensitive, or identifiable information shared will also not be recorded.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please sign below or provide an oral consent to the researcher.

Are there any benefits?

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in the research project, but there are significant potential benefits to the educational community. The research project may help schools in India and the United States better understand practices of school headmasters or headmistresses in fostering parent and family involvement.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the research study, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Kent Peterson, by phone at (608) 263-2720. You may also call the co-investigator, Anupama Shekar, by phone at (608) 770-4104 or 91-98414-19901.

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at (608) 263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature below or oral consent indicates that you have read the information about this study, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily consent to your participation. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix L: Notice of Action from IRB

Notice of Action
University of Wisconsin–Madison
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Principal Investigator: Carolyn J Kelley
Department: Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis
Co-Investigator: Anupama Shekar
Protocol Title: Parent and Family Involvement in Tamil Nadu, India
Protocol Number: SE-2011-0523
IRB: Education Research IRB (Contact: 263-2320)
Committee Action: Approved on: **August 08, 2012** Expires: **August 07, 2013**

Special Notes or Instructions: This protocol was originally approved pursuant to 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), expedited category 7. Recruitment and data collection have ended and study is now open for data analysis only. No changes are being requested. No other issues were noted during review. Therefore, this protocol is approved for an additional 12 months pursuant to 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), expedited category 7.

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Unless this protocol is exempt, or the IRB specifically waived the use of written consent, an approved consent form that is stamped with approval and expiration dates can be found on IRB WebKit. To find the stamped consent form, go to IRB WebKit at <https://rcr.gradsch.wisc.edu/irbwebkit/Login.asp>. Login and open this protocol number. The link to the consent form can be found on the left side of the page. All copies of the form must be made from this original. Any changes to the consent form must be approved in advance by the IRB.

Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented.

Any new information that would affect potential risks to subjects, any problems or adverse reactions must be reported immediately to the IRB contact listed above.

If the research will continue beyond the expiration date indicated above, a request for renewal/continuing review must be submitted to the IRB. You must obtain approval before the current expiration date. If you do not obtain approval by the expiration date noted above, you are not authorized to collect any data until the IRB re-approves your protocol.

Signed consent forms must be retained on campus for seven years following the end of the project.

If you are continuing to analyze data, even though you are no longer collecting data, you should keep this protocol active.

Appendix M: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Survey Permission Letter



June 24, 2011

To:

From: Joyce L. Epstein, Lori J. Connors, Karen Clark Salinas, & Steven B. Sheldon

Re: Permission to use:

- Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. (2007) S. B. Sheldon & J. L. Epstein
- Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades. (1993) J. L. Epstein & K. C. Salinas
- High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School. (1993) J. L. Epstein, L. Connors-Tadros, & K. C. Salinas

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, or reprint the surveys noted above in your study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your work.

STEVEN SHELDON

Appendix N: Projected Research Timeline

Tentative Date	Research Goal
June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with the ED IRB director on campus to discuss the protocol and clarify certain questions ▪ Find a good translator for converting informed consents and interview protocols from English to Tamil (regional language of Tamil Nadu, India)
July 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use Electronic IRB/WebKit to prepare mock IRB protocol ▪ Obtain additional letters from the Department of Public Instruction, Tamil Nadu, India as instructed by the IRB offices
July 25, 2011 (deadline for IRB full committee review on August 8, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit IRB protocol to Education Research Institutional Review Board at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
August 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow up with IRB offices as needed <p>Prepare for research and program requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with advisor on selecting case study sites and finalize sites ▪ Touch base with State Education Department in Tamil Nadu, India for follow up questions or other forms that may need to be completed ▪ Send introductory letters to sites and schedule interviews ▪ Draft a plan with my advisor and committee on staying connected while in the field in India ▪ Plan for possible challenges and techniques to resolve issues while in the field ▪ Work on qualitative analysis software tutorials or certifications <p>Prepare for travel and work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make arrangements with work and set deadlines ▪ Follow up with the International Student Services on campus for visa related forms that need to be signed ▪ Reserve flight tickets

September 29, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Same as goals for August▪ Leave for India
October 3-14, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Interviews in School # 1▪ Transcriptions of Interviews▪ Gathering other Data▪ Writing Field Notes
October 17-28, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Interviews in School # 2▪ Transcriptions of Interviews▪ Gathering other Data▪ Writing Field Notes
October 31 to November 11, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Interviews in School # 3▪ Transcriptions of Interviews▪ Gathering other Data▪ Writing Field Notes
November 14 to November 25, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Interviews in School # 4▪ Transcriptions of Interviews▪ Gathering other Data▪ Writing Field Notes
November 28 to December 2, 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Follow up Interviews and Gathering other Data if Needed▪ Meeting State Administrators▪ Field Visit Closure
January 2012 to January 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Meet with advisor and draft next steps▪ Data analysis▪ Collaborate with other dissertators▪ Writing

Appendix O: Projected Research Expenditure

Expense Description	Estimated Cost
Round trip flight tickets (Chicago, USA - Chennai, India) (Chennai, India – Chicago, USA)	\$ 1,200 (Indian Rupees INR 54,000)
Traveling to Schools (Auto Rickshaw, Taxi, Car Fuel)	\$ 200 (INR 9,000)
Photocopying/Printing	\$ 25 (INR 1,125)
Phone Calls to the U.S.	Skype (no cost) Majic Jack VOIP Phone - \$ 40 (\$ 20 a month; INR 1,800)
Phone Calls within India	\$ 25 (INR 1,125)
Lodging & Meals	None
	Total Expenses: Approximately \$ 1,490 (INR 67,050)

REFERENCES

- Aaron Schutz. (2006). Home is a prison in the global city: The tragic failure of school-based community engagement strategies. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4), pp. 691-743.
- Abrams, L. S., & Gibbs, J. T. (2000). Planning for school change - school-community collaboration in a full-service elementary school. *Urban Education*, 35(1), 79-103.
- Abrams, L. S., & Gibbs, J. T. (2002). Disrupting the logic of home-school relations - parent involvement strategies and practices of inclusion and exclusion. *Urban Education*, 37(3), 384-407.
- Adams, K. S., & Christenson, S. L. (2000). Trust and the family-school relationship examination of parent-teacher differences in elementary and secondary grades. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38(5), 477-497.
- Aggarwal, J.C.,. (2009). *Recent Developments and Trends in Education*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Aggarwal, J.C., & Gupta, S. (2008). *Secondary Education and Management*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Anandakrishnan, M., (2008). Revisiting the Education Commission: Perspectives, Goals and Values. In Prakash, V., & Biswal, K., Perspectives on Education and Development: Revisiting Education Commission and After. Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Anderson, K. J., & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 311-323.
- Anfara, V.A., Brown, K.M., & Mangione, T.L. (2002) Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher*, 31, 28-38.
- Anguiano, R. P. V. (2004). Families and schools: The effect of parental involvement on high school completion. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(1), 61-85.
- Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education*, 42(3), 250-283.
- Auerbach, S. (2009). Walking the walk: Portraits in leadership for family engagement in urban schools. *School Community Journal*, 19(1), 9-31.
- Auerbach, S. (2010). Beyond coffee with the principal: Toward leadership for authentic school-family partnerships. *Journal of School Leadership*, 20(6), 728-757.
- Baker, A. J. L., & Soden, L. M. (1997). Parent involvement in children's education: A critical assessment of the knowledge base. *Report: ED407127.40pp.Mar 1997*, , 40-40.
- Balli, S. J., Demo, D. H., & Wedman, J. F. (1998). Family involvement with children's homework: An intervention in the middle grades. *Family Relations*, 47(2), 149-157.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development*, 72(1), pp. 187-206.
- Barge, J. K., & Loges, W. E. (2003). Parent, student, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 31(2), 140-163. doi:10.1080/0090988032000064597

- Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. London: Sage.
- Bertram-Troost, G. D., Roos, S. A. d., & Miedema, S. (2007). Religious identity development of adolescents in christian secondary schools: Effects of school and religious backgrounds of adolescents and their parents. *Religious Education, 102*(2), 132-150.
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent development in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, pp. 67-92.
- Birch, T. C., & Ferrin, S. E. (2002). Mexican american parental participation in public education in an isolated rocky mountain rural community. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(1), 70-78.
- Blondal, K. S., & Adalbjarnardottir, S. (2009). Parenting practices and school dropout: a longitudinal study. *Adolescence, 44*(176), 729.
- Brian, D. J. G. (1994). *Parental involvement in high schools*.
- Buch, M. B., Joshi, J. N., & National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1991). *Fourth survey of research in education, 1983-1988*. New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training.
- Buch, M. B., & National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1987). *Third survey of research in education, 1978-1983*. New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training.
- Buch, M. B., & Society for Educational Research and Development. (1979). *Second survey of research in education, 1972-1978* (1st ed.). Baroda: Society for Educational Research and Development : sole distributors, Good Companions.
- Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education, 5*(2), 149-177.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Chavkin, N. F. (1993). *Families and schools in a pluralistic society*
- Cheng, C., (2003). *Basic Education: Making it Work for the Poor Experiences from the South*. In NIEPA, *Globalization and Challenges for Education*. Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Chrispeels, J. (1996). Effective schools and home-school-community partnership roles: A framework for parent involvement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 7*(4), 297-323.
- Chrispeels, J. H., & Rivero, E. (2001). Engaging latino families for student success: How parent education can reshape parents' sense of place in the education of their children. *Peabody Journal of Education, 76*(2), 119-69.
- Coleman, J. S. (1987). Families and schools. *Educational Researcher, 16*(6), pp. 32-38.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Crosnoe, R. (2001). Academic orientation and parental involvement in education during high school. *Sociology of Education, 74*(3), 210-30.
- Dearing, E., Kreider, H., & Weiss, H. B. (2008). Increased family involvement in school predicts improved child-teacher relationships and feelings about school for low-income children. *Marriage & Family Review, 43*(3), 226-254.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (2005). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- DePlanty, J., Coulter-Kern, R., & Duchane, K. A. (2007). Perceptions of parent involvement in academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Research, 100*(6), 361-368.
- Desimone, L. (1999). Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter? *Journal of Educational Research, 93*(1), 11-30.
- Deslandes, R., & Bertrand, R. (2005). Motivation of parent involvement in secondary-level schooling. *Journal of Educational Research, 98*(3), 164.
- Dornbusch, S. M., & Ritter, P. L. (1988). Parents of high school students: A neglected resource. *The Education Digest, 53*(9), 16.
- Drummond, K. V., & Stipek, D. (2004). Low-income parents' beliefs about their role in childrens academic learning. *Elementary School Journal, 104*(3), 197-213.
- Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle.. *Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), 289.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *Journal of Educational Research, 95*(5), 308-318.
- Epstein, J. L. (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*(3), pp. 277-294.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*
- Epstein, J.L et al. (2002). *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2002*
- Epstein, J. L. (2007). Connections count. *Principal Leadership (High School Ed.), 8*(2), 16-22.
- Epstein, J. L. (2008). Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Education Digest, 73*(6), 9-12.
- Esther Sui-Chu Ho. (2009). Educational leadership for parental involvement in an asian context: Insights from bourdieu's theory of practice. *School Community Journal, 19*(2), 101-122.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*(1), 1-22.
- Fehrmann, P. G., & Others, A. (1987). Home influence on school learning: Direct and indirect effects of parental involvement on high school grades. *Journal of Educational Research, 80*(6), 330-37.
- Fields-Smith, C. (2006). Motivation for participation: Why highly involved african american parents participate in their children's education. *Journal of School Public Relations, 27*(3), 234-257.
- Flynn, G., & Nolan, B. (2008). What do school principals think about current school-family relationships? *NASSP Bulletin, 92*(3), 173-190.
- Gareau, M., & Sawatzky, D. (1995). Parents and schools working together: A qualitative study of parent school collaboration. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 41*(4), 462-473.
- Gazda-Grace, P. (2002). "Psst... have you heard about the international baccalaureate program?". *Clearing House, 76*(2-), 84-87.
- Giles, C. (2006). Transformational leadership in challenging urban elementary schools: A role for parent involvement? *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 5*(3), 257-282.
doi:10.1080/15700760600805865
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. L. (1965). *Awareness of Dying*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative*

- research. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Goldring, E. B., & Shapira, R. (1996). Principals' survival with parental involvement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 7(4), 342-360.
- Goldring, E. B. (1993). Principals, parents, and administrative superiors. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, , 93.
- Goldring, E. B., & Shapira, R. (1993). Choice, empowerment, and involvement: What satisfies parents? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(4), pp. 396-409.
- Goldring, E., & Hausman, C. (1997). Empower parents for productive partnerships. *The Education Digest*, 62(6), 25.
- Good, T. L. (2008). In the midst of comprehensive school reform: Principals' perspectives. *Teachers College Record*, 110(11), 2341-2360.
- Good, T. L., Wiley, A. R., Thomas, R. E., Stewart, E., McCoy, J., Kloos, B., . . . Rappaport, J. (1997). Bridging the gap between schools and community: Organizing for family involvement in a low-income neighborhood. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 8(3), 277.
- GORDON, M. F., & LOUIS, K. S. (2009). Linking parent and community involvement with student achievement: Comparing principal and teacher perceptions of stakeholder influence. *American Journal of Education*, 116(1), 1-31.
- Gottinger, J. E. (1999). *How structural and cultural features of high schools influence parent involvement programs*. (Ph.D., The University of Wisconsin - Madison). , 298. . (9923453)
- Gottlob, J. E. (2009). *Building on cultural capital of low-income hispanic parents and families in elementary school*. ProQuest LLC). ProQuest LLC, (ProQuest LLC. 789 East Eisenhower Parkway, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Tel: 800-521-0600; Web site: <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/products/dissertations/individuals.shtml>
- Govinda, R., (2003). Basic Education: Making it Work for the Poor Experiences from the South. In NIEPA, Globalization and Challenges for Education. Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Green, C. L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2007). Why do parents homeschool? A systematic examination of parental involvement. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(2), 264-285. doi:10.1177/0013124506294862
- Green, C. L., Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 532-544. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.5.532
- Green, G., & Jaquess, S. N. (1987). The effect of part-time employment on academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 80(6), 325-329.
- Griffith, J. (2001). Principal leadership of parent involvement. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 39(2), 162.
- Grossman, S., Osterman, K., & Schmelkin, L. P. (1999). *Parent involvement: The relationship between beliefs and practices*.
- Gu, W., & Yawkey, T. D. (2010). Working with parents and family: Factors that influence chinese teachers' attitudes toward parent involvement. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 37(2), 146-152.
- Guba, G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks,

CA: SAGE.

- Gutman, L. M., & McLoyd, V. C. (2000). Parents' management of their children's education within the home, at school, and in the community: An examination of african-american families living in poverty. *Urban Review*, 32(1), 1-24.
- Hamm, J. V., Farmer, T. W., Robertson, D., Dadisman, K. A., Murray, A., Meece, J. L., & Song, S. Y. (2010). Effects of a developmentally based intervention with teachers on native american and white early adolescents' schooling adjustment in rural settings. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 78(3), 343-377.
- Hands, C. M. (2010). Why collaborate? the differing reasons for secondary school educators' establishment of school-community partnerships. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(2), 189-207. doi:10.1080/09243450903553993
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research*, 50(3), 277-289. doi:10.1080/00131880802309424
- Harvard Family Research Project . (2005, September). *Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement*. Retrieved April 10, 2011, from <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement>: <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/taking-a-closer-look-a-guide-to-online-resources-on-family-involvement>
- Haynes, N. M., & Others, A. (1989). School climate enhancement through parental involvement. *Journal of School Psychology*, 27(1), 87-90.
- Hiatt-Michael, D. (2006). Reflections and directions on research related to family-community involvement in schooling. *School Community Journal*, 16(1), 7-30.
- Hong, S., Yoo, S., You, S., & Wu, C. (2010). The reciprocal relationship between parental involvement and mathematics achievement: Autoregressive cross-lagged modeling. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 78(4), 419-439.
- Hong, S. (2006). Building school-community partnerships: Collaboration for student success. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(2), 271.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97(2), 310.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Brissie, J. S. (1992). Explorations in parent-school relations. *Journal of Educational Research*, 85(5), 287-294.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Battiato, A. C., Walker, J. M. T., Reed, R. P., DeJong, J. M., & Jones, K. P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3), 195-209.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3-42.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Jones, K. P., & Reed, R. P. (2002). Teachers involving parents (TIP): Results of an in-service teacher education program for enhancing parental involvement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(7), 843-867.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105-130.
- Houtenville, A. J., & Conway, K. S. (2008). Parental effort, school resources, and student achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, 43(2), 437-453.
- Ingram, M., Wolfe, R. B., & Lieberman, J. M. (2007). The role of parents in high-achieving schools serving low-income, at-risk populations. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(4), 479-497. doi:10.1177/0013124507302120

- Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta-analysis - the effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(2), 202-218. doi:10.1177/0013124502239392
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, 40(3), 237-269. doi:10.1177/0042085905274540
- Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement - A meta-analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82-110. doi:10.1177/0042085906293818
- Johnstone, T. R., & Hiatt, D. B. (1997). *Development of a school-based parent center for low income new immigrants*.
- Josephine, Y. (2003). *School resource planning and management*. Delhi, India: Shipra Publications.
- Karther, D. E., & Lowden, F. Y. (1997). Fostering effective parent involvement. *Contemporary Education*, 69(1), 41.
- Kingdon, G. G. (1996). Private schooling in india: Size, nature, and equity-effects. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(51), pp. 3306-3314.
- Klein, D. M. (1990). Parental involvement in secondary schools: Can it be increased? *American Secondary Education*, 18(4), 20-22.
- Kohl, G. O., Lengua, L. J., & McMahan, R. J. (2000). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology*, 38(6-), 501-23.
- Lavenda, O. Parental involvement in school: A test of hoover-dempsey and sandler's model among jewish and arab parents in israel. *Children and Youth Services Review, In Press, Corrected Proof* doi:DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.12.016
- Lawson, M. A. (2003). School-family relations in context - parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. *Urban Education*, 38(1), 77-133. doi:10.1177/0042085902238687
- Leon, L. (2003). Parents and secondary schools. *Principal Leadership (High School Ed.)*, 4(4), 32-37.
- Lopez, G. R. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 416-437.
- Lopez, G. R. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 416.
- López, G. R., Scribner, J. D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2001). Redefining parental involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(2), pp. 253-288.
- Lynch, J. (2002). Parents' self-efficacy beliefs, parents' gender, children's reader self-perceptions, reading achievement and gender. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 25(1), 54-67.
- Mapp, K. L. (2002). Having their say: Parents describe how and why they are involved in their children's education. *Report: ED464724.20pp.Apr 2002*, , 20-20.
- MapsofIndia. (2011). *Political Map of India*. Retrieved May 23, 2011. <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/india-political-map.htm>
- MapsofIndia. (2011). *District Map of Tamil Nadu*. Retrieved May 23, 2011. <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/tamilnadu/tamilnadu-district.htm>

- McGrath, W. H. (2007). Ambivalent partners: Power, trust, and partnership in relationships between mothers and teachers in a full-time child care center. *Teachers College Record*, 109(6), 1401-1422.
- Miedel, W. T., & Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: Does it matter? *Journal of School Psychology*, 37(4), 379-402.
- Mukhopadhyay, M., & Parhar, M., (2007). *Education in India: Dynamics of Development*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Nair, T. K. D. (2004). *School planning and management: A democratic approach*. Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1977). *Innovations in education in india : Report of the national seminar, 19-21 april 1976*. New Delhi: Publication Dept., National Council of Educational Research and Training.
- National Seminar on the Education Commission: Revisiting the Commission's Premises, Vision, and Impact on Policy Formulation, Prakash, V., Biswal, K., & National University of Educational Planning and Administration (India). (2008). Perspectives on education and development : Revisiting education commission and after.
- Narula, M. (2007). *Quality in School Education: Secondary Education and Education Boards*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1983-88). *Fourth Survey of Educational Research*. New Delhi: NCERT.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1988-92). *Fifth Survey of Educational Research*. New Delhi: NCERT.
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1993- 2000). *Sixth Survey of Educational Research*. New Delhi: NCERT.
- Nievar, M. A., Jacobson, A., Chen, Q., Johnson, U., & Dier, S. Impact of HIPPY on home learning environments of latino families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, In Press, Uncorrected Proof* doi:DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.01.002
- Patall, E. A., Cooper, H., & Robinson, J. C. (2008). Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 1039-1101. doi:10.3102/0034654308325185
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pelletier, J., & Brent, J. M. (2002). Parent participation and children's school readiness: The effects of parental self-efficacy, cultural diversity and teacher strategies. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(1), 45-60.
- Pena, D. C. (2000). Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. *Journal of Educational Research*, 94(1), 42-54.
- Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of Racial/Ethnic group differences. *Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 485.
- Peterson, S. S., & Ladky, M. (2007). A survey of teachers' and principals' practices and challenges in fostering new immigrant parent involvement. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(3), 881.
- Planning Commission, Government of India. (2007-2012). *Eleventh Five Year Plan*. Retrieved May 1, 2011, from http://planningcommission.gov.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/11th/11_v2/11v2_ch1.pdf

- Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(3), 373-410. doi:10.3102/003465430305567
- Rajput, J. S., & National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2004). *Encyclopaedia of indian education* (1st ed.). New Delhi: Ncert.
- Rich, M., & Patashnick, J. (2002). Narrative research with audiovisual data: Video Intervention/Prevention Assessment (VIA) and NVivo. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 5, 245-261.
- Richards, L. (1999). Data Alive!: The thinking behind NVivo. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9, 412-428.
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling Qualitative Data (2nd Ed.)*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, S. A. (2009). Principals' perceptions of parental involvement in the "big 8" urban districts of ohio. *Research in the Schools*, 16(1), 1-12.
- Rivas Borrell, S. (2007). Parental involvement in school. *Revista Espanola De Pedagogia*, 65(238), 559-574.
- Rubenstein, M. C., & Wodatch, J. K. (2000). Stepping up to the challenge: Case studies of educational improvement in title I secondary schools. *Report: PES-2000-12.61pp.2000*,
- Sanders, M. G. (1996). Building family partnerships that last. *Educational Leadership*, 54(3), 61-66.
- Sanders, M. G. (1996). School-family-community partnerships focused on school safety: The baltimore example. *Journal of Negro Education*, 65(3), 369-374.
- Sanders, M. G. (1998). The effects of school, family, and community support on the academic achievement of african american adolescents. *Urban Education*, 33(3), 385-409.
- Sanders, M. G. (1999). Schools' programs and progress in the national network of partnership schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 92(4), 220-229.
- Sanders, M. G. (2001). The role of "community" in comprehensive school, family, and community partnership programs. *Elementary School Journal*, 102(1), 19-34.
- Sanders, M. G. (2002). All together now: Creating middle-class schools through public school choice. *Teachers College Record*, 104(5), 1002-1005.
- Sanders, M. G. (2003). Community involvement in schools - from concept to practice. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(2), 161-180. doi:10.1177/0013124502239390
- Sanders, M. G. (2008). How parent liaisons can help bridge the home-school gap. *Journal of Educational Research*, 101(5), 287-297.
- Sanders, M. G., Epstein, J. L., Connors-Tadros, L., & Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed, At Risk. (1999). *Family partnerships with high schools: The parents' perspective. report no. 32*.
- Sanders, M. G., & Harvey, A. (2002). Beyond the school walls: A case study of principal leadership for school-community collaboration. *Teachers College Record*, 104(7), 1345-1368.
- Sanders, M. G., & Lewis, K. C. (2005). Building bridges toward excellence: Community involvement in high schools. *The High School Journal*, 88(3), 1.
- School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. (n.d.). *Acts & Rules*. Retrieved June 2011, from School Education Department <http://www.tn.gov.in/schooleducation/acts-rules.htm>
- School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. (2010-2011). *Policy Note on School Education*. Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu.

- Seitsinger, A. M., Felner, R. D., Brand, S., & Burns, A. (2008). A large-scale examination of the nature and efficacy of teachers' practices to engage parents: Assessment, parental contact, and student-level impact. *Journal of School Psychology, 46*(4), 477-505. doi:DOI: 10.1016/j.jsp.2007.11.001
- Semke, C. A., Garbacz, S. A., Kwon, K., Sheridan, S. M., & Woods, K. E. (2010). Family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors: The role of parenting stress and motivational beliefs. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*(4), 293-312.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 102*(4), 301-316.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2005). Testing a equation structural model of partnership program implementation and parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 171-187.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education and Urban Society, 35*(1), 4-26. doi:10.1177/001312402237212
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2005). Involvement counts: Family and community partnerships and mathematics achievement. *Journal of Educational Research, 98*(4), 196-206.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2004). Partnership programs in US schools: Their development and relationship to family involvement outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*(2), 125-148.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 102*(4), 301.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2005). Testing a structural equation model of partnership program implementation and parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 171-187.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 267-275.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education & Urban Society, 35*(1), 4.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. *School Community Journal, 14*(2), 39-56.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2004). Partnership programs in U.S. schools: Their development and relationship to family involvement outcomes. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement, 15*(2), 125-148.
- Shen, Y., & Peterson, G. (1999). *Effect of chinese parental practices on their adolescent children's school performance, moderated by student's conformity to parents, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.*
- Shumow, L., & Lomax, R. (2002). Parental efficacy: Predictor of parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes. *Parenting: Science & Practice, 2*(2), 127.
- Simon, B. S. (2001). Family involvement in high school: Predictors and effects. *National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin, 85*(627), 8.
- Simon, B. S. (2004). High school outreach and family involvement. *Social Psychology of Education, 7*(2), 185-209.
- Simon, B. S. (2001). *Predictors of high school and family partnerships and the influence of partnerships on student success. Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 61*(10), 3949-A.
- Smith, J. G. (2006). Parental involvement in education among low-income families: A case study. *School Community Journal, 16*(1), 43-56.

- Smith, M., & Mathur, R. (2009). Children's imagination and fantasy: Implications for development, education, and classroom activities. *Research in the Schools, 16*(1), 52-63.
- Sood, N. (2003). *Management of School Education in India*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.
- Stake, R. (1995). The art of case study research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Stevenson, D. L., & Baker, D. P. (1987). The family-school relation and the child's school performance. *Child Development, 58*(5), 1348. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.ep8591320
- Stewart, E. B. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 40*(2), 179-204.
- Stouffer, B. (1992). We can increase parent involvement in secondary schools. *NASSP Bulletin, 76*, 5-8.
- Sui-Chu, E., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *Sociology of Education, 69*(2), 126-141.
- Sung, H., & Padilla, A. M. (1998). Student motivation, parental attitudes, and involvement in the learning of asian languages in elementary and secondary schools. *The Modern Language Journal, 82*(2), 205-216.
- Swick, K. J. (1988). Parental efficacy and involvement: Influences on children. *Childhood Education, 65*(1), 37-38,40,42.
- Thakur, A.S., & Berwal, S. (2008). *Development of Educational System in India*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Tilak, B,G,J.,(2008). *Financing of Secondary Education in India*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Thornburg, K. R. (1981). Attitudes of secondary principals, teachers, parents and students toward parent involvement in the schools. *High School Journal, 64*(4), 150-53.
- Trusty, J. (1999). Effects of eighth-grade parental involvement on late adolescents' educational expectations. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 32*(4), 224-33.
- U.S.Department of Education. (2011). *U.S.Department Of Education*. Retrieved April 10, 2011, from <http://www.ed.gov/>: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/faq/supporting-family.pdf>
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2004). *World Population to 2300*. Retrieved May 1, 2011, from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/longrange2/WorldPop2300final.pdf>
- Van Voorhis, F., & Sheldon, S. (2004). Principals' roles in the development of US programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *International Journal of Educational Research, 41*(1), 55-70. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2005.04.005
- Voorhis, F. L. V. (2001). Interactive science homework: An experiment in home and school connections. *National Association of Secondary School Principals.NASSP Bulletin, 85*(627), 20.
- Waldbart, A., Meyers, B., & Meyers, J. (2006). Invitations to families in an early literacy support program. *Reading Teacher, 59*(8), 774-785.
- Walker, J. M. T., Wilkins, A. S., Dallaire, J. R., Sandler, H. M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2005). Parental involvement: Model revision through scale development. *Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 85-104.
- Watkins, T. J. (1997). Teacher communications, child achievement, and parent traits in parent involvement models. *Journal of Educational Research, 91*(1), 3-14.

- Weaver, R. R., & Qi, J. (2005). Classroom organization and participation: College students' perceptions. *Journal of Higher Education, 76*(5), 570.
- Weiss, H. B., Mayer, E., Kreider, H., Vaughan, M., Dearing, E., Hencke, R., & Pinto, K. (2003). Making it work: Low-income working mothers' involvement in their children's education. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(4), 879-901.
- Wheeler, P. (1992). Promoting parent involvement in secondary schools. *NASSP Bulletin, 76*, 28-35.
- Whitten, J., & Murray Board of Education, KY Murray, Head Start. (1990). *Parents as leaders: Self-efficacy study. final report.*
- World Bank. (2010). India Economic Update. Retrieved May 1, 2011, from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INDIAEXTN/Resources/295583-1268190137195/India_Economic_Update_June_23_2010.pdf
- Xu, J. Z. (2004). Family help and homework management in urban and rural secondary schools. *Teachers College Record, 106*(9), 1786-1803.
- Yerroju, B., (2003). Basic Education: Making it Work for the Poor Experiences from the South. In NIEPA, Globalization and Challenges for Education. Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and method. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and method. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Yonezawa, S., & Oakes, J. (1999). Making parents partners in the placement process. *Educational Leadership, 56*(7), 33-36.
- Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992). Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*(3), pp. 663-676.