

University of the Virgin Islands

Graduate Program

The Relationship between Parental Involvement  
and Academic Achievement of Low Performing  
Ninth Grade Students at the British Virgin Islands High School

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by

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## Abstract

The investigative research was designed to determine if there was a relationship between the Academic Achievement of Low Performing Grade 9 students at the British Virgin Islands High School and their parental involvement. In this study, “academic achievement” was determined by the students’ GPA at the end of the academic year 2001-2002. Academic records were used to select the 70 low performers who completed a survey on Parental Involvement. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was a relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of low performing grade nine students at the BVI High School. An analysis of the data revealed a moderate negative relationship which was statistically significant between academic achievement of low performing Grade 9 students and parental involvement ( $r = -.369, p < .01$ ).

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The British Virgin Islands is a group of about 50 small islands in the Caribbean, 60 miles east of Puerto Rico. The islands constitute one of the four Overseas Territories of Great Britain. Although situated in the westernmost part of the Lesser Antilles, the Virgin Islands form a geological unit with Puerto Rico and the Greater Antilles; they are of volcanic origin overlaid with limestone (Pickering, 1997). As late as the 1940's, no Secondary Education was available in the British Virgin Islands. The highest grade that any child could access was standard VII, the top of the Elementary (Primary) School. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1943 the senior school was opened in rented quarters with Mr. T.D. Green, an Englishman, as the headmaster. The first students of that school were forty teenage girls and boys from different parts of Tortola and Jost Van Dyke. The pupils were divided into forms I and II then later Form III was added (Wheatley, 1983).

Sixty years later, the British Virgin Islands High School is the only secondary school on Tortola the capital of the British Virgin Islands. Tutelage is provided to 1404 students 95% of the entire secondary school population. Positioned in the capital of the territory, the institution has met and continues to experience its share of successes and failures. While the institution has been a pivotal social agent in the development of the territory and a catalyst for the enhancement of the human potential, there have been significant dropout rates, as well as low academic performance involving Grade 9 students at the school. For example, records reveal that from the academic year 1998 up to 2002, 16 students dropped out; three students in 2001 dropped out because of pregnancies (E. Stoutt, personal communication, November 18, 2003).

Instances of students repeating second form are causes for concern. Table 1 below shows the number of repeaters during the trinity terms 2000-2002.

**Table 1**

Grade 9 Repeaters (2000-2002)

Repeaters	Year		
	2000	2001	2002
Males	34	39	41
Females	19	19	29
Total	53	58	70

Additionally as shown in Table 2 the low performing students during the years 1999-2002 were a cause for further concern. There were 45, 42, and 70 low achievers during the academic years 2000, 2001, 2002 respectively. These numbers represented 15.9%, 15.2% and 24.4% respectively for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002, of the Grade 9 student population.

**Table 2**

Low Grade 9 Performers 2000-2002 at the British Virgin Islands High School.

Year	No. Low Performers		%Low Performers		Total students	Overall % Low performers
	M	F	M	F		
2000	24	21	15.5	16.4	283	15.9
2001	22	20	15.5	14.8	277	15.2
2002	41	29	24.3	24.6	287	24.4

M – Males                      F- Females



The administration, teachers, and education officials have encountered significant barriers in finding workable solutions to stem such occurrences. Additionally, an Alternative Education program was developed in September of 2002 to ensure that students are given an opportunity to earn a basic diploma that would provide necessary certification for the world of work. The Alternative Education Program was a program developed by the Department of Education for students of the BVI High School who had repeated their grade more than two times, had far exceeded the average age for the grade and had been very disruptive students.

At its inception, Grade 9 students comprised the majority of students in the Alternative Education Program. The program was conceived in 1997 but became operational in 2002. There were diminishing returns in terms of student attendance and attainment. In fact, during the academic year 2003-2004 there was an increase in student retention for Grade 9. Eighty-four students were retained and another 38 out of a total of 343 students were socially promoted because of age. One can infer that if students are performing poorly at this level, then there is much cause for concern. Moreover, such problems can disrupt the system with implications that endanger the institution as an effective entity for educating the nation.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Based on the researcher's years of experience in education and interactions with colleagues at national, regional, and international levels, it is accepted that no educational system, worldwide, is free of the issue of low student performance. In fact, hours of discussion and research are spent on reversing such trends and safe guarding students from its effects. However, in the British Virgin Islands High School the problem has

been increased to such an extent that it threatens the purpose for which students come to school to learn to become productive members of society.

In 2002 there was a 9.5% increase in low performers at the BVI High School. There was a steady increase in repeaters for the three academic years. Any educational system with an increase in low performers must be deemed to have a serious setback. This situation appears to signal an environment that is not conducive to learning and warrants scrutiny. Factors that impact student achievement range from the teaching and learning environment, the quality of instruction, the qualification of those who impart such knowledge, the role of parents, the socio-economic status of students, the types of families from which students emerge, to the physical plant.

This study will investigate one of the factors that may have contributed to the low level of student performance experienced at the BVI High School.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to investigate if there is a relationship between student low academic achievement and parental involvement.

#### *Research Hypothesis*

There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement of low performing ninth grade students.

#### *Definition of Terms*

**Low Academic Performer** a student with a grade point average (GPA) of 3 or below. This is based on a maximum GPA of 9 and a minimum GPA of 0. (See Appendix A)

**Academic Achievement** refers to the ability of a student to attain sustained and acceptable performance that will meet the requirements necessary for promotion to the next grade.

**Parental Involvement** refers to the extent to which parents or guardians are active participants in their child's learning. Moreover, it refers to the assistance students are given at home and school and the manner in which parents are viewed as teachers, supporters, advocates and decision makers.

**Low Parental Involvement** refers to a score between 15-35.

**Moderate Parental Involvement** refers to a score between 36-56.

**High Parental Involvement** refers to a score between 57-75.

**British Virgin Islands High School** is a comprehensive secondary school in Tortola of the British Virgin Islands that caters to children of ages 12-17.

**Grade 9 Students** refers to students who are within their second academic year at the British Virgin Islands High School. The average age for these students is 14 years. In the American system this is equivalent to Grade 9.

**Repeaters** refer to students who have been retained in Grade 9 for more than one academic school year.

### *Significance of the Study*

An inquiry about low student performance adds to the body of literature that exists in that new and innovative recommendations would be delineated. The findings in this study will provide a reference from which future decisions could be made.

Moreover, such a study could motivate all of the stakeholders in education (Minister of Education, Chief Education Officer, principals, teachers, parents and the

community) within the territory to enact change thereby forcing the educational system of the territory to be responsive to the demands of a rapidly changing territory. The findings can be used to formulate plans and policies that will change, and minimize low student performance at the British Virgin Islands High School.

This study offers a unique perspective because this is the first study of this nature that has been done at this institution. Additionally, much can be gained from the research in that it will open avenues for further research. The findings of this research might ensure new strategies to allow students to have a bright and successful environment conducive to learning.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

There are two main limitations of the study. Firstly, the research only examines the low academic performance of Grade 9 students at the BVI High School institution, and therefore no generalizations can be made to the entire student population at all the secondary institutions in the Territory. Secondly, the questionnaire data to be collected from students was dependent upon their willingness to cooperate and tell the truth. Therefore, questions about student maturity and their tolerance level towards the survey are viewed as a limitation.

#### *Summary*

It is evident that low student achievement is an impediment to the goal of education and learning at the BVI High School. It is important for all the stakeholders to explore means of reversing this trend thereby promoting higher levels of student achievement.

Within the subsequent chapter, literature delineating the relationship between parental involvement and the academic achievement of low performers will be discussed.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

The extant literature that follows reveals that many factors contribute to successful student achievement and attainment. Educators and researchers alike would concur that one of the notable factors is parental involvement.

Results from research advances the view that the influence of Parental Involvement on Student achievement is beyond dispute. To illustrate, when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but also throughout life. In fact, the most accurate prediction of a student achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to: (a) create a home environment that encourages learning (b) express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and (c) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. (San Diego County Office of Education, 1997)

Using data from a nationally representative sample of 21, 814 students and their parents participating in the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Keith, et al. (1993) concluded that parental involvement has a powerful effect on eighth graders' achievement and that although its effect was slightly stronger in math and social studies it was a powerful influence on student success in all subject areas.

Walberg (1984) concluded that student achievement improves in a home environment that encourages learning. For instance, he determined from an analysis of over 2500 students on how they learn that an academically stimulating home environment is one of the chief determinants of learning. Furthermore, Sattes (1985) from a review of

30 studies on the connection between family background and school achievement, surmised that parent-involvement factors such as reading to children, having books available, taking trips, guiding television watching, and providing stimulating experience contribute to school achievement.

Katie Lee, Parent Involvement Coordinator of the Hopkins School district, unearthed evidence that family involvement is critical to student achievement. Lee (2002) cited the following based on research findings; “When parents are involved at school, not just at home, children do better at school and they stay in school longer; children do best when their parents are enabled to play four key roles in their children’s learning: teachers, supporters, advocates and decision-markers”(p.1).

One of the hallmarks of the National PTA since its inception in 1897 has been its affirmation of the significance of parental involvement. For over 100 years, this organization has authenticated children’s benefit when parents and families are involved in education (National PTA, 2000). The foundation of today’s emphasis in parental involvement came from Rousseau and Pestalozzi, both psychologists. Rousseau viewed a child as a plant and therefore emphasized that plants are shaped by cultivation so similarly parents should shape their children with education. Pestalozzi (1951) on the other hand encourages parents to nourish the child’s mind.

In support of these philosophies, a number of other theoretically based as well as empirically based studies have also verified that an investment in parental involvement improves children’s educational outcome (Henderson and Berla, 1995; Comer and Haynes 1991; Erbe, 1991; Epstein, 1990). Predictors of student success include the families’ ability, with the help of the school, to create a home environment that

encourages learning, the ability for parents to communicate high, yet reasonable expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and the ability for parents to become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (Henderson and Berla, 1995). Likewise, studies have confirmed that students get better grades and have better attitudes toward school if parents are aware of what is happening in school and encourage their children (Lynn, 1994).

Steinberg, et al. (1996) examined the relationship between student achievement and parents' participation in school programs, conferences, and extra curricular activities. A statistically significant correlation was found between parental involvement and these variables.

Zellman and Waterman (1998) interviewed 193 children and their parents to determine the relationship between parents' involvement and children's outcome. Findings of this study revealed that parent-school involvement contributed to many positive outcomes, specifically better test scores in reading and teacher ratings of fewer learning problems.

International comparisons attributed the high academic success of students from Asian countries to the priority their families give to education (Stevens, 1993). In the October issue of the Research Press Report, (2001, p.1) on parental involvement, in education, the report stated that British Parents "top the league for spending quality time with their children." It was also concluded that what a mother does with her children is more relevant than her level of education. These findings support the benefits of parental involvement.

Fruchter and Norm (1992) authenticated for instance, that effective parent involvement makes important contributions to students' achievement. Jones (2001) reiterates the meaningfulness of parental involvement in education but suggested that while all children benefit, children from low income and minority families had the most to gain when schools involve parents. Research compiled in *What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning* (U.S. Department of Education, cited in Jones, 2001) concluded that the curriculum of the home is twice as predictive as family SES. In addition, the study revealed that those children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school achieve more than those who do not.

Additionally, Rothstein (1996) suggested that certain families contribute to or detract from the academic achievement of their children. Three types of home environment were profiled as affecting the academic success or failures of students. These are (a) cooperative-to-school families of students, (b) antagonistic-to-school families of students and (c) average families that were between these two extremes.

Cooperative to school families tended to support the formal goals and purposes of schooling, sending their children to school on time, dressing them in appropriate ways and providing them with the necessary school supplies. They are interested in getting to know their child's teachers. Antagonistic to school families were seen as the exact opposite of cooperative ones. They tended to take the side of their children in disputes with the school, consequently encouraging them to disregard the school's rules and requirements. Average families are interested in what is happening in the classroom.

Rollins and Thomas (1979) discovered that for boys and girls high parental support was associated with high academic achievement when parental control was high



and high parental control was associated with low achievement when parental support was low. Furthermore, in a study of high school seniors in Wisconsin, Servek and Shah (1957) showed that when parental interest and encouragement were low, few students planned college careers regardless of their family's status or their own intelligence. Conversely, when parental encouragement was high the number of students planning to go to college was also high regardless of the economic status of parents.

Studies in Europe according to Rothstein (1996), found that middle class families who showed greater interest in their children's education had higher levels of academic achievement.

Portes, Zady and Dunham (2002) conducted a study on the Effects of Parents' Assistance on Middle School Students problem solving and achievement. It was found that the interaction of Parents' assistance correlated significantly with the child's intellectual performance not only in the science tasks assigned 7<sup>th</sup> graders but also in school achievement.

Parents have a major influence on children's success in school and academic performance. Parent involvement has been shown to increase students' academic achievement improve their behavior and motivation, reduce absenteeism and dropping out and foster a positive attitude toward homework (Hester, 1989). Follow up studies verified by Hara and Burke (1998) studied the implementation of a parent involvement program at the third-grade level of an inner-city school. The program resulted in a significant improvement in reading achievement and vocabulary for students whose parents became more involved in their schooling.

### *Summary of the Literature*

According to the National PTA in the United States: “over 30” years research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parental involvement and student success. Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of educational reform” (p.5, 1997). Parent and family involvement in their children’s educational experiences is directly linked to student learning and motivation, quality schools and effective reform strategies (Watkins, 1997; National PTA, 1997). Students whose parents are involved in their schooling demonstrate advanced academic achievement and cognitive development (Herman and Yeh, 1980)

Parental involvement is a powerful influence in student education success. The most comprehensive survey of the research is a series of publications developed by H. Henderson, Anne Henderson, and Nancy Berla; *Parent Participation-Student Achievement: The Evidence Grows (1981)*, *The Evidence continues to Grow (1987)* and *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement (1995)*. Citing more than 85 studies, these publications document the profound and comprehensive benefits for students, families and schools when parents and family members become participants in their children’s education and their lives. The evidence is now beyond dispute. When parents are involved in their children’s education at home, their children do better in school.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

The stated purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there is a relationship between low performing students of Grade 9 at the British Virgin Islands High School and parental involvement. This chapter presents the design of the study, a description of the sampling procedure, instrumentation, procedures for data collection and the analysis of the data collected.

#### *Design*

In this correlational design, quantitative data were collected to determine the relationship between the academic achievement of low performers and parental involvement. School records and a questionnaire elicited the quantitative data that were analyzed.

#### *Sampling Procedure*

The population for this study was the Grade 9 of the secondary school on the island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. Grade 9 students were selected for this study because the researcher has overall responsibility for these students on a daily basis. Moreover, of all the grades the researcher has taught at the school at the point of this study, ninth graders had the greatest levels of low student performance. This school had an enrollment of 1404 students as of September 2003 (Elmore Stoutt, Principal of the BVI High School, October 2003). The student population is multicultural with other ethnic groups from various Caribbean islands, as well as Syria, and the United States.

### *Population and Sample*

The total Grade 9 enrollments at the end of the school years 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and 2002-2003, respectively were 283, 277 and 286. (Department of Education and Culture, British Virgin Islands, School's Terminal Reports, 2000, 2001 and 2002).

The sample of 70 students for the study was selected after the analysis of the students' GPA for the entire academic school year, 2001-2002. (See Appendix A) The GPA was calculated by adding the quality points of all the nine subjects that a student took during a single academic year. If a student scored an A+ for English, C for mathematics, D+ for Music, B+ for History, quality points were assigned. English would be 9 quality points, Mathematics 4 quality points, Music 3 quality points and History 7 quality points. Finally the quality points would be divided by the number of subjects that the student took for the entire year.

A student who scored a grade point average of 3 or below would be considered a low academic performer. A student scoring a GPA of between 4,5 or 6 would be classified as an average academic performer. A student scoring 7,8 or 9 quality points would be considered as a high academic performer. Students who satisfied the criterion for low levels of performance were selected. The sample consisted of 46 males and 24 females.

### *Instrumentation*

The Questionnaire on Parental Involvement was adapted from Welch (2000). This questionnaire was used to collect data, which was checked to determine its correlation with the GPA of the 70 low performers.

The items on the questionnaire pertaining to Parental Involvement were adopted with some modifications from the Questionnaire of Perceptions on Actual and Preferred Parental Involvement (Welch, 2000) (See Appendix B). Items 2, 3, 5-9, 12-13, 18-24, 26-27 and 32-34 were adapted. The fifteen items were used because the questionnaire targeted low performers. In fact, it was felt that these students would not concentrate on the task of completing the entire long questionnaire. The Likert type scale sought responses in five categories. *Strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) Undecided (3) agree (4) strongly agree (5)*. Item 1 sought to determine the frequency at which parents communicated with teachers. Item 2 sought to examine if parents encourages children to obey the rules of the institution.

Item 3 examined how often report cards were collected and reviewed. Item 4 was to determine if parents ensured that students were punctual for school. Item 5 addressed the degree to which parents were pleased with their child's accomplishments. Item 6 investigated if parents insisted that students do their homework. Item 7 sought to determine if parents provided a quiet time for them to study. Item 8 determined if students' parents made sure that they attended school. Item 9 investigated whether parents came to school regularly to check their child's performance in class. Item 10 sought to determine if parents attended activities organized by the school. Item 11 investigated if parents provided additional resources for their children.

Item 12 sought to determine if students thought their parents would like them to get high grades in school. Item 13 sought to determine if parents supervised the television programs they viewed. Item 14 sought to determine if parents supervised their

homework. Finally, item 15 sought to investigate if parents helped to organize activities that were put on by the school.

### *Pilot*

A pilot study was conducted with one of the Grade 9 classes. Students were allowed to complete the questionnaire. Upon completion the researcher performed a preliminary analysis, then selected students for interviews. The interviewees comprised of 7 girls and 9 boys. The interviews were used to elicit data that would clarify any uncertainties or misunderstanding. The results from the pilot indicated that the questions on Parent Involvement were adequate, but had to be organized to fit on one sheet of paper so that the questionnaires would not appear so lengthy.

### *Procedures*

Permission to conduct this study in the BVI High School was sought from the Chief Education Officer in the Department of Education. Moreover, discussions were held with the principal, Mr. Elmore Stoutt, prior to distributing the questionnaire so that his permission and support were obtained.

The subjects for the study were obtained by reviewing the academic records (mark sheets) of the British Virgin Islands High School for the year 2001-2002. Permission was sought from parents of students after informing them of the survey to be conducted. Students were all given the questionnaire at the same time, after permission was granted by the appropriate teachers. Upon completion, the questionnaires were sealed in envelopes and returned at a location designated by the researcher. During the completion of the questionnaire, the researcher monitored the progress of the survey.

*Data Analysis*

The total scores of the 70 low achievers based on GPA (see Appendix A) were tallied on a spread sheet, and transferred to the SPSS 10.1 program for analysis using the Pearsons r correlation .The Standard package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10 (1999) was utilized to analyze the results obtained from the questionnaire. In order to answer the research question of this study that stated “is there a relationship between the academic achievement of low performing students of Grade 9 at the BVI High School and Parental Involvement,” the Pearson Correlation Coefficient test was used. A significance level of 0.01 was set to test each null hypothesis.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The stated purpose of this study was to investigate whether there was a relationship between the academic achievement of low performing students of Grade 9 and parental involvement at the British Virgin Islands High School.

Historical data were retrieved from the school's academic records for the school year 2001- 2002 to select the 70 subjects for the study, based on their GPA. The 15-item likert-type Parental Involvement Questionnaire, adopted from Welch (2000) collected data about the parents' involvement with the 70 students. The data were entered into a computer and the Pearson correlation coefficient was determined using the SPSS 10.1 program. The computer-generated results were analyzed to determine the strength of the relationship between both variables.

The parental involvement questionnaire collected data to determine whether a relationship existed between low performing students and parental involvement. The Instrument was designed to elicit the students' views apart from demographic. The questionnaire had fifteen items. The Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to determine if a relationship existed between Parental Involvement and Low Performing students of Grade 9 at the BVI High School. Results for the research question are presented followed by an acceptance or rebuttal of the null hypothesis.

#### *Research Hypothesis*

There is no significant relationship between academic achievement and parental involvement of low performing ninth grade students.



A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between Low Performing Students and Parental Involvement.

**Table 3**

Intercorrelation between Academic Achievement and Parental Involvement.

		Parental Involvement	GPA
Parental Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
	N	70	70
Grade Point Average	Pearson Correlation	-.369**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
	N	70	70

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A moderate negative correlation was found  $r(70) = -.369, p < .01$ . This indicates a significant relationship between the two variables. Parental Involvement is related to Low Performing Student (See Table 3).

The results of the 70 low performing students indicated that 1 student had a high parental involvement score between 57-75, which represents 1.4%. Twenty-two students had a moderate parental involvement score between 36-56, which represents 31.4%. Forty-seven students had a low parental involvement score between 15-35, which represents 67.1%. (See Appendix F) It is apparent that the majority of the 70 low performing Grade 9 students had low involvement from parents in their schooling and it affected their academic achievement. These results are consistent with that of Rollins and Thomas (1979) who discovered that for boys and girls high parental support was

associated with high academic achievement when parental control was high and high parental control was associated with low achievement when parental support was low.

Twenty-nine students had a GPA of within a range of 3, 19 within a range of 2, 17 within a range of 1 and 5 within a range of 0. (See Appendix F)

## Chapter 5

### Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

This research was undertaken in an attempt to investigate whether there was a relationship between Parental Involvement and Low Performing Students of Grade 9 at the BVI High School. In this chapter, the findings from the research questions are discussed followed by recommendations for practice and future research and conclusion.

#### Discussion

The research question solicited whether there was a relationship between academic achievement of low performing Grade 9 students at the British Virgin Islands High School and parental involvement. The results indicate academic achievement of Low performers was related to parental involvement with statistical significance. However, a higher correlation coefficient was expected between Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement of low performing Grade 9 students. One reason for the results might have been the selection of the sample. Parental Involvement tends to continue until Grades 10 and 11 so it is possible that Grade 9 students had parents who continued to make the effort that reduced the strength of the relationship.

At the BVI High School several other factors could have accounted for this situation. Somehow there seems to be a “mix-up” of priorities. In other words concern for education is not a priority with all parents. Therefore, educational supervision is not promoted in the homes. Some parents lack-parenting skills necessary for sustained student achievement. Parents themselves are dropouts and younger and this creates a problem.

Too often as institution parent involvement opportunities does not extend beyond the classroom or school. There are little or no programs offering home visits. Parents are not seen as integral components of policy planning sessions. In fact, programs consisting of parent training meetings with little direct goal-oriented contact between parents, teachers and children are not practiced. Parents are not surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability in becoming involved in children's learning so that the parents' recourses could be coordinated with those that exist within the school. Parents who are unable to volunteer in the school building are not given the options for helping in other ways, at home or place of employment. Partnerships with local business and service groups to advance student learning and assist schools and families are not developed. Additionally, there are little or no encouragement of employers to adopt policies and practices that promote and support adult participation in children's education. Moreover Collaboration with community agencies to provide family support services and adult learning opportunities, enabling parents to more fully participate in activities that support education is not experienced.

It is possible that when parent meetings are scheduled, sadly those who attend are catered for; instead we need to reach out to all families. Too often we reach out to those who are generally in compliance with what is expected as an educational institution. Parents absent themselves because of several reasons and whenever possible this should be minimized, for instance, there exists among the student body of the BVI High School, students of Spanish speaking origin; therefore, the institution should translate communications to assist non-English-speaking parents. When parents can't attend scheduled Parent Teacher Meetings other alternatives should be proposed. Conduct

conferences with parents at least twice a term, with follow-up as needed. These should accommodate the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, and the need for childcare. Furthermore the institution could promote informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact. At these informal gatherings a significant amount of time should be devoted to open-ended parent-dominated discussion of experiences.

Schools are a reflection of society; in this territory there is a breakdown in discipline in the homes and in the community that has led to an indifferent attitude among students. It appears more seldom than often that as an institution, programs are not tailored to be responsive to the needs and characteristics of the population being served. These factors could have direct bearing on the results.

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's seven years of research (2002) on parent involvement in education, found that when parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, have better attendance, complete homework and consistently and exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior. In fact, students' behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence and antisocial behavior decreased as parent involvement increases. Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, develop a working relationship with their child's educators or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.

McMillan (1993) in her study sought to identify some of the major factors in effective parent-child communication, and to discover how parent-child communication impacted on academic performance of primary school students in the Bahamas.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from upper primary school students and their parents. Results of the data analysis suggested that parents spent too little time in effective communication with their children, and that their involvement in parent-child communication and in school activities correlated highly with the child's academic performance. Reid (1964) made similar assertions. His study sought to investigate the effects of certain school, home, and general environmental factors on the achievement ratings of Jamaican junior school children, and the interactions of these factors. Tests and questionnaires were used to collect data from all students completing the fourth year in a stratified sample of 10 percent of primary schools in the country. Averaged criterion scores in English and Arithmetic were correlated with such school factors as size of enrolment, class size, regularity of attendance, teacher status, equipment, buildings, and accommodation. Amongst home and environmental factors considered against the criterion were nature and size of the family structure, parents' educational level, nature of the communal environment, and the economic level of the community. The results suggested that the most essential contributing factor was good home background, namely, the education of the parents' themselves and their interest in their children's education.

Layne (1992), in his study examined the influence of home environmental factors on mathematics achievement of Barbadian children. The groups of home variables examined were those related to: 1) achievement motivation training, 2) independence training, 3) the educational environment, 4) family stability, unity, and security, and 5) socio-economic status. Data were collected from a sample of 105 Form 3 students (44 boys and 61 girls) from a large newer secondary school in Barbados, and their parents. A 60-item multiple-choice test was used to measure the cognitive domain in mathematics at

three levels: 1) computation, 2) comprehension and application, and 3) analysis. A 5-point attitude scale of 40 items and an interview schedule were used to examine the affective domain.

Results of the data analysis showed that: 1) achievement motivation training, educational environment, and family stability, unity, and security were significantly related to academic achievement; 2) the combined group of home variables were significantly related to the overall mathematics scores; 3) family stability, unity, and security and the educational environment were significantly related to three (motivation, attitudes, reasons for success) and two (motivation and reasons for success) of the attitude variables respectively, while socioeconomic status variables were significantly related to mathematics anxiety; 4) overall home environment scores yielded non-significant relationships with attitudes to school as well as attitudes to mathematics; 5) a number of different attitudes and views about mathematics were significantly related to the mathematics scores; 6) the overall attitude to mathematics yielded significant results with the mathematics scores; and 7) the only socioeconomic status variable that was significantly related to the mathematics scores was father's occupation.

A Study on Students' Issues and concerns conducted by the PTA Executive of the BVI High School found that parental involvement as far as students were concerned was an imperative mechanism for student achievement. 157 students were surveyed from Grades 8-11. Thirty three percent of the students who participated in the study were in Grade 8, 13 % in Grade 9, 25% in Grade 10 and 27% were in Grade 11. The results of the study indicated that a meaningful 93% of the respondents were encouraged to study at home. In fact, 96% of the respondents are allowed to study at home; moreover, 73% of

three levels: 1) computation, 2) comprehension and application, and 3) analysis. A 5-point attitude scale of 40 items and an interview schedule were used to examine the affective domain.

Results of the data analysis showed that: 1) achievement motivation training, educational environment, and family stability, unity, and security were significantly related to academic achievement; 2) the combined group of home variables were significantly related to the overall mathematics scores; 3) family stability, unity, and security and the educational environment were significantly related to three (motivation, attitudes, reasons for success) and two (motivation and reasons for success) of the attitude variables respectively, while socioeconomic status variables were significantly related to mathematics anxiety; 4) overall home environment scores yielded non-significant relationships with attitudes to school as well as attitudes to mathematics; 5) a number of different attitudes and views about mathematics were significantly related to the mathematics scores; 6) the overall attitude to mathematics yielded significant results with the mathematics scores; and 7) the only socioeconomic status variable that was significantly related to the mathematics scores was father's occupation.

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those surveyed had their academic needs met at home. A significant 57% of the students indicated they are rewarded for good academic performances. Eighty nine percent of the students are performing above the low achievement level of the institution. (See Appendix A)

#### *Recommendations for Practice*

In order to improve low student achievement at the BVI High School involving grade 9 students several strategies and programs should be implemented. The academic achievement of low performing grade 9 students of the BVI High School could be improved if all stakeholders in education follow these strategies:

1. The benefits of parental involvement are apparent; parents should get to know other parents and form support groups to work on problems and issues of mutual interest.
2. The BVI High School should provide for parents suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level, to illustrate, provide workshops, videotapes, and/or computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing at each grade level.
3. Interaction homework should be another important activity. Time taken once or twice a week for parents to be actively involved in their child's homework can make a huge difference. Parents cannot only create a quiet area to do homework, but they can become tutors. Peterson (1989) found that when parents act as tutors considerable and instant changes in children's I.Q. scores occur. This rise in I.Q. will carry over into the classroom and cause a rise in performance.

4. Another method of fostering Parental Involvement so that low student achievement can be reversed is to make sure that parents and their children understand the school curriculum. (Jones 2001)
5. Unconditional support from a parent to his/her child will enable the child to prevail. It will become increasingly important for parents to find a place for children to do homework and provide them with the necessary resources such as computers, books, and other pertinent school materials.
6. In today's world, parents have the opportunity of staying involved in their children's lives even if they cannot always be at home. Thanks to advancing technology parents are able to use cell phones, pagers, e-mail web cameras and other audio, and video equipment via e-mail. Homework can be e-mailed back and forth and parents can maintain an active role in their child's educational life.
7. As for the Institution, a website can be a pertinent tool for student success. This school website can be used so teachers, parents and students can communicate freely. Homework and opportunities for all stakeholders especially parents can be communicated via this website.
8. Teaching strategies should be modified to cater to the needs of low performers. To illustrate, the varying multiple intelligences that students have should be taken into consideration by teachers in their classrooms.
9. All school staff must be engaged in creating an environment and a culture in which low achievers' (families) in particular, feel that they have joined a school community.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

1. Future studies may explore, identify and analyze additional factors affecting the academic achievement of low performing students at the elementary or secondary level. Such studies would provide important data for policy makers regarding disparity issues. Moreover, the groups of pupils that are in danger of failing can be targeted for intervention.
2. Future research might examine the actual level of Parental Involvement with what is preferred by both teachers and parents in the British Virgin Islands High School. A study of this nature would show the differences in the perception of teachers, administrators, and parents.

### *Conclusion*

The study has confirmed that there exists a link between Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement of Low Performing Grade 9 students of the BVI High School. Parental Involvement is an all-encompassing term that includes everything from the parent's child rearing practices at home to the parent's participation in events held at the school. Research has confirmed the positive connection between parental involvement and student success. It is imperative to keep a flow of information between parent and school. Parents, as far as possible, should support and supplement the instruction of the school; in fact the institution should do all that is required to foster this situation. An example of this could be programs to teach parents to enhance the home environment in ways that benefit their children's learning can produce substantial outcomes. Parents should become an integral part of the school's decision-making structure through active parent teachers associations. Collaboration with the community

at large (representing the school in partnerships with other organizations) should be pursued for the derivatives it can bring. The home is the most important social institution. The home is the first and most important academy for learning. Children deserve the best; therefore, full consideration from all stakeholders will make them productive members of society.

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## Appendix: A

## Mark Scheme of the British Virgin Islands High School

**MARK SCHEME**

<b>PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	<b>QUALITY POINT</b>
85 – 100	A+	9
75 – 84	A	8
70 – 74	B+	7
65 – 69	B	6
60 – 64	C+	5
50 – 59	C	4
45 – 49	D+	3
40 – 44	D	2
35 – 49	E	1
0 - 34	F	0

Note: A passing grade is represented by a grade of C or above.

High achievement: GPA of 7, 8 and 9

Average achievement: GPA of 4,5 and 6

Low achievement: GPA of 0, 1, 2, and 3

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire on Parental Involvement

Adapted by Welch (2000)

#### Student Questionnaire

#### Parental Involvement

- ❖ This questionnaire seeks your views. Answers will be useful in order that a requirement for graduate studies will be accomplished. **This is not a Test!**
- ❖ Neither your teachers nor your parents will see your answers.
- ❖ Please answer all the questions truthfully.
- ❖ **PLACE A TICK IN THE BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SITUATION**

**IMPORTANT: Do not write your name on the questionnaire**

	<b>Strongly Disagree 1</b>	<b>Disagree 2</b>	<b>Undecided 3</b>	<b>Agree 4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree 5</b>
1. My Parent(s) communicate regularly with my teachers.					
2. My Parent(s) encourage me to obey the rules of the school.					
3. My Parent(s) pick up and reviews my report card regularly.					
4. My Parent(s) ensures that I arrive to school on time.					
5. My Parent(s) are pleased with my accomplishments at school.					
6. My Parent(s) insist that I do homework.					
7. My Parent(s) provide a quiet time for me to study.					
8. My Parent(s) make sure that I attend school.					
9. My parent(s) comes to school regularly to check my performance in class.					
10. My Parent(s) attend activities organized by the school such as sports, concerts or field trips.					

11. My Parent(s) provides additional resources such as newspaper, dictionaries, magazines etc.					
<p>Chief Education Officer          Walle Tenge          P.O. Box 204          Road Town          Tortola          NVI</p>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b> 1	<b>Disagree</b> 2	<b>Undecided</b> 3 disagree/agree	<b>Agree</b> 4	<b>Strongly Agree</b> 5
12. I think my parents would like me to get high grades at school.					
13. My Parent(s) decide on the programmes I watch on television.					
14. My Parent(s) supervise my homework assignments.					
15. My Parent(s) help to organize activities that are put on by the school.					

## Appendix: C

### Cover Letters

#### I – Chief Education Officer

Wade Tobin  
P.O. Box 254  
Road Town  
Tortola  
BVI

January 10, 2003

The Chief Education Officer  
Mr. Angel Smith  
Department of Education  
Central Administration Complex  
Road Town  
Tortola

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a graduate student at the University of the Virgin Islands- St. Thomas campus. I am in the process of completing a thesis of which the topic is "*A study on Poor Academic Achievement of Form Two Students at the British Virgin Islands High School compared to Socioeconomic Status, Parental Involvement, and Family Structure.*" It is my intention to draw my sample from among the student population at the British Virgin Islands High School.

I hereby seek your permission to use students from this school. Confidentiality and ethical standards will be maintained throughout the study. My advisor is Dr. Dennis Griffith, Chairman of the Education Division at the University of the Virgin Islands St. Croix, Campus.

It is my strong conviction that the findings from this study would be valuable in assisting parents, fellow Colleagues and other educators to become more aware of the factors that may inhibit and/or fortify student achievement.

Your favorable consideration of this request would be greatly appreciated. Please respond at your earliest convenience so that I may be able to submit it to the Principal of the school listed above.

Wade Tobin  
P.O. Box 254  
Road Town  
Tortola  
BVI

January 10, 2003

The Chief Education Officer  
Mr. Angel Smith  
Department of Education  
Central Administration Complex  
Road Town  
Tortola

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a graduate student at the University of the Virgin Islands- St. Thomas campus. I am in the process of completing a thesis of which the topic is "*A study on Poor Academic Achievement of Form Two Students at the British Virgin Islands High School compared to socioeconomic status, Parental Involvement, geographic Location and Family Structure.*" It is my intention to draw my sample from among the student population at the British Virgin Islands High School.

I hereby seek your permission to use students from this school. Confidentiality and ethical standards will be maintained throughout the study. My advisor is Dr. Dennis Griffith, Chairman of the Education Division at the University of the Virgin Islands St. Croix, Campus.

It is my strong conviction that the findings from this study would be valuable in assisting parents, fellow Colleagues and other educators to become more aware of the factors that may inhibit and/or fortify student achievement.

Your favorable consideration of this request would be greatly appreciated. Please respond at your earliest convenience so that I may be able to submit it to the Principal of the school listed above.

Yours respectfully,

Wade Tobin

Approval

Date

28/02/03

Disapproval

Date

## Cover Letter II- Teachers

Dear Teacher

I am a graduate student Education at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas campus.

As a requirement for graduation, I am conducting a study on the topic "Student Underachievement and Variables that may inhibit or fortify Student Achievement". Students of The British Virgin Islands High School were selected to participate in this study. Moreover, students from within your class have been selected to complete a questionnaire.

It is my sincere hope that the findings of the study would be beneficial in helping concerned parents, fellow teachers and all involved, to better understand how to help children in their academic achievement. The Chief Education Officer, Mr. Angel Smith has given permission to conduct the study.

Yours sincerely,

---

Wade Tobin  
Teacher,  
BVI High School

### Cover Letter- III

Dear Parent(s)/ Guardian(s),

I am a graduate student in Education at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas campus. I plan to complete my course of study this academic year (2002-2003), graduating with a Masters of Arts Degree in Education.

As a requirement for graduation, I am conducting a study on Student Underachievement compared to Socio Economic, Parental Involvement, Family Characteristic and Geography Location. I am selecting students from the BVI High School to participate in this study. Your child has been selected based on empirical records from his/her class to complete a questionnaire.

The findings of the study would be beneficial in helping concerned parents, teachers and other stakeholder, to better assist students in their academic endeavors. The BVIHS Administration has approved the study.

I would be most grateful, therefore, if you would consent for your child to complete the questionnaire. Your cooperation is vital to the study. I would like to reassure you that confidentiality and ethical standards will be preserved throughout the study.

Yours sincerely,

---

Wade Tobin  
Teacher,  
BVI High School

---

Approval

---

Date

---

Disapproval

---

Date



Cover Letter-IV –Students

The Student Body  
The British Virgin Islands High School  
Road Town  
Tortola

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at the University of the Virgin Islands – St. Thomas campus.

As a requirement for graduation, I am conducting a study on “Student Underachievement”. You have been selected to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a relationship between underachievement and Parental Involvement, Socioeconomic, Geographic, Location, Family Characteristic.

In order to pursue this study I really need your assistance. Will you therefore, kindly complete a questionnaire?

You will NOT be required to write your name on the questionnaire. Further, I would like to assure you that confidentiality and ethical standards will be preserved throughout this study.

Yours sincerely,

---

Wade Tobin  
Teacher,  
BVI High School

## Appendix D

## GPA of 70 Low Performing Students 2001-2002

Names		Gender	GPA
Hughes	Willichia	F	0.92
Stapleton	Verdella	F	0.77
Haywood	Monique	F	0.23
Sebastian	Joel	M	0.97
Huggins	Sheena	F	1.80
Drew	Tamasha	F	1.30
Fahie	Shaunlee	M	1.43
Matthias	Shakoi	M	1.27
Davis	Kenroy	M	1.73
Donovan	Dexter	M	1.87
Fergus	Glenroy	M	1.80
Ramirez	Juan	M	1.67
Skelton	Miguel	M	1.73
Penn	Andrew	M	1.33
Stoddard	Craig	M	1.93
Carey	Cymica	F	1.00
Penn	Deron	M	1.57
Phillips	McKenio	M	1.83
Harrigan	Keri	M	2.57
Brown	Stephen	M	2.67
Parsons	Daron	M	2.93
Rymer	Samuel	M	2.07
Smith	Deon	M	2.10
Phillips	Nicholas	M	2.43
King	Kenya	F	2.81
Richards	Elaine	F	2.77
Wheatley	Nkwame	M	2.80
Frett	Garvin	M	2.13
Browne	Donna	F	3.83
Peter	Samantha	F	3.40
Liburd	Sherrisse	F	3.87
Thomas	Shenovia	F	3.10
Todman	Jessica	F	3.57
Blackman	Shakeila	F	3.90
Brewley	Helen	F	3.00
Callwood	Derice	F	3.53
Douglas	Deshawn	M	3.20
Fahie	Wayne	M	3.20
Frett	Joel	M	3.37
Kelly	Regan	M	3.37

Frett	Jevon	M	3.67
Herbert	Lester	M	3.97
Barry	Sheldon	M	3.87
Jones	Bradford	M	3.57
Matthew	Jameil	M	3.47
Penn	Stewart	M	3.47
Percival	Ivin	M	3.50
Grant	Stephen	F	3.77
Maynard	Ariel	F	3.47
Mejia	Aurys	F	3.93
Hanley	Selroy	M	2.82
Walters	Gawhyne	M	3.00
Charles	Cyrene	F	3.00
Forbes	Sheema	F	1.45
Stoutt	Chantal	F	2.36
Frett	Trisha	F	3.18
Bryan	Antonio	M	2.20
Collins	Shaheed	M	2.30
Greenacre	Jahmal	M	0.60
Pemberton	Shane	M	2.50
Winter	Darren	M	1.70
Thomas	Teaka	F	2.00
Samuel	Enol	F	2.90
Richards	Shanice	F	2.90
Jeffers	Natasha	F	3.10
Donovan	Dwayne	M	3.50
Guishard	Doyle	M	1.30
Joans	Oran	M	3.10
Leonard	Delvin	M	3.50
Durante	Akeem	M	2.77

**Appendix E**  
**Results of Grade Point Average and Parental Involvement**

		Parental Involvement	GPA
Parental Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.369**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
	N	70	70
Grade Point Average	Pearson Correlation	-.369**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
	N	70	70

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Appendix F**  
**Frequency tables on Parental Involvement and Grade Point Average**

**Parental Involvement**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	47	67.1	67.1	67.1
	Moderate	22	31.4	31.4	98.6
	High	1	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

**Grade Point Average**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	5	7.1	7.1	7.1
	1.00	17	24.3	24.3	31.4
	2.00	19	27.1	27.1	58.6
	3.00	29	41.4	41.4	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	