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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: A STORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN SRI LANKA

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#### Abstract

This research found out the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement with a special focus on the secondary level students in an international school in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The main objective of the current research was to find out the significant difference in student achievement among international school students in respect to parent participation in teacher-parent meetings and their help for their child's homework. The selection of the research method was based on the quantitative research approach and the type of methods available within this broad approach. The sample of the study comprised of 542 students, 542 parents, and 35 teachers in an international school in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Data was collected through questionnaires. The findings concluded that (1) there was no significant difference in student achievement among international students with respect to parent education. (2) there was a significant difference in student achievement among students with respect to their parents' participation in the teacher-parent meetings but (3) there was no significant difference between student achievements among students with respect to parental help on student's homework. (4) Teachers in the International school are strongly agreed: their school offers workshops and provide resourceful information to help families to understand how children learn, their school has a clear understanding of the defined policies for teachers that encourage communication with the parents discussing the curriculum, student achievement, and ways a parent can be involved, their school provides productive professional developers that train them on the value of parents and ways to encourage partnerships between the school and home, their school encourages the use of our Learning Management System that provides classroom resources and items parents can access. their school assists families in guiding students to set academic goals, and monitor and discuss schoolwork at home, their school provides information to families on how to assist students with the skills they need to improve. However, (5) teachers in the school disagreed that their school trains parents on developing home routines, conditions, and environments that support their child's learning respectively.

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**Introduction:-**

Achievement is one of the main factors in assessing the quality of education in the academic field. Therefore, identifying the factors that affect students' learning and achievement continues to be an important objective of the study of educators of different countries. Academic achievement is the outcome of the general and specific learning experiences. Singh (2013) explained that academic achievement is the end product of all educational effort. It refers to the knowledge attained and skills developed in school subjects. In the current research, academic achievement is defined as students' knowledge or competence in school subjects measured by standardized tests in grades based on student's performance. However, the factors influencing students' achievement are complicated and interconnected. Factors influencing student learning can be divided into two major parts. They are school - based factors and out of school factors. Parental support normally goes under the factors of the out of school. Family relationship is an important factor of an individual's life from childhood to adulthood. Most of the individual's personality originates from their home environment. Therefore, Parental support had been identified as one of the contributing factors in a child's educational achievement.

Hoover – Dempsey and Sandler's model (2005) of the parental involvement process suggests that three major factors influence the verity and frequency of family involvement. These three factors are parents': personal motivators (Parental role construction for involvement, parental efficacy for helping the student succeed in school), perceptions of invitations to be involved (General school invitations, Specific invitations from teachers, Specific requests/invitations from students), life context variables (Parental knowledge and skills, parental time and energy, family culture) Further the model shows the parent involvement forms. One form of involvement of parents is clear communication with their children about children's personal and family values, goals, expectations, and aspirations for students learning. The second one is involvement activities at home. Under this involvement, activities talking as the school days expressing the interest of learning, monitoring, and reviewing students work. The third one is effective family-school communication influence students' academic progress. The final one is participation in school-based activities. Finally, Hoover - Dempsey and Sandler's model shows that parent involvement influences student's achievement.

According to the above explanation, one major way of parental support of students is to participate in parent-teacher meetings. Parental involvement includes participating in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, parent-teacher conferences, attending school functions, fundraising as a classroom resource, volunteering, and attendance at school events (Klein-Becker, 1999). The other way of parental support is to supporting learning at home by helping children with their homework.

The relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement has been researched and documented by many educators and policymakers in the education field. Many researchers have found that parental involvement has indicated activities at home have a significant impact on students' academic achievement. Baker (2009) revealed a statistically significant association between parent involvement and a child's academic performance, over and above the impact of the child's intelligence. In his study, a multiple mediation model indicated that the child's perception of cognitive competence fully mediated the relation between parent involvement and the child's performance on a standardized achievement test. The quality of the student-teacher relationship fully mediated the relation between parent involvements.

Whitaker, (2001) found benefits to parental involvement for students, schools, and parents. (1) Students obtained high achievement scores (2) Students increased positive attitude and behaviour that produced higher attendance rates and elevated homework scores. The above associated a high graduation rate among secondary students. He also found that parental confidence was elevated as parents participated in their children's learning. Their interest in their children's schools elevated since teachers and administrators demonstrated a true concern for the students. In addition to the confidence that the parents projected toward the district, the faculty, in turn, had higher opinions of the family and increased expectations with regard to student performance. This allowed teachers to expand student erudition to new levels. Parent involvement gave parents the confidence to engage their children more often at home and even to learn more about themselves as parents. In many cases, parents would often register and participate in continuing education in hopes of advancing their edification.

Although research is indistinct in establishing which particular family practices are the most beneficial in increasing student achievement, it does conclude the more involvement from parents in the child's instruction, the more probable that interaction correlates with the student's success. Student outcomes are again compounded when parent interaction in education is both inside and outside the school setting. Khan and *et al* (2015) completed a study which was based on an early study of Whitaker. The research concluded that students whose parents were actively involved at an above-median level when compared to those below-median parent involvement levels scored significantly higher. Students in core subject matter scored 30% higher on assessments in mathematics, communication arts, science, and social studies. The percentages extended as much as 50% in reading and 40% in math when teachers reported higher levels of outreach to parents within cited schools. They also presented additional key information. First, the family provides the child's primary educational environment, parental involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive and long-lasting. Therefore, involvement is beneficial primarily through high school. Secondly, students from lower socioeconomic status families will benefit more from parental involvement when compared to those of higher incomes. School authorities should consider this when presenting policy and creating target groups. Lastly, the benefit for schools is the retention of qualified personnel. Teachers are more likely to achieve tenure and stay at schools with outstanding parental support. Research collected throughout these years defended the preliminary findings and allowed for more insight into parental involvement.

Overall, research from the mid-1990s to the last decade has substantiated the theory that parental involvement will impact student achievement in a positive manner. Each parent is an immeasurable resource that can be tapped by educators to increase student learning. It takes a collaborative effort of school districts working with parents, patrons, and the community to make the difference that will impact student learning for a lifetime. Consequently, secondary schools in the future should strive to incorporate parents into their children's educational plans.

The parental involvement in assisting with educating their children is of unquestionable significance. A study conducted in New Zealand in 1986, according to Hornby (2000), reported that mothers who engaged in reading sessions with their children every night after helping their children with school homework had a positive impact upon their children. Those children improved their reading skills when compared to their classmates. What is more startling about the result of this study is the fact that the parents involved newly arrived immigrants from Cambodia and they, themselves, were learning to read English along with their children. This finding provides a very strong foundation for the belief that a child's education is impacted by the involvement of a parent. Since parents who could hardly speak English might facilitate their children's reading progress through working with them at home, parents who have literacy difficulties themselves could also be able to help. In fact, the potential benefits for all parents who help in this way are clear.

Parents and Home remain the first teacher and first school respectively for every student. Teachers can also help to create a positive environment for the learning orientation of the students. Children's learning is the most natural and innate of human skills; human is born to learn better than any other species. Learning is generally understood as the process through which an individual acquires knowledge, skills, and values in a range of formal and informal settings, throughout life. As far as the Indian education system is concerned more focus has been given to marks scored by children to fulfill the preference of their future career. To enhance the learning orientation of students. Parents' attitude plays a vital role. Parents become stressed and anxious at the time of the exams being appeared by the students (Gorman, 2004).

Parents should be encouraged to take a holistic approach to literacy at home, and even to advocate, challenge, or change what they may see as unacceptable school programs or lack of support for students. Parents are not always aware of the opportunities they have to influence and in some countries to establish a formal body for different stakeholders. To run schools requires initiative which is not always acted upon. Another issue is the fear that, if parents raise critical issues about the school, there might be a negative impact on their children. Family literacy or parent-child literacy programs and projects developed as a response to growing evidence that cycles of low literacy tend to repeat themselves across generations.

Evidence has highlighted the role of schools in promoting parental interaction with children's literacy comprehension and the significance of the interaction as home and school are linked with a close relationship. For instance, an investigation of home and school influences on literacy development found a strong relationship between teacher-initiated parent contacts and student gains in reading comprehension (Gorman, 2004).

In order to have successful parent involvement programs, it should begin with assessing the necessities of the family and attention in regards to techniques of interaction with school districts. The program should have a clear set of measurable objectives based on parent and community input to help foster a sense of cooperation and communication among families, communities, and schools. In addition, a bilingual parent-family liaison should be hired and trained to directly contact parents and coordinate family activities! (Fiore and Whitaker, 2001).

Parents are the first educators at home and should be utilized as partners with educators to enhance the educational outcome; however, many parents find obstacles to breaking the barrier of participation and actively contributing to their individual child's education. These constraints may range from simple excuses to legitimate concerns, but for involvement in education at the secondary level, the barriers must be broken.

The first constraint is that parental involvement shows a precipitous decline from the primary level to the secondary level. Reasons vary and fluctuate as to why students in grades 7-12 are less likely to receive parental involvement when compared to a younger sibling (Hanoon, 1995). The structures of the middle and high school levels are more complicated than those of the lower grade levels. Students work with a number of diverse instructors rather than one classroom teacher. In addition, parents perceive that children at this age need more autonomy and can be more self-sufficient (Fernando, 2016). However, contrary to parent's perceptions, neither parents nor researchers dispute parental involvement is still momentarily needed and has an explicit impact for students at the secondary level.

To help understand the dissimilarities between parents, many studies have been conducted to survey parents and teachers. They helped to explain the constraints both parents and teachers felt when dealing with the issue of parental involvement at public schools and the limitations which prevented a cohesive working relationship (Swantie, 2009).

According to this survey, the number one barrier for parents is the constraint on time. Students at the secondary level are busy with school, employment, and friends; compound this with both parents working or a single parent family and a total of 89% of the surveys found time to be a major confining factor. In addition to time, parents felt inadequate at school. Past experiences may have attributed to this feeling; parents often felt intimidated and unwelcome by authorities. This feeling of inadequacy was compounded by educational changes. School is not what it once was. Parents lack an understanding of the current system, feeling they have little to contribute or do not have the know-how to become involved (Swantie, 2009).

One essential thing authorities can perform in an effort to improve student achievement is for educators to strategize and get parents on board. Authorities must break down barriers. The first step is to provide parents with simple and accurate information in a non-threatening manner. Parents are easily intimidated by schools as many have had unpleasant experiences in the past and base current beliefs on those past situations. Encouragement and flexibility are the keys. As time has been identified as the number one constraint to the lack of participation, authorities must be flexible in schedules and policies to meet the needs of all patrons. One size does not fit all parents. Elimination of this could begin by considering the input of all stakeholders and encouraging them to share their ideas with the district(Bandara, 1995). Schools may need to start encouraging parents to make small contributions, such as the sharing of careers, hobbies, or other topics of interest. By starting small, parents will not feel overwhelmed. Authorities should acknowledge that a significant transformation will take place over time if the change is founded by data-driven information. Schools will face reluctance, but the benefits of a strong parental involvement program may far exceed the challenges.

Generally, schools are not oriented toward collaboration with families or communities and, although students and their families are taught to accommodate the schools, only infrequently is the school open to the families' language and culture. However, parents' lifestyles and work lives may not accommodate intensive involvement, but they're also may be parents who are simply not interested(Grero, 2010). Therefore, the following perspective was put forth: Achieving effective school-family partnerships is not always easy.

### **Research Methodology:-**

The main objective of this study is to find out the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement with a special focus on the secondary level students in an International school in Colombo Sri Lanka. Following are the sub-objectives of the study.

1. To find out the significant difference in student achievement among international students with respect to parent

education.

2. To find out the significant difference in student achievement among international schools with respect to their parent's participation in teacher-parent meetings.
3. To find out the significant difference in student achievement among international schools with respect to the help of student homework.
4. To what extent are teachers involved to make a stronger parent-child relationship in international schools.

#### Hypotheses of the study

1. There is no significant difference in student achievement among international students with respect to parent education
2. There is no significant difference in student achievement among international school students with respect to their parent's participation in teacher-parent meetings
3. There is no significant difference in student achievement among international school students with respect to helping with student homework at home.

Descriptive research method was utilized in the study to attain the above objectives. The students of the middle school from Form I to Form III ranging from 11 years to 14 years of age and Upper School from Form IV to Upper VI ranging from 15 to 18 years of age male and female 542 students participated as the student sample 542 Parents of those students participated as a parent sample. Questionnaires were given to 542 students and 542 parents as a main data collection tool. Data analysis was done using a quantitative method.

#### Discussion and Conclusion:-

The current study found out that there was no significant difference in student's achievement among international school students with respect to parent education. Table 1 shows that the relationship between parent's educational level and the average term test marks of their children.

**Table 1:-** Educational level of the parent and average marks of their children.

Average marks	Postgraduate degree		Degree		A/L		O/L		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
90 -100	2	2.4	3	1.3	1	0.6	1	1.5	7	1.3
80 – 89	13	15.3	40	17.1	32	20.4	6	9.1	91	16.8
70 – 79	14	16.5	52	22.2	29	18.5	20	30.3	115	21.2
60 – 69	24	28.2	62	26.5	40	25.5	12	18.2	138	25.5
50 – 59	18	21.2	37	15.8	32	20.4	17	25.8	104	19.2
40 – 49	9	10.6	24	10.3	14	8.9	6	9.1	53	9.8
30 – 39	3	3.5	12	5.1	7	4.5	1	1.5	23	4.2
Below 30	2	2.4	4	1.7	2	1.3	3	4.5	11	2.0
Total	85	100	234	100	157	100	66	100	542	100

Around 30% of students with parents in all educational qualification categories had 60-69 marks for their examination. The table 1 shows that few students had the highest marks and those students belong to parents in all educational categories. On the other hand, a few students got low marks for their examinations and those students also belong to parents in all educational categories. The analysis of Chi-square test reveals educational level of parents not influences ( $p = 0.610$  see Table 2) to their children's achievements. The result may be influenced by the income of parents. All of the students may get help from private tuition classes to increase their academic achievement.

**Table 2:-** Chi-Square Tests (1).

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.619 <sup>a</sup>	21	.610
Likelihood Ratio	18.760	21	.601
Linear-by-Linear Association	.005	1	.946
N of Valid Cases	542		

Literature shows totally different result from the current study. Rana *et al* (2015) tested the influence of parent's educational level on secondary school student's academic achievements in district Rajanpur in India. However, they received a positive relationship between parent's educational level and the academic achievements of students. 200 students of Grade 10th were taken as a sample randomly. The null hypothesis was formulated and tested using independent Z-test analysis. A descriptive study based on empirical data was tested to correlate the described variables. After analysis of the data the research finds a significant positive relationship between parent's education level and the academic achievements of students.

The current study found out that there was a significant difference in student achievement among international school students with respect to their parent participation in teacher-parent meetings. Table 3 shows the relationship between the number of participation in the parent's meetings and student's marks. This data shows that the children of parents who participated 3 times (2.0%) for parent-teacher meetings had the highest marks (90-100) for at examinations. Overall the data of the above table show that parents who participated in teacher-parent meetings had a better average than those who did not participate in the meetings. For instance, children of parents (nearly 20%) who did not participate at any time in parent-teacher meetings had low marks at examinations.

**Table 3:-** Participation in the parent's meetings and student's marks.

Marks	0 time		1 time		2 times		3 times	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
90 – 100	0	00	0	00	0	00	7	2.0
80 - 89	2	6.3	1	1.6	8	8.4	80	22.7
70 – 79	2	6.3	3	4.8	9	9.5	101	28.6
60 – 69	3	9.4	15	24.2	25	26.3	95	26.9
50 – 59	5	15.6	18	29.0	26	27.4	55	15.6
40 – 49	10	31.3	16	25.8	16	16.8	11	3.1
30 – 39	4	12.5	7	11.3	8	8.4	4	1.1
Below 30	6	18.8	2	3.2	3	3.2	0	00
Total	32	100	62	100	95	100	353	100

A chi square (see Table 4) further indicated that there was a significant difference in student's achievement among international schools with respect to their parents' participation in parent-teacher meetings ( $p < 000$ ).

**Table 4:-** Chi-Square Tests (2).

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	193.610 <sup>a</sup>	21	.000
Likelihood Ratio	179.967	21	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	139.871	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	542		

Guirong and *et al* (2019) found out that developed countries support the ideas that higher parent – teacher interactions improves students' outcomes. Croll (2004) also shows families are important to young people as a source of identity and security and also in gaining favorable educational outcomes. In addition Guirong *et al* (2019) research indicates that teachers value parental involvement in their students' education. However, parents' lifestyles and work lives may not accommodate intensive involvement, but they're also may be parents who are simply not interested (Grero, 2010). Therefore, the following perspective was put forth: Achieving effective school-family partnerships is not always easy. Barriers to family involvement in schools arise from many sources, some related to the constraints facing teachers and other school staff, some related to the challenges and pressures that families face, and others related to language, cultural, and socioeconomic differences between families and school staff (Fernando, 2016). It may be possible to seek alternative ways to consult parental opinions, such as organizing regular surveys or consultations at the national, regional, or local level in which parents are asked about a number of major issues. For instance, the reason for the lack of parental involvement in America is oftentimes cultural diversity or the internalized oppression of non-dominant groups. In Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, the main barrier was work commitment followed by child-care difficulties and lack of time (Swantie, 2009).

On the other hand, this research found that there is no significant difference in student achievement among with respect to parents helping with students' homework. Table 5 shows the relationship between parental help on homework and students' examination marks. It shows that children of parents (84%) who helped them with homework gained over 50-59 marks for their examination. However, even without parental help (85%) with homework those children also had over 50-59 marks at their examinations.

**Table 5:-** Parental help on homework and students' examination marks.

Marks	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
90 - 100	5	1.6	2	0.9	7	1.3
80 - 89	62	19.6	29	12.8	91	16.8
70 - 79	62	19.6	53	23.5	115	21.2
60 - 69	79	25.0	59	26.1	138	25.5
50 - 59	56	17.7	48	21.2	104	19.2
40 - 49	33	10.4	20	8.8	53	9.8
30 - 39	13	4.1	10	4.4	23	4.2
Below 30	6	1.9	5	2.2	11	2.0
Total	316	100	226	100	542	100

Further, a chi-square (see Table 6) indicated that there was no significant difference between student achievements with respect to their help for homework. ( $p = 0.497$ ).

**Table 6:-** Chi-Square Tests (3).

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.373 <sup>a</sup>	7	.497
Likelihood Ratio	6.493	7	.483
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.184	1	.277
N of Valid Cases	542		

Dettmers *et al* (2019) have demonstrated that parental homework involvement may not always foster students' desired school outcomes. However, they have identified that the quality of parental homework involvement matters, rather than the quantity. Further, they explained through previous studies that strong family-school relationships may help to improve parental involvement for their children. However, Antoine (2015) concludes that parents who are more involved in the academic lives of their children have a higher probability of being successful academically, as a result of that additional assistance. This result also influenced by the teaching of private tuition classes. There were no direct evidence in the literature for the relationship between private tutoring and academic achievement of students in international schools in Sri Lanka. However, Hearth (2019) found a significant positive relationship between private tutoring and the academic performance of the students in public schools in Sri Lanka.

#### **To what extent are schools involved to make a stronger parent - child relationship in the international schools:**

Parent-school engagement is acknowledged in education policies internationally as playing a positive role in children's education (Weerasekara, 2009). However, the issue of collaboration between schools, families and communities 'occurs within the context of the globalization of knowledge and competencies and along the continuum of strategies recommended by the school effectiveness movement' (Baker, 2009). The Table 7 show the teacher attitudes about parental involvement at school.

Statement No.	Strongly agree		Agree somewhat		Disagree somewhat		Strongly disagree		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	15	42.9	27	48.5	3	8.6	00	00	35	100
2	00	00	4	11.4	28	80.0	3	8.6	35	100
3	30	85.7	5	14.3	00	00	00	00	35	100
4	12	34.3	22	62.9	00	00	1	2.8	35	100

5	19	54.3	16	45.7	00	00	00	00	35	100
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**Table 7:-**Teacher attitudes about parental involvement at school.

**Statement of teacher attitude:**

1. My school offers workshops and/or provide with resourceful information to help families understand how children learn.
2. My school trains parents on developing home routines, conditions and environments that support their child's learning
3. My school has a clear understanding of the defined policies for teachers that encourage communication with the parents discussing the curriculum, student achievement and ways a parent can be involved
4. My school assists families in guiding students to set academic goals, and monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
5. My school provides information to families on how to assist students with skills they need to improve.

Table 7 shows that the majority of teachers in the school are strongly agreed (42.9%) and agreed somewhat (48.5%) with their school offers workshops and/or provide resourceful information to help families understand how children learn. Parents cannot shoulder the complete burden; school authorities and professionals must do their part. However, a number of factors make it difficult for teachers as well. Once again, time is the ultimate factor that affects teachers. An astounding 95% of teachers surveyed stated they would be unwilling to participate in an in-service that would help to assist teachers in increasing parental involvement. Teachers believe it is the responsibility of either parents or administrators to close the gap between school and home and oversee these programs. Money for programs, feeling threatened, and expectations of others were at the top of the list for additional reasons why teachers avoided active participation in programs associated with parental involvement; however, none of the aforementioned items exceeded 30% whereas time constraint was recorded at a lofty 95%. Although all teachers in the study recognized the value of parental support and involvement, they were still reluctant to create or administer a partnership between parents and teachers (Swantie, 2009).

However, the teachers' questionnaires of the Asian International School indicated that the majority of teachers disagreed somewhat and strongly disagreed that their school trains parents on developing home routines, conditions, and environments that support their child's learning respectively (80.0% and 8.6%). The research report of Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement (2010) is clearly explained that school staff should receive parental engagement training through initial teacher training or continuing professional development.

The study found that all the teachers (100%) agreed that their school has a clear understanding of the defined policies for teachers that encourage communication with the parents discussing the curriculum, student achievement, and ways a parent can be involved. Funkhouser (1997) was quoted, when families are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. For these reasons, increasing family involvement in the education of their children is an important goal for schools, particularly those serving low-income and other students at risk of failure (Funkhouser, 1997). The most practical and important question, however, is how to create more effective parental participation, and also remove barriers and obstacles. At the most basic level, this means all parents are informed about their rights and opportunities to have a say in their children's education.

Further, the research shows that teachers agreed somewhat (72%) that their school provides productive professional developers that train them on the value of parents and ways to encourage partnerships between the schools and home. The same report the above mentioned has explained that parental engagement of the students learning process is effectively supported when parents receive clear specific and targeted information from the school.

The research found out that all the teachers (100%) had positive attitudes regarding that their school provides information to families on how to assist students with the skills they need to improve and most of the teachers (Agreed somewhat 60% and strongly agreed 30%) in the school agreed that their school assists families in guiding students to set academic goals and monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. Literature shows that family school-school engagement and family-school symmetry were associated with greater reading gains during the primary grades (Crosnoe, 2013).

From the study conducted, it was found that there was a significant difference in student achievement with respect to their parents' participation in parent-teacher meetings. Therefore, it seems to be imperative to make necessary communication arrangements between the school and parents, and also between parents and students. Further, it found that a good relationship between parents and the school was benefited the student's educational achievement. Teachers in International schools have suggested that schools must provide productive professional developers that train them on the value of parents and ways to encourage partnerships between the schools and home.

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