Building the Bond Between Families and Schools

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Abstract

Research has shown that parents in today's society face many obstacles. Many parents have increasing struggles to raise children while earning a living. The more social and political forces parents have to contend with the more the stability of the family structure is threatened (Shonkoff, J.P., Phillips, D.A. (eds). 2000).

There seems to be a chain reaction in our community. As the difficulties in parenting increase so do the difficulties in teaching students. Our community is in need of cohesive programs that will alleviate some of the pressures parents encounter by providing them with programs that will help them rise above societal pitfalls, tap into their community's resources, attain empowerment and help their families and children.

Many efforts to design programs for parents who are ethnic minorities are hampered because of a lack of understanding of the cultural background of the people who are to be served. Powell, Zambrana, and Silva-Palacios (1990) found that programs for parents are better received and have a greater effect when the people they are designed for have more contribution in the design. This research has reached out to parents of students at Park Avenue school to identify some of the challenges these families face. The staff and parents of Park Avenue school have worked together to begin to create systems of support to address these needs.
The findings of this study show that parents express a need for after school care, especially for their children. During the various stages of creating both the Parent Teacher Organization and its after school program, parents' reaction and degree of participation indicates a willingness to collaborate with school staff and take advantage of programs that the school provides.
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Building the Bond Between Families and Schools/

by
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Introduction

She walks into her busy classroom and, without hesitation, hurriedly hangs her things in the coat closet. Her hair is unkempt and her light blue uniform blouse is gray with dirt. A white streak of dried drool lines the corner of her mouth and cheek telling tales of a missed bath and teeth brushing. She walks over to where the teacher is working with a group of children and almost repentantly, says "Good Morning." The teacher secretly glances up at the clock before replying. It was almost 10:00 a.m., only a half-hour remained in the Language Arts period. The teacher tells her to join her center group and asks another child to explain the directions for the current activities. The little girl goes over to her group but is clearly detached from the other children...

The teacher referred to in the above vignette is me, and the little girl one of my former students. Her situation is illustrative of too many other students I have taught and presumably will teach over the years. I have been a teacher of kindergarten and first grade for four years at Park Avenue School in Orange, New Jersey. In my experience teaching in an early childhood classroom, I have found that there is a huge margin between the achievements of children in my class whose parent/caregiver assists them at home and those who evidently may not receive as much support and attention from a parent/caregiver. The Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC), (2007) explains that a caregiver’s “primary role is providing sustenance, stimulation, support, structure, and surveillance.” For the purpose of this research, the definition of a caregiver is expanded to one
who gives nourishment, love, emotional and developmental support, to a child by providing a stable environment where a child can grow, play and learn safely.

In the process of this study many models to collaborating with and families were researched and taken into consideration in order to find the best approach to be used within Park Avenue School. The FSPC’s approach of family strengthening served a major tool in guiding the action taken as a result of this study.

The FSPC is an initiative of the National Human Services Assembly. “The FSPC serves as a focal point for research, information dissemination, and advocacy on place - based, practice - driven family strengthening practices, programs, and policy.” The center publishes policy briefs as a major information tool in “advancing the family strengthening approach as a model that produces meaningful results for families and children.”

(http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/practices.html7)

In addition to teaching, classroom teachers are overburdened with many responsibilities. My foremost concern is, of course, the well-being, happiness, and academic success of every child I teach. Naturally, during the time I spend working with each of my students, it is necessary to form a partnership with their families. Some relationships are stronger than others are. I make a deliberate attempt to become familiar with the family of each of my students. From the first day of school when I meet my parents I inform my parents of my open door policy and they are always welcome to drop in and check on their child’s progress
throughout the day. There are some parents whom after that first day of school or “Back to School Night,” I will never see throughout the year. For example, one of my current students, Kimani’s mother is a parent of four. Kimani is six years old; she has two older siblings and a younger brother who is in daycare. Her mother works full time and attends school. It is apparent that Kimani gets little support at home. She attends the afterschool program in the same facility where her brother attends day care, so that her mother can pick them both up at the same time after work. Her mother relies on the counselors at the after school program to assist Kimani with her homework. Many times her homework comes back to school incomplete or disheveled. The homework folder is sent home every day with homework, corrected homework, completed class assignments, and notices for parents. My classroom policy is that it be checked, notices and marked assignments be removed and completed each night and be returned the next morning with completed homework. Kimani’s folder is seldom checked as it is always overflowing with notices and corrected work. Sometimes the homework folder does not come back at all. Sometimes she comes to school with no book bag at all. She comes to school late every morning and goes weeks sometimes months without her hair being combed. One might say this is a case of bad parenting or neglect but because I know Kimani’s mother’s hardships, I can take into consideration all the factors that contribute to this situation and make an extra effort to alleviate the stress on Kimani. Instead of punishing her for missing assignments, I give her time during recess to complete them. I make an extra effort to call Kimani’s mother to let her inform her of her child’s progress or lack
of because I know she has time management issues. This is one of the many reasons I prefer to have direct communication with my students’ parents and cut out the intermediaries, such as the school secretary, by giving my students parents my personal cell phone number. My approach in working with children and their families is that we are partners and I constantly remind my student’s parents when they stop in the classroom or when I speak to them on the phone that I am available at any time for anything concerning their child. This gesture though small allows me access to get to know the parents of my students and their family’s situations. Sometimes I realize that a child’s behavior is not a direct result of events in the classroom but an indirect effect from situations in the home. There are times when I have to step outside the role of a classroom teacher and become a friend to some of my parents by simply providing a listening ear or an encouraging word. Parents and teachers have profound effects on children’s lives. The goals set by the teacher for promoting positive behavior, social development and educating a student should be aligned with the goals that parents set for the child. When all individuals come together to partner in serving the child’s best interest, parenting, teaching and student learning are more successful.

Background

For the past three years the students and staff of Park Avenue School formerly Park Avenue Elementary School, have been displaced. While we awaited the conclusion of construction on our school building to facilitate our transition from a k-6 school to a k-8 school, grades 1-6 were relocated across town to an old Catholic school building, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. The two
kindergarten classes including mine were housed in trailers at Forest Street School campus on the west end of Orange. The preschool class was at another school in the district. During this transition, I taught kindergarten during the first year, I was moved to Mt. Carmel to teach first grade the second year, and the following year I was moved back to Forest Street School to teach kindergarten. I am currently a Kindergarten teacher at Park Avenue School. To facilitate the relocation, students were bused from a central pick up site near Park Avenue to the surrounding schools. It is important to mention that Mt. Carmel, where the majority of the student body was being taught, is about five miles from Park Avenue and the area where our students and their families live. Families that did not own transportation had to cross a major freeway to access the school. The relocation resulted in many difficulties for staff, students and their parents. However, one of the most crucial effects of the move was a loss in parent support and involvement. While teachers had become accustomed to taking advantage of informal conferencing with parents during morning drop-offs and afternoon pick-ups, we now felt as if we were lucky to meet the parents of new students and barely saw others. School programs were very scantily attended and staff morale was low. This is not to say that lack of parent involvement and collaboration between professionals and families was a non-existent problem prior to the move. On the contrary, Park Avenue’s Parent Teacher Association has been inactive for over four years. However, it was not until the move that the problem became severely evident and stakeholders, staff and parents alike, began to feel the impact and voice their concern.
In September of 2009 after a one-year delay, the building was finally complete. The staff was reunited and we were able to move back “home.” But this is by no means the happy ending to this story. With the opening of the newer, bigger facility, we were still faced with several issues. How do we get parents back on board? How do we motivate teachers and administrators to extend themselves to families? How do we come together as professionals, parents, caregivers and a community to utilize our building in the most efficient way to benefit our students? As a teacher I am a direct observer of some of the factors that influence the problems we face at Park Avenue when it comes to parental involvement. I thought it was important to find research that would inform this study as to whether there are trends among these issues or were these issues indigenous to my school community?

According to a study conducted by Allen, Engelking, Hoadley, and Thompson (1997), among 300 parent interviewees, the majority believed that school administrators did not want their opinions on policies, decisions or school activities. The interviews also divulged that parents wanted to be “respected” by teachers and would like their suggestions to be received “more graciously” (pp. 22-24).

When parents show an interest in their child’s school, students are more likely to get better grades and higher test scores, graduate from high school, go on to higher education, and are more disciplined. Strong parental involvement is
positively associated with a child's readiness and success in school, school attendance, and positive attitudes toward education.

(http://www.njpirc.org/parentinvolvement.shtml)

In a study titled Parents as problems or parents as people? Parental involvement programs, school and adult educators, (Journal of Lifelong Education, 2001), Lynn Tett makes a controversial but important point. Tett points out that people are quick to recognize that schools cannot solely bear the responsibility of meeting the intellectual, social and emotional needs of all children, especially those in low-income areas. However, parents cannot be expected to meet all of a child's needs alone either. "As long as the responsibility for monitoring children's schooling rests on individual parents, usually mothers, and is not shared with school officials, teachers and social services, then working class and poor children's school success will be compromised" (Tett, 2001). This argument emphasizes the need for building a bond between families and schools for the educational success of children.

Context of Study

Before delving into the specific problems we are met with, it is necessary to outline the sociopolitical context of the community in Orange. During the year the school facilitator surveys every homeroom class to record the native countries as well as the home languages of each student. The data is reported to the New Jersey Department of Education and published under the school report card. Orange is an increasingly multi-ethnic city. In Orange there are mainly four groups of ethnic minorities:
1. African–Americans

2. Hispanic immigrants – a wide population from countries such as Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru and Costa Rica

3. Immigrants from African countries – many of whom have the advantage of being bilingual when they enter school and are able to speak both in their native tongue as well as English without the assistance of ESL programs

4. West Indian immigrants; of which a large population are French – Creole speakers from Haiti many of whom speak a broken English are from islands such as, Trinidad and St. Vincent, and the South American territory of Guyana (see Appendix A Demographics)

(http://education.state.nj.us/rc/nclb08/reports/13/3880/NJASK-LAL-120.html)

Problem Statement

As professionals who are invested and passionate about our roles in the lives of the children we serve, teachers are rightfully frustrated when meetings are held and a minimal number of parents attend or when notices sent home pile up in students’ book bags. When this happens parents can appear to be disinterested in their children’s education. Many parents/caregivers in low-income areas either do not possess the adequate skills or have not come to terms with their need for help and support services (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Barshinger, Schaller, & Rocha, 2007; Fraenkel, 2006; Miller, & Anderson, 1996; Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2005). In certain cases teachers grow resentful because they feel forced to take on responsibilities they believe should be carried by the parents/caregivers and families.
The majority of parents care about their child and understands the importance of successful education. As a classroom teacher at Park Avenue it is difficult to look beyond the obvious; unkempt children, incomplete homework, poor attendance, or a parent who does not initiate communication, to see that there may be underlying issues. As in the case of my students Kimani, it is not that her parent does not care about her, but she has difficulty in juggling all her responsibilities with limited resources. Based on not only my experience, but also as a result of collaboration with my co-workers, in particular the school social worker, I believe that many of Park Avenue parents want their children to succeed in school but do not understand what the effort entails. Many of them are preoccupied with trying to straighten out their own lives, have limited education, or do not understand the requirements of today’s education system.

Research supports that parent/caregiver inaction often stems from frequent inequalities in our society. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2001) describes the following as “serious challenges” to parent/caregivers ability to raise children while earning a living:

- Difficulties in juggling family and employment responsibilities.
- Persistent economic hardships that undermine health and thwart child and youth development.
- The cumulative impact of multi-generalization health and development disparities for some racial and ethnic minority groups.
- Increases in parent/caregivers’ employment resulting in greater use of child care, including substandard providers.
- A significant decline in children living in two parent families, who tend to have better health and school outcomes than peers in single-parent families (in part due to differences in socio-economic resources). (p.8)
Teacher attitude also plays a critical role in parent involvement in our school. In her article, Leaning forward or bending backwards: Cultural reciprocity in working with families, Beth Harry, (1997) states: “I believe the sorest spots appear when we’re trying to work with families who look very different from ourselves. The spots that hurt most are those that reflect deeply held beliefs” Harry goes onto say that we come to view our personal beliefs (be it about religion, society or in the case of this study, child rearing) as “universal truths” (p.62-63).

I think Harry’s theory is reflected in many of the issues we face at Park Avenue. As teachers, we often experience barriers with students who have difficulties in class. Whether the child is struggling in a subject area, has poor attendance or fails to turn in homework assignments, when teachers reach out to parents they sometimes feel dissatisfied with the response. Often times they complain they are not getting the support they need. However, I believe that lack of reciprocity sometimes stems from the delivery of the communication. At times we as teachers approach parents with an opinion already formulated. We may think we already have all the answers and our plea for help may feel like criticism or complaints to parents. This frame of mind makes it difficult for us to listen to beliefs that differ from ours without instinctively viewing them as wrong. As teachers and professionals, we often have preconceived notions and stereotypes, which make us quick to judge but slow to empathize. These problems create an agitated atmosphere among teachers and parents.
In light of the problems at Park Avenue School community and others with similar demographics; research suggests a unique, collaborative, and somewhat complex approach in efforts to make a positive change in the lives of parents/caregivers, families and ultimately children (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Barshinger, Schaller, & Rocha, 2007; Fraenkel, 2006; Miller, & Anderson, 1996; Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2005 Tett, L., 2001). In both my personal experience and informal research it appears as though the problem of parental involvement is recognized but many of the underlying variables are not fully taken into consideration. Perhaps the most evident example of this is students’ failure to turn in homework. In many cases these students are left on their own or with an older sibling after school to complete their homework while their parents are at work. Sometimes the parents do not understand the homework because education methods are continuously changing over time or due to another language spoken at home. These are areas where our parents need support services. However, often when professionals plan programs at school they do not consult the group of people they are targeting. Then parents are thought of as uncaring when there are low turnouts. If we look even closer at this example we may find that the hours planned for such programs may not be convenient or adequate notice was not given for the working population of parents.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to access the attitudes and concerns of parents/caregivers at Park Avenue School. So that we (parents, family members, educators, service professionals, and members of the community) can collaborate in the design of support programs that will assist them in self-efficacy and ultimately provide them with opportunities to become more involved in the lives of their children. Thus this research will be conducted among self-selected participants.

The following questions guide this research:

1. Do parents believe there is a need to increase parental involvement and support programs at Park Avenue School?
2. What programs and support services are already available to parents/caregivers, if any?
3. Are parents willing to collaborate with the school to support the success of such programs?
4. What types of support services do parents feel they need?

Literature Review

Parent Involvement

Parental Involvement encompasses many meanings in educational, psychological and social research. For this research Parental Involvement can be defined by the following characteristics borrowed from Abdul-Adil & Farmer’s (2006) framework:
• Attitudinal components of parental involvement - such as parent/caregiver’s aspirations for and expectations of children

• Behavioral components of parental involvement - parental assistance with home work or attendance at parent-teacher conferences and school functions

• General parenting style, such as parent child interaction

The contribution that parents make and the role they play in a child’s life is one that cannot be compared to any other entity in society. Although schools play an essential role in educating children, schools need parents and parents need schools to ensure the success of every child. But many of today’s families face great challenges in childrearing as they try to balance careers and raising their children. It is time that both parents and professionals end the blame game and work towards understanding and finding common solutions. If professionals can take time out to understand the needs, as well as the culture, strengths and aspiration of the families they serve then perhaps it would inform the design of more lucrative programs promoting parent involvement and success. (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Anderson & Miller, 1996; Barshinger, Rocha-Ogelsby, & Schaller, 2008, Fraenkel, 2006; Powell, Silvia-Palacios, & Zambrana, 1990, & Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2007).

**Why Our Parents Matter**

Parents influence positive child and youth development. “Parents matter because when parenting is at its best children thrive. Children grow and thrive in the context of close and dependable relationships that provide love and
nurturance, security, responsive interaction, and encouragement for exploration” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p.7). Parental Involvement (its importance, its deficiency, programs and strategies for generating it) is extensively researched in schools not only across the nation but also in countries such as the Netherlands, Britain, China, and Africa (Bakker, 2007; Chen, 2007; Morland, 2007, & Peterson, 2007). Many of these studies have shown that positive parental involvement in schools is one of the fundamentals of positive student outcomes. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) conducted an evaluation of contemporary parental involvement research and programs among inner city African American parents in Chicago. The authors found that program strategies focusing on themes of empowerment, that helped parents access resources available within their own community were most promising. Abdul-Adil and Farmer also concluded that, “In particular, strong parental involvement is positively associated with a child’s readiness and success in school, school attendance, positive attitudes toward education, and entry into post-secondary education” (p.2). Research indicates that not only does parental involvement have a positive influence on children’s learning and cognitive development but, parental involvement has the ability to enhance school effectiveness (Bastiani, 1993; Epstein, 1992; Golby, 1993; Hornby, 1995; Mortimore, Lewis & Ecob 1988; Munn, 1993; Ng 1999).

Understanding Today’s Family

The Family Strengthening Policy Center cite Kali & DeLeire, (2004) who explain that parenting is a “complex interplay between the child, the family and the broader social environment” (p. 5). A myriad of social forces have an
influence on families and parents. The FSPC places the family in a Macro System. (see Appendix B) The ecological model provides four levels of environments based on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (1979)

1. Microsystems
2. Mesosytems- (Primary Environments)
3. Exosytems – (Local Context)
4. Macro System

In the text, Building Family, Schools, and Community, Partnerships (Hartle, Stegelin, and Wright, 2007) the authors also use this ecological model, (Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model, 1979) to explain parent - school relationships. (see Appendix C) The model helps us to understand the interconnecting forces in a child’s life and how they come into play in our educational setting. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory provides a model that emphasizes the importance of the parent-school connection. The premise of this theory is to view the child’s world as being made up of a chain of “nested structures” (Hartle, Stegelin, and Wright, 2007, p.19).

The microsystem refers to relationships between the child and the immediate environment, the mesosystem to connections among the child’s immediate settings, the exosystem to settings that affect but do not contain the child and the macrosystem to the broader cultural context in which development takes place (p.19).

A good example of a microsystem would be the nuclear family; or the homes of extended family members. Relationships that develop between the child and these microsystems are referred to as mesosystems; such as the school, the babysitter or day care setting, and the church. Here it is evident that the schools
and the childcare setting are a vital support system for the family. A prime example of an exosystem would be a Board of Education, the parent's work place, and other community and governmental agencies. The decisions made by a Board of Education directly affect the child in his school setting. For example the Orange Board of Education members stipulate everything from school breakfast and lunch to curriculum to afterschool programs. For working parent's their salary and hours of work determine how much time they spend with their children and often the quality of life they can provide for their children.

_The Parent Involvement Challenge_

"In recent decades the American Family has undergone many changes, in part due to social and political forces in the macro system" (Family Strengthening Policy Center 2007; Stegelin, Hartle, and Wright, 2007). Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) define parental involvement as any parental attitudes, behaviors, styles, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioral success in their currently enrolled school. The National Educational Longitudinal Study was a major longitudinal survey designed to provide critical data on the transitioning period for students from middle school to high school and from high school to post secondary institutions or the work force. The base year for the survey was 1998 with follow-ups conducted through the year 2000. To provide enriched data samples not only students but also teachers, parents, peers, and school administrators were included. The survey reported on a broad range of topics including home experiences, neighborhood characteristics, and schoolwork.
Surveys from the National Education Longitudinal Study (1998) found that inner-city African American parents reported lower overall rates of parental involvement across a range of different activities in comparison to their European American counterparts (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). The results suggest that African American parents are disinterested or detached from their children’s educational success. “Consequently, an ‘urban legend’ of apathy has emerged among disappointed and often frustrated researchers and professionals that inner-city African American parental involvement is an extremely difficult task” (Abdul-Adil, Farmer 2006, p.4).

It is possible that the model for parent involvement endorsed by these schools is not culturally compatible with the population’s beliefs and practices. A 1990 study by Powell, Silvia-Palacios, and Zambrana, interviewed 121 low-income Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American mothers regarding their preferred methods and content of a parent education program. The study found that, “Efforts to design programs for ethnic minorities is hampered by the limited amount of empirical data on the program preferences of different populations” (p.298). In other words, schools were not able to design efficient programs for parents because they had no knowledge of their cultural and social needs.

Culture seemed to be one of the major themes developed across much of the research reviewed. Bakker, Denessen, and Gierveld conducted a study among the immigrant parents and principals of schools with a high multi-ethnic population. The research found that the two main barriers to getting parents more
involved were language problems and cultural differences between the families and school personnel. “Culture differences within parent communities provide challenges for schools trying to develop a successful parental involvement policy” (Bakker, Denessen, and Gierveld, 2007, p. 27). In many cases addressing the needs and customs of diverse families can be taxing on school staff (Bakker et. al., 2007). Over time barriers created by the school or by parents can lead to frustration and thus reduce the rate of parental involvement. Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) found that parents felt meeting content did not reflect parent concerns, and school personnel were perceived as condescending. Ami and Nir (2005) state that although teachers and school personnel “claim they are interested in parent involvement, the type of involvement they typically have in mind is quite limited in scope” (p.57).

As in the ecological model of parenting previously referred to, all research reviewed confirms that children in low income families are increasingly at risk of falling into poverty due to federal-state reforms of cash assistance, food and child care programs and other vital services. These families are considered to be “at risk” because of societal oppression. For example, unemployment, low wages, lack of affordable high-quality child-care, unaffordable health care, the availability of safe and affordable housing all affect the stability, function and well-being of parent/caregivers and families (Anderson & Miller, 1996; Barshinger, Schaller, & Rocha, 2007; Fraenkel, 2006; Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2007). Hartle, Stegelin, and Wright, (2007) summarize this socio-
political effect on the child explaining, “Issues that affect parents also affect children; the parent who is stressed has children who are also stressed” (p.14).

A longitudinal study of Mexican immigrant mothers of young children in the AVANCE-Dallas early childhood intervention program demonstrates that despite their own lack of education parents often have positive attitudes and high aspirations for their children’s education (Barshinger et. al. 2006). AVANCE – Dallas surveyed 59 Mexican immigrant mothers with low levels of education; 91% of the participants did not complete grades 1-6 in the 1970’s. They also offered parenting classes to mothers of students in their early childhood program classes on mother-child interaction and playtime activities that taught developmental skills. The study concluded that parents in at risk populations did not lack positive attitudes about their child’s schooling and education. However, they were hindered by the lack of knowledge on how to successfully impart their ambitious attitudes on their children. Through qualitative interviewing the study found that positive attitudes among Mexican immigrant mothers can overcome the effects of their low education levels. “Higher levels of parental involvement produce higher levels of literacy especially in children of low educated moms” (pp.351-354).

Research suggests that meeting the challenges brought on by changes in the political climate and our multicultural society requires schools to take a new approach to parental involvement (Barshinger et.al 2006; Powell et. al., 1990). Undoubtedly strong families exist across all racial and socio-economic classes. The challenge is to find effective ways to get families involved in our schools.
In order to build the bridge between our schools and our families we as teachers and administrators must be willing to engage in a circular process of cultural transmission. In his book, Teachers as Cultural Workers, acclaimed author Paulo Freire (1998) reaches out to teachers in an effort to get us to look more closely at how children learn. His theory states that in order to be successful, educators must look more closely at the many social, cultural, and economic factors that influence how a student learns in the classroom. In his Eighth Letter to Teachers and Educators; Cultural Identity and Education, Freire states,

“In consequence, it is absolutely necessary that educators act in a way consistent with their choice – which is political – and furthermore that educators be ever more scientifically competent, which teaches them how important it is to know the concrete world in which their students live, the culture in which their students’ language, syntax, semantics, and accent are found in action in which certain habits, likes, beliefs, fears, desires are formed that are not necessarily easily accepted in teachers’ own worlds” (1998, p. 72).

For teachers at Park Avenue similar communities to succeed in working with children and their families we need to consider the societal factors that influence our students culture and that of their families. In order to consider these factors we should be well informed of what they are.

The FSPC (2005) reviews three groups of societal disparities that put low income families at risk. Compared to higher income families lower income families tend to:

1. Have social networks that are less helpful in connecting parent/caregivers to community resources that can build family assets.
2. Experience higher levels of stress over meeting basic needs.
3. Live, learn, and work in environments that have fewer family supports. (p.8)
Parents’ /caregivers’ attributes are considered as one set of risks because the wellbeing and health of a parent have a great impact on parent effectiveness or lack thereof, with secondary effects on children and youth. Risks increase for families when parents/caregivers:

- are adolescents or are otherwise immature – “One example is teenage pregnancy. Its associated difficulties affect multiple generations regardless of income.”
- are parenting without a partner, lack a support network with extended family or have a significant change in major adult relationship (such as divorce or remarriage).
- suffer from depression, psychological distress, or substance abuse.
- have limited literacy skills or low educational attainment.
- experience social isolation.
- have unrealistic expectations of their children’s capabilities or unproductive beliefs about childrearing. (p.9)

The Opportunity

The research reviewed gives suggestions, strategies, models, and plans for creating collaborative parent/family support programs. The strategies of empowerment, advocacy, and leadership are echoed throughout the research.

America’s Promise Alliance is a cross-sector partnership of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations dedicated to forging strong and effective partnerships among schools, parents and communities. The alliance is committed to helping children experience the fundamental resources they need to succeed. The Alliance mission is to fulfill “Five Promises” for children in America - (caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education and opportunities to help others) – at home, in school and out in the community.

(http://www.americaspromise.org/About-the-Alliance/Mission.aspx)
According to the America’s Promise Alliance website, empowerment can be achieved when schools partner with community agencies. Schools and communities need to create programs where parents can both receive services and volunteer their services. Collaboration such as this supports families and children and builds trust. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are a good example of an organization that can encourage and help establish strategic partnerships that focus on getting better results for students and families. PTAs are an important resource for parental leadership. PTAs not only provide parents with opportunities to voice their goals for their children’s education, but they also give them a platform where they can express their needs and hopes and receive support from the school community. PTAs can then assist schools in responding to the needs of parents and families by spearheading initiatives in the form of personal outreach or parent led programs.

(https://www.americaspromise.org/~media/Resources/Community%20Schools%20Engaging%20Parents%20and%20Families.ashx)

Candice Anderson and Laurie Miller conducted a report for the 1995 Child Care Action Campaign national audio conference. The report reflected on “approaches to empowering parents through developing support, leadership, advocacy and activism.” Miller described three successful parental programs; the Parent Service Project in California, the Parent Leadership Institute in Connecticut and the Parents United for Child Care out of Massachusetts. Miller reports that “parents can become effective agents for change and they often pursue a similar path: first, by helping their own children; second, by recognizing
the interest they share in common with other parents; and third, by taking in an increasingly active role in programs, institutions and public policies that directly affect their lives” (1996, p. 3).

*What This Means for Park Avenue School Families*

The objective of this research is to gather information about programs that would better support the parents/caregivers of our students. The information parents volunteer has driven and informed recommendations. It is my hope that these recommendations will encourage Orange Board of Education administrators and Park Avenue teachers and administrators to invest more efforts to empower our students’ parents/caregivers through education, outreach and the provision of more after school programs so that they can become advocates for their children, and form strong collaborations between parents and the school.

*Research Methods*

Empirical data indicates that the best practices for successful parental involvement and support programs that benefit both parents/caregivers and children take on a collaborative approach that considers the needs, concerns, goals, experiences, and cultural identity of parents/caregivers and family (Anderson & Miller, 1996). This research takes on a collaborative approach with Park Avenue School staff and parents so that programming will be responsive to parents’ needs and interests.

Research findings provide models for the design of such parental programs. Anderson and Miller (1996) describe the experiences of a parent program, The Parent Service Project (PSP) of California. The program uses childcare centers in
San Francisco to provide childcare and essential services to approximately 180 children and working parents. "The center staff emphasizes meeting parents’ needs, because parents who satisfy their own needs are better able to take care of their children" (p.4). The idea for this study emerged from the difficulties teachers and students experience in the classroom when they feel a lack of support from parents/caregivers. Once we begin to question the reason for the gap between families and schools we discover that parents may also feel their needs are not supported. The philosophy behind the PSP parental programs served as a critical influence in planning this study.

The PSP allows parents to make their own choices about workshops and other activities that will help them. At the beginning of each year the center hosts a "wish night" event where staff invites parents to become acquainted with each other and discuss desires for their families for the coming year. The parents involved in the PSP choose leadership. A small group of parents is chosen to sit on a Parent Action Council (PAC). The PAC meets regularly to organize programs and program finances.

I chose to follow this method in designing responsive programs for Park Avenue School parents by beginning with forming a Parent Teacher Organization. In an effort to promote collaboration between parents and teachers and empower parents as leaders we launched a Parent Teacher Organization Membership drive. Encouraging parents to become members of the PTO is important to this study because the PTO is a vehicle for parents/caregivers to become more involved in the school. In order for parents/caregivers to participate in school planning as well
as the design of programs that respond to their needs, I believe it was necessary for parents to be represented by an organized voice. In anticipation of the discussions and programs that have emerged from this study the PTO has been a catalyst in building the bond between families and the school by forming partnerships with teachers, establishing common goals with other parents and advocating for the needs of their children.

Fraenkel, (2006) presents a 10 step research-based model for collaborative family program development, referred to as the Collaborative Family Program Development (CFPD) approach. I have modified and used some of the steps in this approach as the framework for this research. The CFPD approach begins with:

- Forming the collaborative professional relationships and engaging cultural consultants
- Intensive interviewing of parents/caregivers/family members
- Creating program formats and contents and writing an initial manual

Considering the recommendations from the CFPD approach I have begun forming collaborative professional relationships by enlisting the expertise of the school social worker and several experienced teachers vested in the community (Fraenkel, 2006 & Barshinger, 2007). Whether through serving as family advocates or volunteering time in working with students, these professionals continuously express their passion and dedication by helping the children and community we service. I have worked with these colleagues on several parent involvement programs and after discussing the objective of this study and my
plans for research they were very willing to come on board. After several discussions we were able to come up with recommendations of several parents who would be able to serve as Co-Principal Investigators. As a result of their suggestions, I have also enlisted two parents who are always concerned with their children's progress and are constantly involved and in attendance at Park Avenue student programs. We all share the philosophy of reaching our children through their parents and families. The parents and other professionals who form the collaborative team are the Co – principal Investigators who also make up the research team. Each person has drawn from their experiences within the school and the community to identify some of the problems that parents and teachers are facing when it comes to working in unison at Park Avenue School.

Participants

This study attempts to gain the voluntary responses of approximately 250 participants. As teacher action research, this study seeks to develop an understanding of parents/caregivers of students at Park Avenue School, by accessing their voices, because they are the stakeholders.

The participants in this study were the parents/caregivers of students at Park Avenue School where, according to the school Report Card on the New Jersey Department of Education website, the vast majority of students are African American or Black. The report does not give specific percentages for other populations such as Hispanic. Therefore, it is hard to accurately give demographic details for the student population. However, as a teacher and active observer in the school we can assume that a great remainder of the population is Hispanic.
The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. They were simply asked if they wished to participate in the study and given an explanation of the study’s goals, benefits and minimal adverse effects. They were also given consent forms that explained their rights as participants. Exactly 200 parents/caregivers gave their consent by completing the questionnaires. In order to protect the identity of parent volunteers the questionnaire did not ask parents to volunteer their race.

Data Collection

While Fraenkel (2006) suggests incorporating open ended interviews as methods for data collection methods, as a teacher-investigator conducting research among a parent population, time constraints made it very difficult to attempt such an endeavor. The months from September through December are typically very busy months for both school professionals as well as parents. Both parents and teachers go from preparing for the opening of school, to getting to know our parents and students and assessing their needs, to preparing progress reports, to preparing report cards, and scheduling and attending parent-teacher conferences. Given the nature of this study, recruiting parents to volunteer and coordinating schedules for hours of intensive recorded interviewing seemed like a daunting task. Taking into consideration everyone’s anticipation at the start of the school year in a brand new facility we were anxious to begin programming. The start of the school year is when most parents/caregivers are mapping out their families’ schedules and arranging for childcare and extra-curricular activities. The research team felt that the first few months of school would be the most opportune time to meet with parents and get them on board.
Considering the time constraints, the research team decided to use a questionnaire to assess parents' needs instead of conducting intensive interviews with the parents. All parents and caregivers attending Park Avenue School's Back to School Night were given a consent form and questionnaire. In an effort to ensure full disclosure the Parent Co – Principal Investigators explained the purpose of the research, consent forms, and the questionnaire. Participants were given the option of completing the survey in a designated reception area or wherever they felt comfortable. The Parent Co-Principal Investigators informed the participants that to maintain anonymity they must not write their names on any forms. The forms were completed that night and placed in designated boxes. Members of the research team remained in the hallways and in the cafeteria where we were easily accessible for anyone who had questions or concerns.

*Data Collection Instrument*

An anonymous questionnaire (see Appendix D) was used to access the opinion of parents and families regarding programs they thought would support their increased involvement. In order to conduct the research justly, include all the willing participants the questionnaires, and consent forms were provided in English as well as French and Spanish, the two languages aside from English that are spoken by families at Park Avenue School. This questionnaire was an efficient method of research for this study because my purpose was to ascertain the needs of parents/caregivers and immediately respond to their needs by creating support programs. All documents in French were translated by Mrs. Baguidy – Lauture, the Park Avenue School certified social worker. She is a Haitian native and
studied French for 3 years to perfect her fluency. Mrs. Bella Gomez was the translator for documents in Spanish. She is a native of Ecuador and a certified Spanish teacher who has studied in several Spanish speaking countries and has taught the language for over ten years.

The questionnaire is comprised of two sections; Child Centered Activities and Parent Programs and Services. The program topics included on the questionnaire were driven based on recommendations from the parents on the research team as well as the school social worker, Mrs. Baguidy-Lauture, who functions in many capacities and has contact with every child and parent in the school. Mrs. Lauture serves as a liaison between parents and administrators, as well as students and parents. She supervises the academic, emotional and behavioral intervention referrals made by teachers for students. Parents often develop a personal and confidential relationship with her and she works diligently to provide them with various services and resources from counseling to job applications. She was able to highlight many of the issues that families face both in and outside of the educational system. Many of these societal concerns are linked to the research discussed in the literature review. On the questionnaire there are 11 specific activities for parents to choose from for their children. There were also two multiple choice questions regarding the duration of after school services and affordability if a cost is associated. The activity choices were based on several elements. As teachers and staff members at Park Avenue members of the research team have also served as advisors for clubs over several years. Therefore, we have come to know many of our students outside of the classroom.
and are familiar with many of their interests. In designing the questionnaire we also reflected on programs that had been offered at Park Avenue in the past and had positive responses from students, but were no longer being offered, such as basketball and choir. Lastly but of equal consideration, we needed to offer programs that could be facilitated by resources within our school community so that we could keep costs at a minimum. For example, a netball team could be run by the Physical Education teacher and Visual Arts club would be facilitated by the art teacher. We also looked at programs that were offered in other schools throughout the district and spoke to building principals regarding parent and student response. A karate program being run at Forest Street School was very successful and was offered to both students as well as their families. Offering homework help and tutoring was a vital program choice because so many parents complained of difficulty in assisting their children with homework and many teachers complained of homework non-compliance from their students. Newspaper Club/photojournalism and Book Club arose from a need to promote academic development as well as students’ strengths. Many of Park Avenue after school programs were solely focused on test-preparation. Over the years these programs were receiving lower student attendance. We wanted to suggest programs that would help students strengthen essential skills for testing but also encourage their talents and creativity.

Role as a teacher-investigator

Teacher research is initiated and carried out by teachers in their classrooms and schools. Teachers can use their inquiries to focus on analyzing
and solving problems they are trying to address in their own classrooms. (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

The foundation of this research is best demonstrated by Fraenkel (2006, p. 239), who cites Heron and Reason’s (1995) argument, “One can only do research with the persons in the true and fullest sense if what they do and what they experience as part of the research is to some significant degree directed by them. So persons can only properly study persons when they are in active relationship with each other.”

The major goal of this study is to access the opinions, interests and needs of the families at Park Avenue School. The ultimate goal is to create programs responsive to their needs. As teachers and school professionals, the members of the research team have authority over the children of the parents participating, thus creating the potential for coercion during data collection. To minimize coercion, I have designated the Parent Co – Principal Investigators, Vinnette Montague and Sylvia Garay, as additional parties who do not have authority over students. This was done in an effort to have parents’ opinion drive the planning of this research to ensure that parents who are the participants in the study did not feel coerced in any way because people who teach and issue grades to their children were conducting the study. Both individuals are fluent in English. Ms. Silvia Garay is a native of Ecuador and Spanish is her native language. Ms. Vinnette Montague is a native of Haiti and French is her native language. These individuals read the recruitment scripts (see Appendix E) as well as distribute the consent forms (see Appendix F) and questionnaire. The recruitment script was
used to address parents during a Back to School Night at Park Avenue School (in lieu of a wish night use in the PSP method) and if necessary any other parent meetings or school events where parents were in attendance.

Agreement to participate in the study was voluntary. All signatures and identifying information on consent forms were waived to protect the identity of participants. The Parent Co-Principal Investigators explained to participants that they were not being asked to write their name on anything. Parents and caregivers were not coerced or influenced to participate. They were allowed to act autonomously and to express their right of self-determination. Volunteers were informed about the research process through the informed consent process before participating in the survey. They were provided with all relevant information about the study, including the minimal risks and the benefits involved. Both the letter and questionnaire were provided in clear and simple language. The members of the research team who were persons of authority; Mrs. Baguidy-Lauture, Mrs. Bella Gomez and myself, were not present in the room during the completion of questionnaires but were on site to address questions and concerns and ensure that the information was understood. Participants were asked to return questionnaires by dropping them in separate designated locked box in a neutral area.

Data analysis

The questionnaire is comprised of two sections; Child Centered Activities and Parent Programs and Services. There are 11 specific activities for parents to
choose for their children and two multiple choice questions regarding the duration of after school services and affordability if a cost is associated. The responses to each question on the survey were tallied and then calculated into percentages based on the number of participants. The top three responses to the Parent Programs Services are currently being used by the school social worker, Guerdy Baguidy-Lauture to prioritize and determine the immediate needs for parent workshop topics. The data is presented through tables (see Appendix G). The findings were used to design and implement services to support caregivers, parents and their children.

Limitations of Study

This study was conducted among a particular community and culture however, research may be insufficient because the data analysis does not attempt to group participants by race or economic status. Therefore it is difficult to ascertain the needs of more specific cultural and social groups among the participants. The study would also have benefitted if the research team was able to conduct interviews with parents/caregivers. Their open ended responses may have resulted in a deeper understanding of parent opinions on the relationship between parents and the school.

Results

Based on the high number of respondents, (see Appendix G) it is evident that many Park Avenue School parents feel that there is a need for child centered programs that will support families. 86% of participants responded saying that
they needed after school homework help. 73% of participants chose karate, 68% said they would like their children to participate in dance, and 55% said they would like their children to participate in basketball and book club after school.

In September, the research team and members of the newly organized Park Avenue PTO met to discuss the most efficient and appropriate way to provide support in the form of an after school program that would be open to students in all grades. Option one was to outsource a program by entering into a contract with a local organization. The local YWCA was already contracted by the Orange Board of Education and currently runs after school programs in several schools in the district. Upon meeting with the director of youth programs the President of the PTO was dissatisfied with the option of partnering with the YWCA citing several reasons. The YWCA would only commit to providing the service if enrollment met their quota for children enrolled in the program. If the number of enrollments decreased at any time during the school year the YWCA based on their contract, would not continue to provide after school services for a limited number of children. The director of youth programs for the YWCA was unable to provide a written proposal outlining the nature of the program, possible activities and schedules for the course of the day in a timely manner. The PTO President, Tamika Withers, also approached the director of the East Orange Cultural Arts Center. Several members visited the site where we received a tour of the facility. The center offered enriching programs such as textile design and pottery, foreign language, computer technology classes, etc. The director was willing to oversee the operation of a similar program at Park Avenue. The
stipulations of the proposed agreement would be that East Orange Cultural Arts Center hire their own staff and designate the fees to be charged to parents.

A major disadvantage to outsourcing the after school program to any one of these organizations would be the need to acquire insurance. According to Mrs. Lauture who also serves as the PTO treasurer, the initial premium for an insurance policy for the after school program would cost approximately $1200.00 a month. Upon consulting with the building principal the PTO was informed that the insurance premium would not be paid for by the Orange Board of Education because it is not an expenditure that was accounted for in the school’s budget and the Board of Education was unwilling to take on the financial responsibility for an additional insurance policy solely for an after school program. Therefore parents would have to withstand the cost of the acquisition of an additional insurance policy which would result in higher tuition fees for the program.

The second option for creating an after school program at Park Avenue was for the PTO to be responsible for operating the program. This option had many advantages in comparison to sub-contracting. In the effort to cut the cost that would be accrued by parents the PTO would hire Park Avenue Para-professional staff, which would be paid at a substantially lesser pay rate than teachers. The PTO functions as a subsidiary of the Orange Board of Education. This partnership eliminates the need for an additional insurance policy because the participants of any programs being facilitated by the PTO are considered liabilities of the Board of Education, which is already insured for the school day and any extensions of the school day. Thus insurance fees would not be included
in the fees charged to parents. The partnership also helps to enhance relations between Park Avenue staff and parents of students that will participate in the program as well as parents who are involved members of the PTO.

The executive body of the PTO voted on the three options and decided that the best option for providing parents with a low cost quality program would be for the PTO to facilitate the after school program. The initial steps in launching the PTO after school program were the assessment of parent’s needs based on the collection and analysis of data in the form of the parent questionnaire, creating a budget (see Appendix H) that would allow the PTO to charge parents a substantially lower fee in comparison with day care providers in the area and finally obtaining approval and support from the Orange Board of Education.

Parent Responses

The responses that are highlighted are the needs that the PTO is best able to meet based on teacher and staff participation and financial resources. Mrs. Baguidy - Lauture, the guidance department, and members of the Parent Involvement Committee, including myself, are planning to work in unison to provide parents with workshops that they feel will enhance their everyday lives as well as the upbringing of their children. An important finding in the data is the need for domestic violence support as well as the need for a food pantry. Although only 14% of parents expressed the need for domestic violence support and just 11% said they needed food pantry services, these are two very important social concerns that should not be disregarded based on numbers. We must also
take into consideration the stigmatism associated with both issues in responding
to providing services to help our parents. Nearly one in seven households in the
United States went without food at some point during 2008.

(http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR83/ERR83fm.pdf)

According to the State of New Jersey Domestic Violence Report for the year
ending in 2008, there were 70,613 domestic violence offenses reported by the
police in 2008. Children were involved or present during 33 percent of all
domestic violence offenses occurring in 2008.


The next step in the process was coordinating the PTO after school
program with the other extended school day programs being offered to students
free of cost. The academic programs are being offered on Wednesdays and
Thursdays only, for students in grades kindergarten through 7th grade. Students in
grades 3 through 7th have an opportunity to participate in several social and
recreational clubs. These programs have been developed to provide tutorial
services and enrichment opportunities in reading, math writing and science as
well as recreation to enhance students’ academic achievement and social
development. All clubs meet once a week on either Tuesday or Friday. However,
students have the opportunity to join more than one club provided the clubs do not
meet on the same day. Only the students who are members of the club will be
permitted into the program area. Younger siblings must be supervised at all times
and will not be permitted to accompany their older siblings to program areas.
In planning the after school program the PTO had to take into consideration the needs parents expressed through the survey responses as well as the fact that club membership opportunities are only offered to students in higher grades. (see Appendix I) The students in primary grades would only participate in the extended school day programs on the Academic days, Wednesday and Thursday. This creates a greater need for after care. Not only for parents who had none or had difficulty obtaining day care services for their children during after school hours but also for parents who depend on older siblings to care for their younger siblings after school because the older siblings would be involved in clubs on days when there were no programs for the younger students. Since the study found that parents were in great need of homework help for their children it was decided that the after school program would focus foremost on providing homework assistance and tutoring to the children. A large number of participants also expressed the need for childcare after school, with 84% responding that they needed after school programs for their children until 6:00 p.m. 73% of participants said that they would be able to pay a weekly fee of $35.00 for after care services. As a result of this study and a united effort among teachers, school personnel and parents the PTO was able to submit a proposal to the Orange Board of Education. (See Appendix J) The proposal was prepared by Ms. Tamika Withers, PTO President in collaboration with the members of the research team. The program was approved by members of the board on October 13, 2009. The PTO after care program is called the “After School Clubhouse” started on
November 2, 2009 and is currently serving the parents/caregivers and students of Park Avenue School.

Conclusion

This study played a major role in the launching of the PTO After School Clubhouse. The study was used to inform the goals and many of the decisions made in the planning of the after school program.

The start of the program was met with much excitement from the parent/caregivers and I am very proud to see that we were able to create a program that responded to the needs of our parent/caregivers. It is safe to say that the goals of this study were fulfilled to some extent. However, the program has experienced many setbacks under its current supervisor. Some of the difficulties that have arisen are misuse of funds, lack of proper management, and poor customer service. These problems have resulted in loss of staff as well as a high decline in the initial number of students that were attending the program. It is disheartening to hear about many of the issues that the program has been experiencing after only four months of operation. I believe that if the program leaders maintained the goals and plans of operation that we (the research team and PTO) outlined many of these mishaps could have been avoided. For example, a number of problems arise when supervisors continuously deviate from the proposed schedule. Firstly, parents feel dissatisfied because they are not receiving the support services that they not only need, but pay a fee for. The environment becomes chaotic and some staff falter in their duties to serve the children in an atmosphere of disorganization and lack of effective leadership.
My greatest fear is that the program will fail under mismanagement. However, I try to remain optimistic in the thought that the people who are managing the program are committed to serving and assisting our Park Avenue families. The PTO afterschool program is a new venture and I suppose that many of these obstacles can benefit the program as learning experiences and will help improve the management of the program. Currently two of the research team members serve as Executive Board Members of the PTO. As the Principal Investigator, after the commencement of this study I am not directly involved in the program. However, I do serve as an informal liaison between parents who are customers of the PTO After School Clubhouse, employees, members of the executive board and even students. Not having direct involvement in the program places me in an approachable position to mediate and give input on much of the decision-making and conflict resolution processes. For instance, a large population of the participants in the aftercare program are younger students in primary grades kindergarten through second grade. Many of them are my current or former students, so I have the opportunity to enquire and receive feedback from the parents about the programs services because I already have a rapport with these parents. When the issue of children’s homework not being completed during the program arose, not only did I observe the problem among my students as a classroom teacher, but also parent began to complain me that they were dissatisfied. I was able to speak with the members of the executive board about this problem. From this discussion another discussion arose regarding staff productivity and organization of scheduling. I sat in on meetings with the
president and treasurer and gave my input on how staff could be better organized. As a member of the Parent Involvement Committee I am in a position to continuously bring up the results and findings of this study in order to play a pivotal role in parent programming that is responsive to their needs. One of the major struggles for the Clubhouse has been attaining the funds needed to conduct transactions necessary to operate as a small business, such as the limited liability corporation license and the funds to pay the payroll administrating company. I also participate in meetings to assist with planning fundraising. We have held bake sales, an “Oldies But Goodies” dance and dinner for families, and sponsored dress down days for staff and students to assist with some of the programs overhead.

Children that participate in the After School Clubhouse seem to take pride in their membership. They have developed a camaraderie and a sense of community I hear them talking about how much fun they have and they seem very excited to go downstairs to the community room where the program is housed. The children are able to participate in a vocal performance classes, as well as art and dance classes taught by Park Avenue teacher assistants. Some of them have even performed the pieces they learn during school assemblies and programs such as Grandparents Day. Aside from helping families and parents by providing a safe learning environment, the PTO After School Clubhouse has had many positive influences in our school community. We have hosted community book fairs; raised money for victims of earthquakes in both Haiti and Venezuela started a program called Donuts for Dads to encourage fathers and other males to become
more active in the education of their children. Several former students of Park Avenue School who now attend Orange High School volunteer their time to the after school program. The program has also provided employment for teacher assistants, and senior citizens in the area who work as counselors.

Reflection

I decided to focus on the particular issue of parent involvement in my school because as a teacher I feel hurt when I see my students struggling because of lack of support at home. As an early childhood educator it is weighs heavily on my heart because my students are so young and helpless. The lack of support I observe does not refer to merely home work non-compliance, low attendance at Parent Teacher meetings or school functions. These situations are disheartening because they play a role in both the objectives I set for myself as a teacher as well as my students achievements. When students do not receive the support they need at home there is a chain reaction. For students who come to school without proper meals or hygiene, it is clear that their self esteem is affected, which can lead to not only academic failure but also behavioral and emotional problems. It is not only my personal belief but the research I have done for this study has shown that students do better in school when the parents are more involved and parent’s lack of involvement does not necessarily mean that they are disinterested. They sometimes lack the resources or education or both. In other cases they want to know that teachers genuinely care. In other words, we all want to know that someone cares beside us. As a teacher-investigator I can somewhat identify with these parents. Building the bond between the school and families has been no easy
task. It has taken a strong commitment, time and energy. As a teacher as well as a student, the process of this research has been a very demanding one. I have had to rely on others members of the research team as resources to help with many aspects of this study. When I decided to focus on this issue it was easier planned then carried out, without collaboration, I do not think I would have been successful in this endeavor. In this way, I have unknowingly tested the research and found it to be true as all of the studies and papers I reviewed suggested taking a collaborative approach to planning and implementing programs to encourage parent involvement and build the school and family community relationship. As a student I have learned more about conducting research during this study then I have my entire graduate career. Writing the proposal, accepting advice from those more experienced than me, and doing constant revisions has been an educational yet humbling experience for me. Yet I feel as though I have only laid a plank in this bridge to building the bond between Park Avenue and our families. We have so much work to do in the form of educating our parents and encouraging our teachers to become more involved in this process.

Presently we face a new problem as the new governor of New Jersey has made massive cuts into the state education budget. There has been discussion that Park Avenue will not have any school-facilitated programs after school next year.

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(http://education.state.nj.us/rc/nclb08/reports/13/3880/NJASK-LAL-120.html)


## Demographics

### Language Arts Literacy Details

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<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Race</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economically Disadvantaged</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Migrant Students</strong></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state standard for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for language arts literacy is 75% proficient for the school and each subgroup.

NOTE: The male, female, and migrant categories are not used in calculating AYP.

* For participation, an asterisk denotes less than 40 students in a subgroup.
* For proficiency, an asterisk denotes less than 20 students in a subgroup; 35 for students with disabilities
Appendix B

Macro System
Appendix C

Brofenbrenner’s Ecological Model of the Environment

Macroystem
(Historical events, Broader culture)

Exosystem
(Parents’ workplaces, Social networks, Local government)

Microystem
(Home, Child, Mother, Father)

Mesosystem
(Child-care center, School Peer system)
Appendix D

Parent Questionnaire

Think about what would make your life easier. Please place a check mark beside the after school programs that you and your child are interested in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Centered Activities</th>
<th>Parent Programs/services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Homework help/ tutoring</td>
<td>Parent Workshops - topics may include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Newspaper Club/photojournalism</td>
<td>☐ Bonding with your child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Book Club</td>
<td>☐ helping your child with school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until what time would you need after school services for your child?</td>
<td>☐ Adolescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 5:00 PM</td>
<td>☐ computer technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 6:00 PM</td>
<td>☐ other ___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Needlework (sewing, crochet, etc.)</td>
<td>☐ GED classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Visual Arts Club</td>
<td>Career and Consumer Skills - topics may include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Arts</td>
<td>☐ resume writing and interviewing techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Dance</td>
<td>☐ money management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Drama</td>
<td>☐ planning for your family’s future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Choir</td>
<td>☐ Food Pantry Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>☐ Health/Fitness Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Basketball</td>
<td>☐ Domestic violence awareness and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Netball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Karate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may be necessary to charge a fee for these programs. What is the maximum amount you would be able to afford to pay for after care on a weekly basis?

| □ $25 | □ $30 | □ $45 |

| English as a second language |
| □ English for Spanish speakers |
| □ English for French speakers |

Parent Volunteer - options may be

| □ helping in the classroom |
| □ preparing for school events |
| □ Assisting with after school programs |
Appendix E

Script for Parent Meeting

Good evening Park Avenue Family. The beginning of the school year is always exciting. Let me start by saying welcome home. It is such a wonderful feeling for us all to be together in our brand new beautiful building! We look forward to partnering with you and supporting you as we take on this year’s challenges and triumphs. When I call you family it is with the greatest sincerity. We are a family and we must work together to make school one of the best experiences in our children’s lives. We want to fulfill our motto here in Orange, and keep our children first. But we also would like to recognize how valuable you all are as parents.

This school year we have a great opportunity to make a difference in our lives and the lives of our children. I am currently conducting a research as part of my graduate studies in education, at Montclair State University. We would like to find out from you, the parents what services you need to help make your life easier and improve the quality of your child’s school experience.

You have received a consent form that explains exactly how this research is being conducted. Please read it carefully and then sign it if you agree to participate. Participation is quite easy. All you need to do is fill out an anonymous questionnaire. Simply place a check mark beside the programs or activities you and your child are interested in. Once you have completed the questionnaire please drop it and the consent form in the locked yellow box located near the exit. The results of these surveys will be tallied to find out what programs you would like to participate in. Dr. Hackett, Mrs. Baguidy-Lauture and I will then work diligently to create these programs in the form of after-school programs and evening classes and workshops.

You do not have to participate but this is a great opportunity to voice your concerns and your needs in the community but most of all to help yourself and your child. If you have any concerns or questions or if there is something you do not understand please see Mrs. Baguidy-Lauture or myself.
CONSENT FORM FOR ADULTS

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you fill in this form.

Study’s Title: Building the Bond Between Families and Schools

Why is this study being done? This year we have a great opportunity to make a difference in our lives and the lives of our children. I am currently working on a Masters degree at Montclair University. As part of my studies and my commitment to our community, I am conducting a research study titled: Building the Bond Between Families and Schools. The objective of this research is to find out from you (the Parents) what programs you need to help you improve the quality of your life and your child’s school experience.

What will happen while you are in the study? Because this research will be used in presenting a proposal for the start and design of the programs you would like to have here at Park Avenue, I am asking you to partner with me in designing the education and support programs for your family. You will be asked to take and complete a questionnaire.

Again this is a great opportunity to voice your concerns and your needs in the community but most of all to help yourself and your child. Please take the first step in affecting change by indicating whether or not you would like to volunteer to be a part of this research.

Time: If you choose to participate by completing a questionnaire this study will take about fifteen minutes of your time.
**Risks:** The risks are no greater than those in ordinary life. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire. Please do not feel anxious or embarrassed about expressing the need for programs that will provide you with help. We are here to work together for your benefit and that of your family and community.

**Benefits:** You may benefit from this study because this is a great opportunity to voice your concerns and your needs in the community but most of all to help yourself and your child. Your responses will be used to create programs that will address the needs you express.

**Who will know that you are in this study?** The questionnaires will be anonymous. You will not be linked to any presentations. We will keep who you are confidential according to the law.

**Do you have to be in the study?**

You do not have to be in this study. You are a volunteer! It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not be in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Nothing will happen to you. You will still get the things that you were promised.

**Do you have any questions about this study?** Phone or email Ms. Mary Ann Folkes, (973) 677-4124, maryannfolkes@yahoo.com

**Do you have any questions about your rights?** Phone or email the IRB Chair, Joan Besing (besingj@mail.montclair.edu, 973-655-3182) or the IRB Administrator, Fitzgerald Edwards (edwardsf@mail.montclair.edu, 973-655-7781).

The copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

If you choose to be in this study, please fill in your lines below.

Print your name here  Sign your name here  Date

Name of Principal Investigator  Signature  Date
## Appendix G

### Parent Responses to Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Centered Activities</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Parent/Programs/Services</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework help/Tutoring</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Computer Technology</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Money Management</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Helping your child with homework</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Club</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Planning for your family’s future</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Resume Writing and interviewing</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Club/Photojournalism</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>Special Needs Children</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needlework (sewing, crochet etc.)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Bonding with your child</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Domestic violence awareness and support</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>English for Spanish Speakers</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual arts</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Need child care until 6:00 pm</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Can afford to pay a fee between $25 and $30</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Park Avenue School PTO Proposed After Care Budget

**Fiscal School Year 2009-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Job</th>
<th># of Headcount</th>
<th>Hourly Rate</th>
<th># of Hrs per week</th>
<th>salary per day</th>
<th>Salary/ Week</th>
<th>Per Month (Avg 30 days)</th>
<th>Salary/ Quarter (45 days)</th>
<th>Sub Total School Fiscal Year (183 days/10 months)</th>
<th># of additional hours (three 1/2 days @ 2.5 hrs/day)</th>
<th>Salary (three 1/2 days)</th>
<th>Sub Total School Fiscal Year (183 days/10 months) (w/ add hours 1/2 days)</th>
<th><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong> (by Headcount)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$2,700</td>
<td>$10,980</td>
<td>2.5 $</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$11,130</td>
<td>$22,260</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Project Coordinator</td>
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<td>$15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>$225</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$2,025</td>
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<td>2.5 $</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$8,348</td>
<td>$8,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
<td>$5,490</td>
<td>2.5 $</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$5,565</td>
<td>$33,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$135</td>
<td>$675</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
<td>$6,075</td>
<td>$24,705</td>
<td>2.5 $</td>
<td>$330</td>
<td>$25,043</td>
<td>$63,990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Consultants**

- Special Programs (10 sessions @ $200)

  - $2,000

**Sub Total**

  - $2,000

**Supplies**

  - $100

**Training**

- Life Saving/CPR

  - $370

**Scholarships**

  - $3,000

**Field Trips**

- For 1/2 days

  - $500

**Grand Total**

  - $0

---

# of students: 90 (about 24.4% of total student population of 370 = 90.28)
Appendix I
Park Avenue Extended School Day Programs

Dear Parents / Guardians,
This school year, Park Avenue School students will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of extended school day programs. These programs have been developed to provide tutorial services, enrichment opportunities, and recreational activities to continue to enhance our students' academic and social development.

This chart below will provide a brief explanation of the extended day programs that are being offered. Attached is an Extended Day Program Application. You must complete the application and return it to your child's homeroom teacher. Applications will be processed on a first come, first serve basis. Students will receive a notification letter indicating which extended day programs they will be attending. Only those students whose names appear on the group list will be permitted into the program area. Younger siblings must be supervised at all times and will NOT be permitted to accompany their older siblings to program areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Avenue PTO</th>
<th>Academic Academies</th>
<th>Clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afterschool Clubhouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monday – Friday</td>
<td>• Wed. &amp; Thurs. only</td>
<td>• Meet once a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hours 3–6 p.m.</td>
<td>• Hours 3–4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>• Hours 3–4:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tuition $30 per week</td>
<td>• Grades K–7th</td>
<td>• Grades 3–7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Must register at PTO Office</td>
<td>• Reading, Math, Writing, Science</td>
<td>• Provide an opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grades K–7th</td>
<td>• Tutorial instruction</td>
<td>for students to pursue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homework assistance</td>
<td>• Enrichment activities</td>
<td>new interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recreational activities Registration will begin on Monday, October 26, 2009</td>
<td>• Test Taking Strategies</td>
<td>• Develop team building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Club Descriptions:**
- **Intramural Sports** – Fundamentals of basketball, soccer, volleyball, etc.
- **PAS Band** – Students must already play an instrument
- **Chorus** – Students must be able to attend performances in the Winter/ Spring concerts
- **Ladies In Training** – Girls will learn proper etiquette, build self-esteem, and participate in service learning projects
- **Men In Training** – Boys will learn proper etiquette, build self-esteem, discuss important male issues, and participate in service learning projects
- **Book Club** – Students will develop a love of reading and engage in book talks
- **Newspaper Club** – Students will learn to use computer based programs and basic journalism skills to create a school newspaper
- **Student Council** – Students will develop leadership skills as they participate in community and school-based projects, while learning about local and state government
Park Avenue School Extended Day Program Application: Kindergarten – 2nd Grade

Student’s Name ___________________________ DOB ______
Age ______ Grade ______ Home Room Teacher ____________________
Address _______________________________________
Parent/Guardian ___________________________ Home # ____________________
Cell # ___________________________ Work # __________________________

Programs will begin on Tuesday, November 17, 2009.
Please circle one grade appropriate activity, per day your child would like to attend:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Academy</td>
<td>Kindergarten Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade Academy</td>
<td>1st Grade Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grade Academy</td>
<td>2nd Grade Academy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate One.

_____ My child will be going to the PTO Afterschool Clubhouse from 4:30 – 6 p.m.

_____ My child has permission to walk home.

_____ My child will be picked up by an adult.

Parent signature ___________________________ Date __________

PAS staff ________

PTO Afterschool Clubhouse Registration Information: Registration will begin on Monday, October 26, 2009. The program will start on November 2, 2009. Parents/Guardians must register in person at the PTO Office located in the basement. There is a registration fee of $60.00 and the first tuition payment is due no later than November 13, 2009.
Park Avenue School Extended Day Program Application: Grades 3-5

Student’s Name ______________________________________ DOB ________

Age _______ Grade _______ Home Room Teacher ________________

Address ____________________________________________________

Parent / Guardian ____________________________________________ Home # __________

Cell # __________________________ Work # ________________________

Programs will begin on Tuesday, November 17, 2009.

Please circle one grade appropriate activity, per day your child would like to attend:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intramural Sports</td>
<td>3rd Grade Academy</td>
<td>3rd Grade Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheer Club</td>
<td>4th Grade Academy</td>
<td>4th Grade Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>5th Grade Academy</td>
<td>5th Grade Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band (4th &amp; 5th Only)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4th &amp; 5th Grade Only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Club</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chess / Bridge Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students MUST be in good academic standing in all subject areas and / or participate in an Academic Academy, in order to participate in an afterschool club.

Indicate One.

____ My child will be going to the Afterschool Clubhouse from 4:30 – 6 p.m.

____ My child has permission to walk home.

____ My child will be picked up by an adult.

Parent signature __________________________________________ Date __________

PAS staff _______

PTO Afterschool Clubhouse Registration Information: Registration will begin on Monday, October 26, 2009. The program will start on November 2, 2009. Parents / Guardians must register in person at the PTO Office located in the basement. There is a registration fee of $60.00 and the first tuition payment is due no later than November 13, 2009.
Appendix J

Proposal for the Park Avenue School PTO After School Program

Pilot Program: Park Avenue School’s Community Clubhouse

Partnership between the Park Avenue PTO and the Orange Board of Education

Program Overview

The Park Avenue School PTO would like to run an on-site after school program at Park Avenue School during the hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. The program will service students in grades Kindergarten through 7th grade currently attending Park Avenue School. We strongly believe that our students, parents, staff and community would greatly benefit from an on-site extended day program.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to enrich the lives of the children attending Park Avenue School by providing a safe, nurturing, and structured environment that supports each child’s individual growth and well being. We provide quality educational, social and recreational programs that promote positive youth development. We wish to empower parents to be active participants in their child’s academic career and social development.
Goals of the Program

This proposed After School Program will serve multiple purposes within the school and global community. By partnering with the Orange Board of Education, the program will have a direct impact that will:

- provide supervised activities for students in grades K-7 during after school hours

- provide a convenient location at an affordable cost for working families

- expand learning time by complimenting the school day with an academic focus on homework and reading

- introduce and engage students in positive, potential life-long recreational pursuits based on individual interest

- Enable Parents to be decision makers in the development of community based programs for their children

- actively promote a greater sense of community and service learning by collaborating with parents, community leaders in education, business, and government
Activities

Students will engage in age appropriate activities which enhance their academic and social skills. After school counselors will provide homework assistance and serve in a mentoring capacity.

Some of the activities will include:

- Home Work help
- Arts and crafts
- Book Club
- Drama
- Yoga / Dance
- Basketball

Sample After School Schedules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:00-4:30</td>
<td>Academic Clubs / Academies</td>
<td>3:00-4:00</td>
<td>Homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30-5:30</td>
<td>Snack / Homework</td>
<td>4:00-4:30</td>
<td>Snack / Book Talks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-6:00</td>
<td>Recreation / Reading</td>
<td>4:30-5:30</td>
<td>Activity Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30-6:00</td>
<td>Recreation / Reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staffing

After School Program staff will be employees of the Park Avenue School PTO. There will be 2-Program Coordinators, 1- Special Project Coordinator and After school Counselors based on a 15:1 student / adult ratio.

Facility Request

Program activities will take place on site at Park Avenue School. Activity areas will include the community room, cafeteria, gymnasium, and library and computer lab.

Fees

The proposed program fees are based on the agreement that the Orange Board of Education will provide the following at no cost: program space, utilities, custodial services, and security. Parents would be required to register their child or children into the program by completing a registration packet and signing a contract in which they agree to pay a weekly tuition of $30 per week, per child. The PTO will organize fundraisers throughout the year to help support families that are in need, but experiencing hardship.

Evaluation

- Conduct parent surveys
- Monitor the academic progress of program participants
- Hold monthly staff meetings to address concerns, evaluate and plan events and activities