

Christian Education... something to do together

Research on parental involvement

Anneke Visser



Title

Christian education... something to do together

Research on parental involvement

Author

Anneke Visser

07VI0203P

Minor 'Christian education'

Tutor

Miss. Drs. W. de Jong

Name University

Driestar University for Teacher Education

Burg. Jamessingel 2

2803 PD Gouda

The Netherlands

Date

September 2010 – January 2011

Index

Prologue and acknowledgements	p. 4
1. Problem statement and methodology	p. 6
1.1. Introduction in research	p. 6
1.2. Problem statement	p. 6
1.3. Research questions	p. 7
1.4. Research objective and relevance	p. 7
2. Theoretical framework	p. 8
2.1. Education in Ontario – Canada	p. 8
2.1.1. <i>Elementary and secondary education</i>	<i>p. 8</i>
2.1.2. <i>Private schools</i>	<i>p. 10</i>
2.1.3. <i>Home schooling</i>	<i>p. 11</i>
2.2. Defining parental involvement	p. 13
2.2.1. <i>What is parental involvement</i>	<i>p. 13</i>
2.2.2. <i>Why parental involvement</i>	<i>p. 15</i>
2.2.3. <i>Model of Epstein</i>	<i>p. 17</i>
3. Research methodology	p. 20
3.1. Research methodology and data analysis	p. 20
4. Results	p. 22
5. Conclusion and discussion	p. 38
6. Literature	p. 47
Appendix I: Questionnaire Parental Involvement	p. 49
Appendix II: Results Questionnaire	p. 54
Appendix III: Invitation Meeting	p. 59

0. Prologue

Christian education is not obvious. Certainly not when you have to pay it by your own. Freedom of Christian education is also wealth. The Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) in Copetown is a Christian school and they don't get money from the government. But it is a Christian school with good education. How can that be? That's possible like the prologue says in one of the yearbooks of this school: *'A big thank you goes out to all of the volunteers at RCS. They are the ones who keep everything running. We appreciate all of the work that they have done for us, and we look forward to next year with them.'* (Yearbook 2010)

I would like to see this school with my own eyes. I would like to hear the voices from the volunteers with my own ears and I would like to give a help and support through this research with my own hands. Christian education... something to do together. This was the value from this travel to Canada and this research at the RCS. I packed my bags and I went for a time of ten weeks to Canada. In Canada I visited the RCS, a Christian school, non-subsided from the government. I talked with the parents from that are involved in this school. My questions where: how are they involved? Are they volunteers and for what reason are they volunteers? Why are they going to pay lots of money for education if there are also good public schools in Canada?

Back home I had a bag full of memories. Beautiful memories. For example the parents and grandparents that made apple pie for fundraising. The bus drivers who drove every day with a school bus of great value: the children from a Christian school. The children that made cookies for fundraising and the mothers from the focus group that showed me the incentive for their involvement: Christian education for their children. Something to do together... I only can dream about a big parental involvement in my class in the future. Only because of our children. Our children because Christian education is something to do together.

Anneke Visser

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many people who have encouraged me in writing this thesis.

Thanks to all the teachers from the International Class who gave me the opportunity to across the borders. The discussions about Christian education are of great value for me and it increased my view on Christian education. Miss. de Jong, thanks for your guidance by making choices for my research and for your advices by writing my theoretical part of this research. Also thanks for the many stimulations and your enthusiasm about my work.

Thanks to the RCS for your hospitality and that you gave me the possibility to do my research at your school. My stay at your school made me more thankful for the freedom of education in the Netherlands. It's is wonderful to see how your school is 'fighting' for Christian education. Mr. Westerink, thanks for your help with the questionnaire and all your stories about the education in Canada.

Thanks to John and Jennifer Kroesbergen and their family. I am thankful for your hospitality to give me a stay in your house for ten weeks. I will remember you as my Canadian dad and mom, and the children as my Canadian brothers and sister. Like a fish is happy in water I felt me like a daughter and sister in your family. I hope my stay is a blessing for you as family. Jennifer, thanks that you took the time to read my thesis and to check the grammar.

Thanks to my family and Wilco who accepted that I left home for a long time. Also at special days like Christmas and New Year. Wilco, your surprise to visit me was more than great and thanks that you gave me a break in this busy time of graduating. Thanks to Nelleke. Your stay in Canada made it more easy for me to feel me not alone. Thanks for your enthusiasm, Canada has become my second home.

A big thank you goes out to all of the parents at RCS who made this research successful. Thanks for your openness and honesty.

And thanks to all my friends and family in Canada and the Netherlands who made my stay in Canada unforgettable. *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)*

1. Problem statement and methodology

1.1. Introduction in research

In my last course year I was involved in the International Class. In this class we thought and discussed about Christian education across the borders. I was surprised by the well organized school system of my own country. We have many different schools in the Netherlands. Every religion has its own education. Roman Catholic schools, Islamic schools and Christian schools. And they are all state-subsidized. That is quite different from Canada. They have public schools and private schools. A Christian School is a private school. You are allowed to have your private schools but only the public school is state-subsidized. A school without pupils and students is not a school. Therefore a school needs parents to bring their children to a school. When parents can make a choice they are looking for quality and identity. Peter de Vries (2004) says in his book 'Met ouders kom je verder' that schools are required to provide quality. Every parent want to send their children to the best school. The school must be accountable to parents and the community he says. Therefore every school should invest in parental involvement. In the Netherlands we can bring our children to every school that we prefer. We don't have to pay for it. But if you want to send your child to a Christian School in Canada you have to pay the education yourself.



1.2. Problem statement

What is the most important if you have to pay for your own education? Only the financial involvement, or does the school need more than this kind of involvement? I think the school needs more than only the financial involvement from parents. Only the money from parents is not sufficient for good education. You need the help from parents because a school without money from the government cannot pay for a lot of extra help in the class, help for special need children and especially other activities at the school. For example they need parents for the transport from home to school every day because they drive with their own school busses. This is to keep the costs of Christian education low. I think the most important reason for a high parental

involvement is to collect money in different ways. Money that they need for education. I think the school can save money because they have a lot of volunteer parents instead of special educated people beside the teacher. The parental involvement at RCS in Copetown is high. I expect from them a great parental involvement because they make a special choice for a non-subsidized school. How looks the parental involvement at the RCS in according to the model of Epstein?



1.3. Research questions

The main question is: What does the parental involvement at the Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) look like in according to the model of Epstein? I want to find an answer to this question with the following questions:

- What does the educational system look like in Ontario - Canada?
- What is the definition of parental involvement?
- What does the model of Epstein look like?
- What does the effective parental involvement look like at the RCS?



1.4. Research objective and relevance

With this research I want to give an answer to the problem statement. I want to give an overview what parental involvement looks like at the RCS in Copetown, in according to the model of Epstein. I also want to give an overview how the parents think about their involvement into the RCS. In my own opinion parental involvement is important to help the school and to continue Christian education. The RCS cannot do without parental involvement. Education has to be in line with the upbringing at home.



2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Educational system in Ontario - Canada

The educational system in Canada differs from the educational system in the Netherlands. The Canadian government provides, funds and oversees public education. But there are also private schools, that are funded and overseen by the parents and by the community. Therefore it is good to start with an overview of the educational system in Canada. I will describe the educational system from the province Ontario because this is the province where the Rehoboth Christian School is located. The educational system differs in every province of Canada. This overview is a framework for this whole research. The educational system of Ontario consists of elementary school and high school. Homeschooling and private schools are other choices for educating the children. For the information about the educational system in Ontario I interviewed Mr. Westerink, principal of the Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown.



2.1.1. Elementary and secondary school

Elementary schools offer education from the kindergarten level to a grade between 3rd and 8th. An elementary school may contain primary grades, K-2; intermediate grades, 3-5; and middle grades, 6-8. Kindergarten provides a program for four and five year old children. This is a play-based educational program during the regular school day. Exploring, discovering and growing are the goals of this program. In kindergarten a child will benefit from a stronger start in school. A full day of learning early in life can help improve the child's reading, writing and math skills. This provides a strong foundation for future learning in all areas. This includes language and math, engage in healthy physical activities and art, and the development of social and emotional skills. The Canadian Counsel on Learning (2007) agrees: 'Research indicates that the experiences during the first five years of a child's life have a major bearing on her or his future success in school, in the workplace, and many other aspects of healthy, fulfilling life.' Examples of activities in the classroom are activities with exploration and investigation activities, creative thinking and observing.

I asked Mr. Westerink about how the government is involved in the decision making of the school. Can you make your own education and rules because you are a private school? What is allowed and what is not allowed? Mr. Westerink gave me an example. He said: *'You know in Holland if you are not at school I think you get a fine. We don't have that. Sometimes families will say we would like to go to Florida in February. It is not the March break but you know, do we have permission. If the students are doing okay I will say it is fine you know. But I know that's not allowed in Holland. It is more stricter in that way. I think it is because the way works in a public school. Every day a child is at school the school gets so many dollars per day per child. And so the school really wants the child there. If the child is not there they phone home and say why is the child not here. They don't get money for that child that day. It's all connected to money. In a private school this is different.'*

Mr. Westerink about the educational system in Ontario, Canada: *'There is junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten. They are optional. You don't have to send your child to school. You do in grade 1. It's mandatory so from the age of six to eighteen you have to be in school in Ontario by law or you have to prove that you are receiving education at home. (...) The government wants a educated healthy country and that's right. I child needs a proper education.'* (...) *The Ontario ministry of education does not inspect private elementary schools because we don't issue a diploma from the government. We will give a Rehoboth Christian School elementary diploma but it doesn't mean anything really. It's just a piece of paper saying you have completed elementary but high school courses are credits. And in order to say you have got a credit in Ontario. To get your diploma you have to follow specific guide lines like it has to be one hundred and ten hours and it has to cover the prescribe curriculum at least. You have to show that you are in the classroom, that many hours, and that you have covered that content. And then you are allowed to get a credit. So high schools, because we give a Ontario high school diploma, we are only allowed to do that because we are inspected. So the government send an inspector here. They check all the students, the records, they are going into the classrooms, they look at the timetable, I have to send a lot of paperwork in, and all the courses, the outlines. I*

have to show that I am filling the guidelines and the criteria from the government for a diploma. So it is very strict and they spend the day in the classroom to see if what is on papers happening in real. Because you can make up nice paper and then it is not really happening in that way and they can tell very quickly if something is wrong or

right. The inspectors are retired principals so they know after five minutes really well how the school is. In general our school is not a problem but they always find a little thing.

So what is than the difference with a public school? They also get inspectors if their education is doing well but they also get money. What makes the difference? Mr. Westerink: *'We do it Christianly. So you do the government's content but you can add in the Bible, the Word of God. You can do it all from a Christian biblical perspective as long as you do teach them. Like in science we have to tell them about evolution and we want to anyway. But you can just say, we don't believe in evolution so we don't tell the children but that would also not be from a Christian view. The children need to know what is out there.*



2.1.2. Private schools

Mother from six children: 'For me there are two reasons for sending my children to a private school. The first and most important reason is that this school gives education from Biblical perspective. The values that we teach our children at home are reinforced at school. The second reason is the quality of the school. Our private school has to pass the guidelines from the government, but every year you can see that the level of the students at the private schools is higher. When my children come out of high-school they are better prepared for university or college than students in public schools. And the special need children in this school get more special intention than in a public school.'

More and more Ontario parents have been choosing private schools for their children. 'Private school attendance in Ontario has grown over recent decades from 1.9 percent of the student population in 1960 to 5.6 percent in 2006.' (Van Pelt, 2007, p. 3) The number of private schools in 2006, in Ontario, is 869. There are different kinds of private schools. Some private schools are Academically Defined like Montessori and Waldorf. Other private schools are Religiously Defined like Christian, Islamic, Mennonite and Jewish. From the 869 private in 2006 schools are 329 schools Christian. Those schools are defined by a religious perspective.

Deani Van Pelt, PhD Candidate at the University of Western Ontario and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at Redeemer University College, did research at Ontario's Private Schools. In this research Van Pelt shows us that parents make a choice for religiously-defined schools because this school teaches right from wrong, has dedicated teachers and supports the family's values. If we go back into the history we can see two reasons for the necessity of the Christian School. 'In the first place it's important for American liberty; in the second place, it is important for the propagation of the Christian religion.' (Robbins 1995, p. 66) Robbins also says in his book that it is impossible that a Christian life can be lived on the basis of anti-Christian thought. Therefore the necessity of Christian Schools. Private schools are not-subsidized.

Van Pelt (2007) shows in her research at private schools the results about the finances at the private school. 'One Head of a Christian school noted that the school receives extensive support from former families, grandparents and some churches and also from supporters of Christian education at large.' (p. 13) The most common outside source of assistance are parents and grand-parents. Parents estimated additional costs ranging from \$10 (€ 7) to \$15,000 (€ 11.000) per child.



2.1.3. Home schooling

Mother from two children: 'I am mother but also teacher for my children. I made the choice for home schooling because of the bad influences from the world. I don't want to send them to a public school. But also I don't want to send them to a Christian school. At a Christian school the students get education from Biblical perspective but there are always bad influences from the world in the school. Students that listen to bad music, bad language etc. I prefer to give my children education from my own values. And of course I like to have my children around me the whole day. I am not worried about the social skills for my children. They meet children in church. I also made the choice because of the costs for home schooling.'

Across Canada, 60.000 to 80.000 children do not join their peers but receive their education outside of the classroom. Van Pelt (2003) did also a study on home education. The most important reason for homeschooling is to provide religious or

moral instruction. 'For most parents, the initial motivation to keep their children at home is based more on achievement than avoidance. That is, most parents do not choose to home school in response to a negative situation, but rather to proactively achieve some combination of moral, social, familial, and academic goals (such as teaching within a framework of certain beliefs...)' (p. 3)

The research of Van Pelt tells us more reasons for home schooling. For more than 70% of the home schooling parents is the directly influence on the moral environment important. Other reasons for home schooling are to have more parent child contact and to have less wasted time for the children. Home-educated students can participate in the standardized testing option. They make their test in the usual educational setting, at home. 'Over 94% of home-educated students scored above the Canadian norm for both grade equivalency and basic skills.' (p. 7)

In her research Van Pelt ask the question how it can be that the score from home-educated students is really high. 'However, scores do seem to be different when other factors are analyzed, such as parental motivation to home school, family income, educational approach and curriculum, fathers' participation, and cognitive limitations of the student. The interaction between variables and academic scores is complex and, for the most part, cannot be claimed to be causal.' (p. 8) The research reveals some sampling of findings. If both parents report participating in a student's instruction, the percentile rankings for academic achievement are higher. And the scores can be higher if the number and variety of activities in which home-schooled students participate is high. The average amount of money spent per child, per year, to home educate is \$700 (€ 515). Unlike private schools, most families receive no financial support or funding from their broader family, church or educational communities.



2.2. Defining parental involvement

In this chapter a review of literature regarding the topic of parental involvement will be presented. It provides information related to the questions ‘what is parental involvement’ and ‘why parental involvement.’



2.2.1. What is parental involvement?

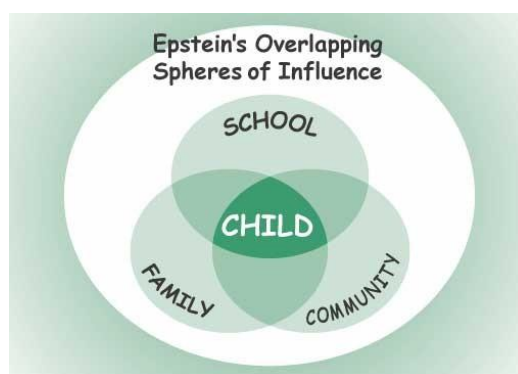
Parental involvement means that parents sympathize with the ups and downs of their child. In education, the term used to indicate that parents are a vital link in the relationship between school and student. In according to Lopez and Cole (1999) parents’ involvement can be defined as a variety of activities that allows parents to take part in children’s educational process at home and/or school. Marzano (2003), reports that it’s the day-to-day running of the school.

Schools and parents meet each other in the education of their children. They can help and support each other. This is reflected in the way how parents are involved in the work of the school. De Wit (2002) mentions various forms of parental involvement. ‘Ouderbetrokkenheid omvat alle vormen van belangstellende betrokkenheid van de ouders bij de begeleiding van hun eigen kind, bij de groep waarin dit zit en bij de (...) school als geheel.’ (p. 57) He mentions four forms: sympathize, join in, think along, and participation in decisions.

1. *Sympathize*: Sympathize is the basic of the other forms because this is the way to know an environment and the perspectives of other educators. For example, parents are going to the ten-minute-conversations. Peter de Vries (2004) talks about sympathize like PTA-meetings and home visits. He says that these meetings has the main goal to promote contacts between parents and teachers. Parents and teachers talk together about different themes (with or without an expert). De Vries mentions the turnout of parents at the PTA-meetings as a well-known problem for some schools. Many schools visit one time in a year a family. This is with the goal that a parent can empathize in the home situation of the child. Parents are more open about their child if they are in a safety environment. Therefore, home visits are seen as accessible contact between school and home.

2. *Join in:* Parents are helping with various activities in the school. For example with reading, fundraising, ICT and activities from the activities committee. Good contacts between parents and teachers Good contacts with their parents can be encouraged if parents participate in fun activities. For example the parents can organize a school camp or a school trip, they can organize competitions and other activities in the school. These informal contacts mentions de Vries valuable.
3. *Think along:* Groups of parents and teachers think about different themes. For example the curriculum, the safety or the library. De Vries (2004) talks about surveys. Following a regular school self-evaluation or special situations, a written survey of parents can give valuable information. Another form of think along is panel discussions. A panel group is a small group of parents which talk about the wishes that they have and the things that they want to change. De Vries says that with those panels the quality of the school can becomes higher.
4. *Participation in decisions:* This form of involvement is included 'think along'. The parents are involved in PTA (Parent-Teacher-Association) and the board. When a parent seat in the PTA or the school board of course this allows for a greater involvement.

Fig. 1.1. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence



Epstein (1995) says that there are three major contexts in which students learn and grow: the family, the school, and the community. In this model of Epstein the child is located at the centre. It is all going about the child. They are the main actors in their education, development, and success in school. The school, the family and the community are partnerships around the child that engage, guide, energize, and

motivate the students to produce in their own success. These three partnerships are separated but in some situations they are overlapped. The reason for this model is that the child feels cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of student. Epstein says that if they feel cared they will do their best to learn to read, calculate, write and learn other skills and talents. 'Epstein expands upon the traditional types of involvement by categorizing six important types of cooperation between families, schools, and other community organizations.' (Paul Caines 2000, p. 14) These include the following types that is explained a little bit farther in this research:

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at home
- Decision making
- Collaborating with the community



2.2.2. Why parental involvement?

The literature shows that parents fulfill this role in more than one way. Parents and schools need each other throughout the school, from pre-school to secondary education. They need each other as partners in education, as a sounding board, participation in school, volunteer or as an interlocutor. 'A strong school-parent partnership is an important ingredient in any successful school program.' (Mewezino 2010, p. 2) Parents can be instrumental in the change process for the education of children, especially for children with special needs. Enlisting the support of parents is essential, as parents provide key information regarding their children.

Training and education is a shared responsibility of parents and school. Parents trust the school with the most valuable property: their child. Therefore it is normal that they have an important place in education. Nurture is a big responsibility. When a child enters the school the parents hand over a part of this responsibility. VanBrummelen (2009) says: 'The school is a part of a larger community. That larger community plays a role in the school.' (p. 248)

But the primary responsibility of children's nurture rests with parents. This is in according with what the Bible says about the nurture of children. 'And thou shalt love

the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...' (Deuteronomy 6:5-7a)

'We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments...' (Psalm 78:4, 6-7)

'And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up into the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' (Ephesians 6:4) From these verses we can conclude that Christian parents must choose the type of school is consistent with the nurture at home.

Parents have a prominent place in a school says Peter de Vries (2007) in his book *'Handboek ouders in de school'*. Parents must have a place in the total school policy. He mentions two reasons for parental involvement. 'Een school kan samenwerken met ouders op twee manieren benaderen: omdat de school het wil (interne behoefte) en omdat het moet (externe behoefte).' (p.39) The first reason for parental involvement is the internal need. For a school it can be a surplus value when cooperation with parents is an internal need. Through this cooperation the school wants to see a better quality and education in the school. Divided responsibility of every involved person can improve the student learning and the attitudes from the students. The main reason for Epstein (1995) is that such partnerships can help the students succeed in school and in later life. When a parent or a teacher feels responsibility there is also involvement. Cees de Wit (2002) agrees with this. He says that parents in the way of parental involvement express that they wish to bear the shared responsibility for the whole community of education.

Peter de Vries (2004) also mentions parents 'education directors'. Parents know the whole context of a child. They live together day and night, they know the family traits as the best and they know the history of the child from the beginning. Parents usually have the best understanding of the opportunities and threats for their child.

The second reason Peter de Vries (2007) mentions for parental involvement is the external need. In this situation the parents can be participated in the administration or they can have a voice in the matter. A school is obligatory to report the results of the quality of education. Parents are able to ask for responsibility from the school about the education for their child. A school has to evaluate with the parents and the parents may call to account.

Kees Broekhof (2006) gives also different potential reasons for parental involvement.

- Reinforcing learning results
- School as a meeting point for parents and residents
- Increasing participation
- Strengthening social cohesion
- Promoting integration
- More hands in and around the school



2.2.3. Model of Epstein

For this research on parental involvement is used the model of Epstein. (Epstein, 1995). First a description of the model.

Joyce L. Epstein is the founder and director of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. For many years, she has conducted research and worked with elementary, middle, and high schools, districts, and state departments of education to develop research-based partnership programs that will improve policy and practice. She mentions six types of parental involvement.

Parenting

Families must provide for the health and safety of children. The parents must create an environment that encourages learning and good behavior in school. The school gives the families assistance with parenting and child-rearing skills. They also assist families with understanding child and adolescent development and the school assists setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. (Epstein 1995) Parenting is more than only the biological relationship between parents and children. Parenting is usually a task for parents but also for the government and the society. For example a school can give family support programs

to assist families with health, nutrition and other services. Parent education and other courses or trainings for parents is a part of parenting. For parents the result from parenting is that they feel support from school and other parents and that they are aware of their own and others' challenges in parents. For students the result from parenting is that they are aware of the importance of school and that they develop positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family. Another result is that they are aware of family supervision and that they have respect for parents.

Communicating

Parents are involved with the school through communication. When we talk about communication than we talk about school-to-home and home-to-school communications. A school provides information about school programs and student progress. Different ways of communication can be: telephone calls, reports, conferences, newsletters, and information about school and the transition from primary to secondary education. In according to Epstein (1995) the information has to be clear and useful. Through communication the parents can understand the school programs and policies and they can respond effectively to students' problems.

Volunteering

Parents can make contributions to the environment and functions of a school. A school can organize volunteer work to help teachers, administrators and students. A school can also organize training and workshops for parents. It is important that a school matches to the talents and interests of parents to provide the needs of students and teachers. Parents need to know that their time and talents are welcome. 'Our school wouldn't be able to function without the help of the many adults who volunteer at the various school functions. There are too many to list, but you know who you are and we are very thankful to them.' This quote from the yearbook (2009) shows that the RCS in Copetown is thankful for the volunteering in their school.

Learning at home

With the support of teachers, family members can supervise and assist their children at home with homework assignments and other school related activities. The school has to involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including

homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities. The parents have to encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting tasks. The school can help the family with information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. Learning at home means encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring and discussing. Epstein (1995) says that it doesn't mean 'teaching' school subjects. Learning at home makes the parents aware of the child as a learner. If the parents are involved with learning at home they have to know how to support, encourage, and help the student at home.

Decision making

The school can include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations. Training and information should be provided to the parents so they can make the most of those opportunities. This opportunity should be open to all segments of the community, not just people who have the most time and energy to spend on school affairs.

Collaborating with the Community

Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community. It's like a Amish Proverb says: 'Community is like an old coat – you aren't aware of it until it is taken away. (Woods Fisher 2010, p. 163)



3. Research methodology

3.1. Research methodology and data analysis

This research design is a survey to identify the parental involvement on the Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) in Copetown according to the model of Epstein. The survey that is used is developed by researcher Joyce L. Epstein. Not all the questions from the survey from Epstein are used in this research. The questions 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, 17, 25-37, 39-42, 44-51, and 59-66 from the questionnaire (Appendix I) are taken from Epstein. The questions 6, 7, 9, 10, 13-16, and 18-24 from the questionnaire (Appendix I) are derived from the description that Epstein gives about the different types of parental involvement (Epstein 1995). The skipped questions from the survey of Epstein are also important but these questions are summarized in the questions that are derived from the description that Epstein gives about the different types of parental involvement. The question 'I watch TV with my child' is skipped because of the Christian identity of the RCS. The questions 38, 43, and 54 from the questionnaire (Appendix I) are made by the researcher from the questionnaire because these questions are applicable for the RCS. The questions 1, 2 and 5 from the questionnaire (Appendix I) gives more extra information that helps by analyzing the data. The questions 56 and 58 from the questionnaire (Appendix I) are derived from the questions from the survey of Epstein but they are asked in a different way. The method of research that is used is exploratory. The main goal of this research method is to get background information by obtained data, defining terms and answering the problem statement. (Burns&Burns, 2006)

First the questionnaire is distributed to the parents of elementary students at the Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown. This school is a private school in Canada and needs financially parental involvement to preserve Christian education. The questionnaire and the letter to the parents can be found in appendix I of this research. The parents completed the questionnaire and handed it in to the researcher. The data from the questionnaires are entered into Microsoft Excel 2007 and they are evaluated by using this aromatic program. After data analysis there is used a qualitative method namely focus groups. The advantage of this research method is that it will lead to more background information. And the conclusion of

this questionnaire can be based on experiences from parents and not on own interpretations from the researcher. These focus groups were formed by parents who voluntarily signed in. They filled in their email addresses on the questionnaire and they got a special invitation to participate in the focus groups. In this meeting the model of Epstein and the results are presented. During the presentation the researcher asked the parents an explanation by marked results. The parents were free to discuss about the results of the questionnaire and the questions during the presentation. The meeting is recorded by video.



4. Results

Throughout this chapter, results from the questionnaire and the results from the focus group will be present. The questionnaire asked the parents to provide their judgment about parental involvement at the RCS. The results of the research are divided into two parts:

- The results of the questionnaire
- The results of the focus group

Fig. 2.0. Returned questionnaires

Rehoboth Christian School	N	%
N=108		
Returned questionnaires	53	49
Fathers	4	8
Mothers	49	92

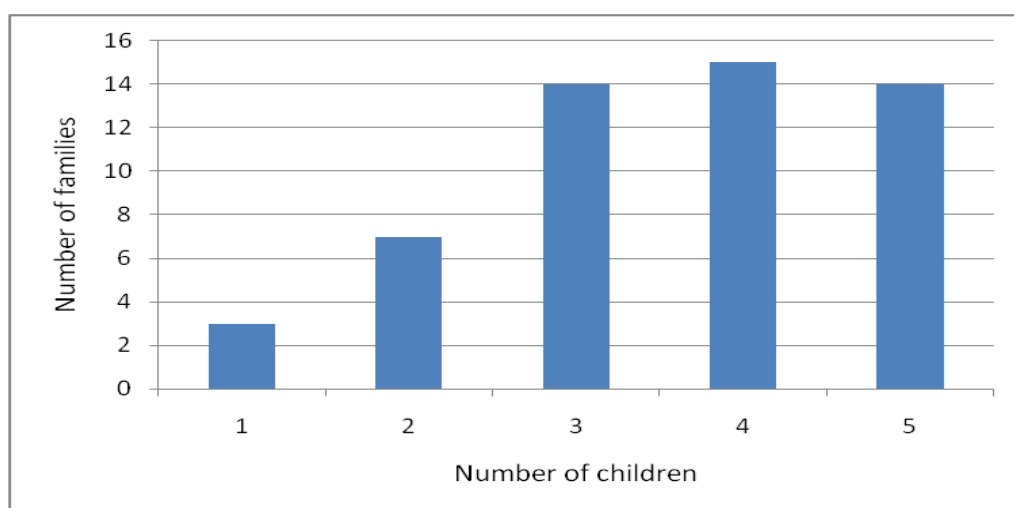
The results of the questionnaire

At the Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) in Copetown, the responses of the parents provide a framework to examine their involvement into the school. The score of the responses was higher than when the school hand out a annually questionnaire. Forty-nine percent of the total parent population at this school returned the questionnaires (N=108). Figure 2.0. illustrates the percentage of parents that returned questionnaires at RCS.

At RCS 53 parents of 108 parents returned questionnaires. It is important to note that the parent questionnaire were administered two times. The first time thirty-two parents returned the questionnaire. After a fellow-up contact in the news bulletin, twenty-one parents returned the questionnaire. Despite this increased return rate, the total number of questionnaires received from parents still accounts for less than half of the total parent population. Figure 2.0. also displays who filled in this

questionnaire. At RCS 4 fathers and 49 mothers of 53 parents filled in this questionnaire. Figure 2.1. illustrates the numbers of children in a family. This number of children is from the families that filled in the questionnaire. The average of the number of children per family is 2,4 child/family.

Fig. 2.1. Number of children per family

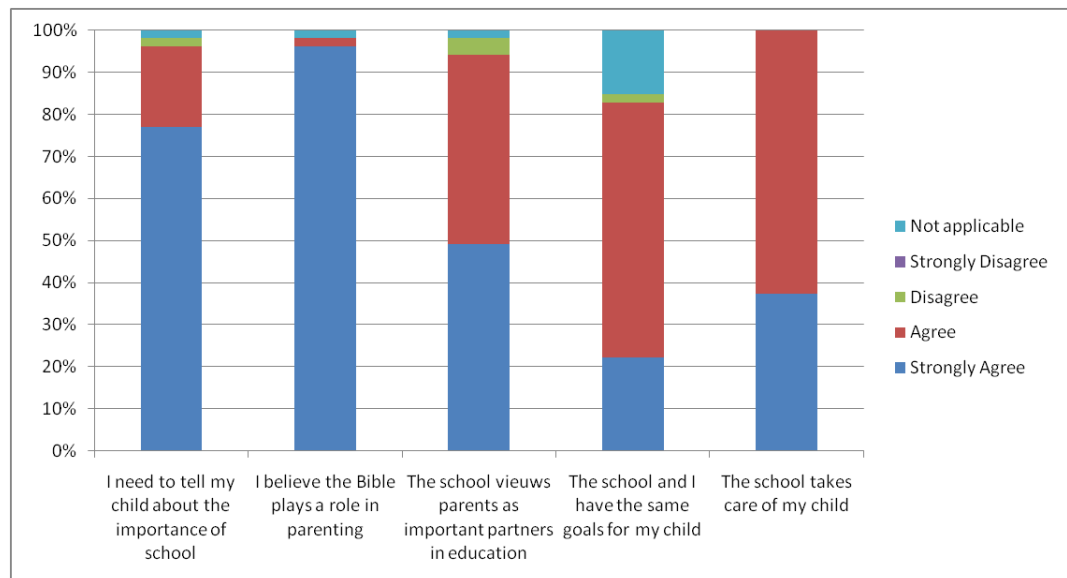
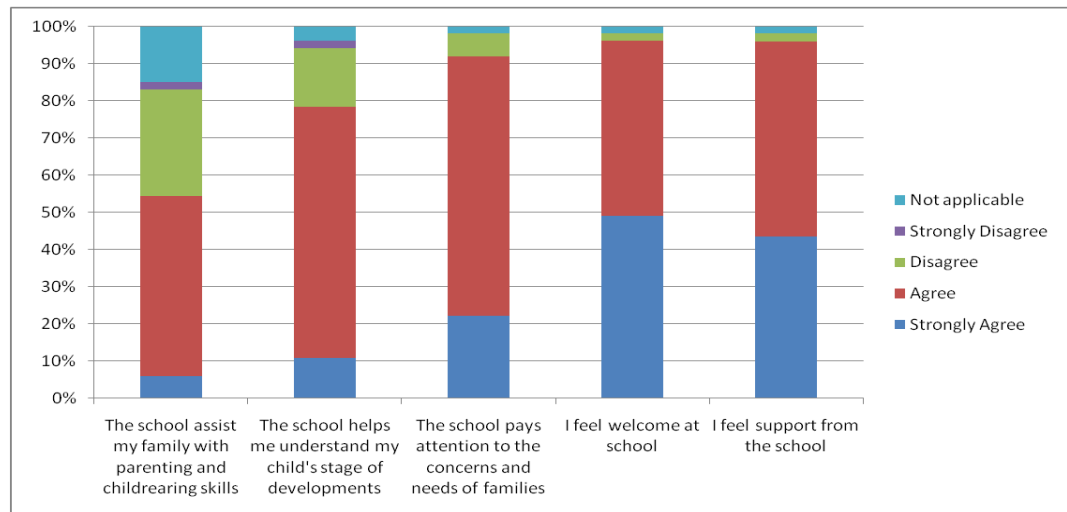
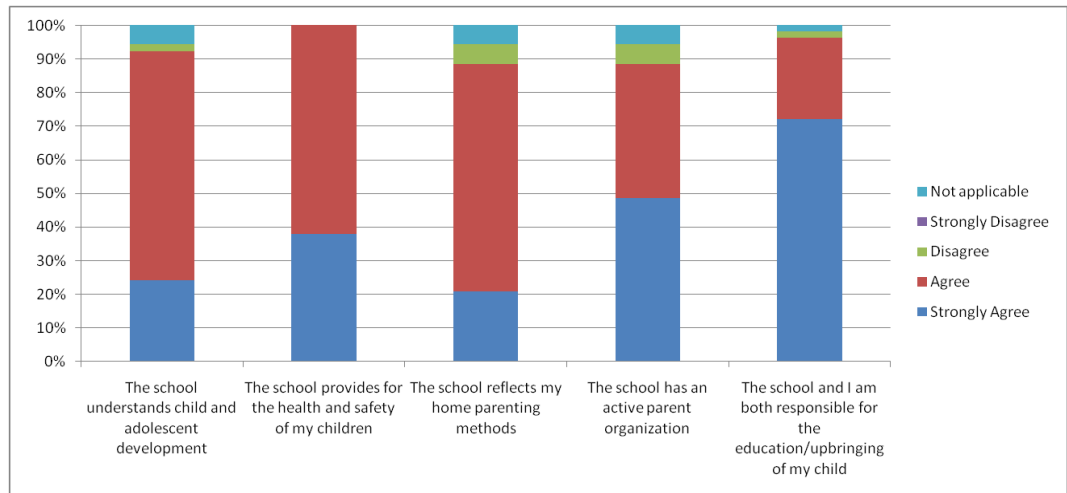


The results of the focus group

Several factors may account for this low return rate. Parents gave back that they didn't have time to fill in the questionnaire. Or they simply did not wish to response to the questionnaire.



Fig. 2.2. Parenting



The results of the questionnaire

In fig. 2.2. you can see all the questions about parenting. This is the first type of involvement in the model of Epstein. All parent respondents agree or strongly agree with the questions: 'The school provides for the health and safety of my children' and 'the school takes care of the children'. It is marked that 98% of the parent respondents strongly agree with the question: 'I believe the Bible plays a role in parenting'. Only 2% of the parent respondents don't agree with 'I feel welcome at school' and 'I feel support from the school'. It's also marked that 90% of the parent respondents says: 'The school pays attention to the concerns and needs of families'. At least 90% of the parent respondents agree or strongly agree that the school views parents as important partners in education.

The results of the focus group

We started the meeting with the question: Why is parental involvement important for you? This question is following the questions in the questionnaire 'The school views the parents as important partners in education' and 'the school has an active parent organization. At least 80% agree or strongly agree with this. *'I feel responsibility for the education of my child. I bring my children to this school and I expect something from the teachers. But through my involvement we can do it together.'*

The question: 'I believe the Bible plays a role in parenting' has the highest score in this part of the questionnaire. In the meeting with the parents the question was why and how the Bible plays a role in parenting? One of the parents said: *'The Bible is the only truth and this is the guideline for parenting.'* And another parent said: *'It is God's rule for life. The Bible teach us how to educate our children.'*

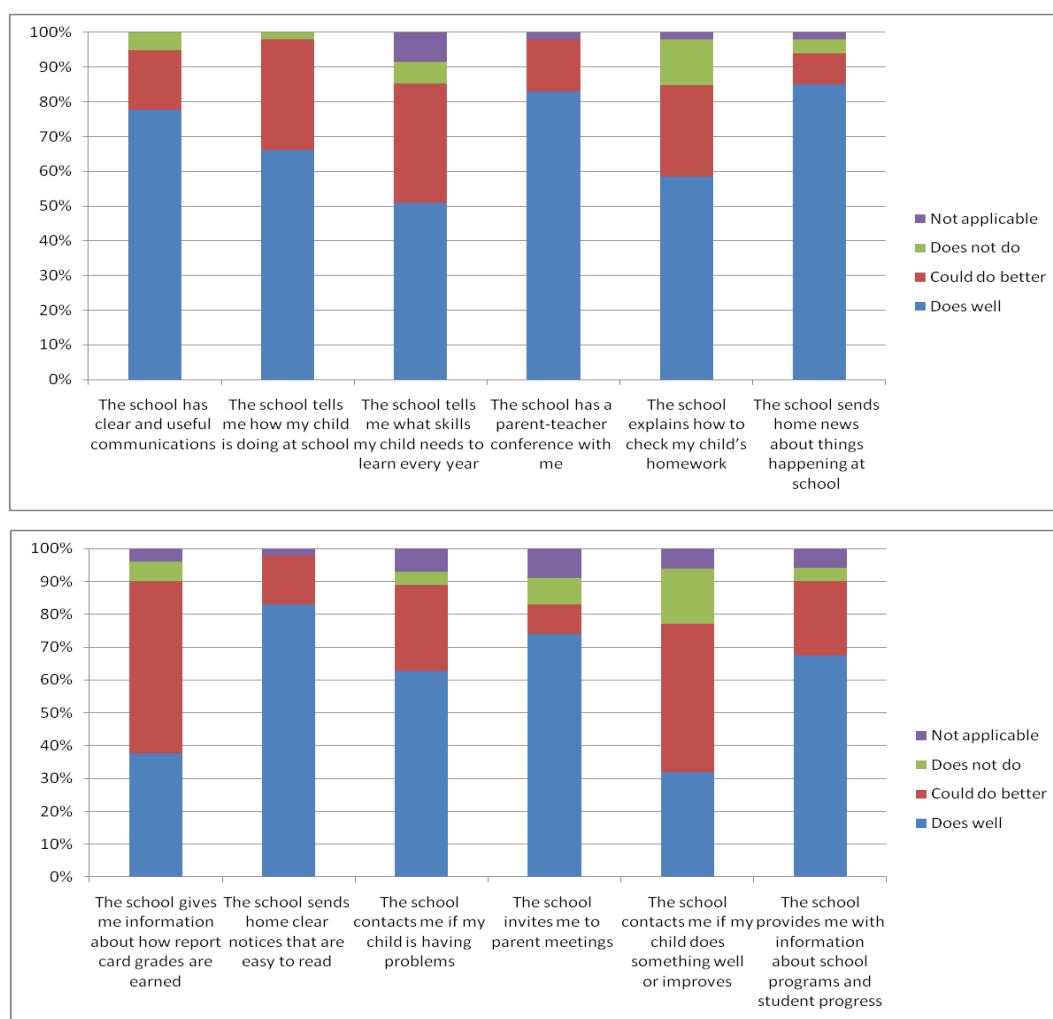
We also discussed about the question: 'The school and I have the same goals for my child.' This question was not clear to everybody because at home you have different goals then in the school. For example housecleaning is not a goal from the school. But a mother can teach her child how to clean a house. But the whole focus group agree that the main goal of school and home together is to teach the children how they can serve God and how they can live like a real Christian. Like the graphic tells us the parent respondents believe that education is the responsibility from both. One

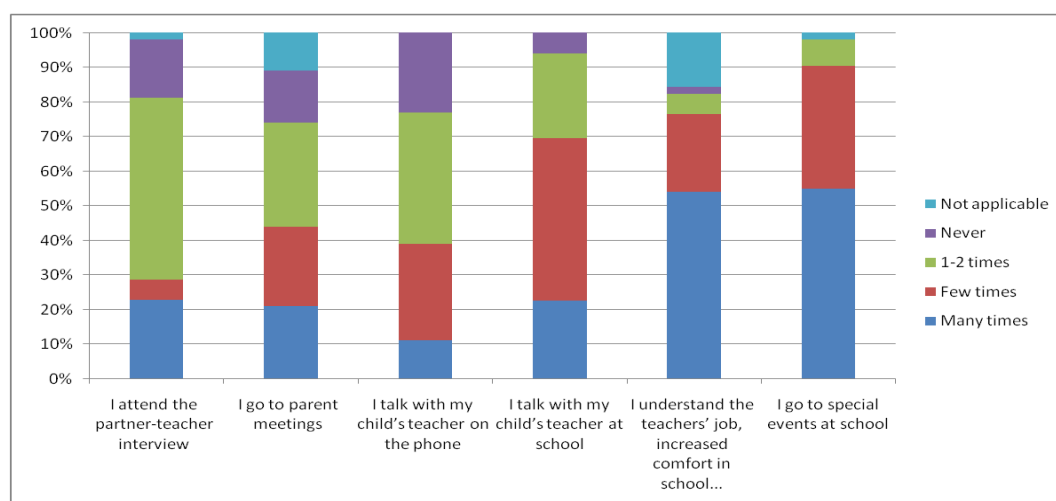
mother said: *‘But the parents they have the most responsibility. They get children from God and it is their responsibility to send the children to a Christian school.’*

One parent had a question about ‘The school provides for the health and safety of my children.’ She said that health and safety is not alone the safety in and around the school but also the wellbeing of the child. *‘What about bullying? How can they prevent bullying? Because I can tell from own experiences that the teacher didn’t take care of my bullied child.’* The principal, he was also in the meeting, gave the next answer. *‘If there happens an accident on playground the teacher is there. But if we talk about the case of bullying, most of the times there is no teacher to provide for the wellbeing of the child.’*



Fig. 2.3. Communication





Results of the questionnaire

Figure 2.3. Shows all the questions about communication. This is the second type of involvement in the model of Epstein. According to Epstein (1995) a clear and useful communication between parents and the school is important. More than 75% of the parent respondents say that the school has clear and useful communication. But also circa 20% of the parent respondents say that the school can do it better or does not have clear and useful communication. Marked is that circa 50% of the parent respondents say that the school could do better in informing parents about how report card grades are earned. The results of this questionnaire tell us that the school could do better in contacting the parents if their children do something well or improve. Circa 40% of the parent respondents say that the school doesn't do or could do better in contacting if their child does something well or improves. More than 60% of the parent respondents say that the school contacts if their child is having problems. Circa 30% from the parent respondents attend the parent-teacher interview many times or a few times. More than 50% attend the parent-teacher interview 1-2 times in a year. At least 90% is going to special events at school.

Results of the focus group

One of the questions for the focus group was how they think about the communication. They gave back that they all are satisfied about the communication. They get every week a news bulletin and they use the agenda for homework and short messages between the parents and the teachers. *'My experience is that if I write the question in the agenda to call me soon as they have time, they will call me the same day!'*

The focus group discussed about the questions ‘The school tells me how my child is doing in school’, the school contacts me if my child is having problems’ and ‘the school contacts me if my child does something well or improves’. The experiences from the parents were different in both of the meetings. This discussion was according to the results. *‘I communicate with the teacher of my child in the agenda of my child. She tells me sometimes what is going well with my child and she also tells me if my child has problems. I like this kind of communication but I can imagine that the teachers don’t have time to write every day thirty letters to parents if their child is doing well.’* The principal explained that some teachers make an appointment with parents to write every day in the agenda. This is because of learning problems or behavior problems. Another parent said: *‘I have my children here at school since fourteen years and they all do well. It’s enough for me and I like it if they tell me at the report card how my child was doing in class. I expect from the school that they tell me if my child has problems, but they get three report cards and the next report card I would like to see how my child improved the problem.’* A mother with four children with learning and behavior disabilities: *‘The teachers of my children they always contacts me if my child has problems. And that is good because then we can try to solve the problems. It’s also the responsibility from parents to go to school and to sit down with the teacher to talk with them about your child. Then you can talk more effectively. But I need also to hear positive things about my child because it is not only a child with problems.’*

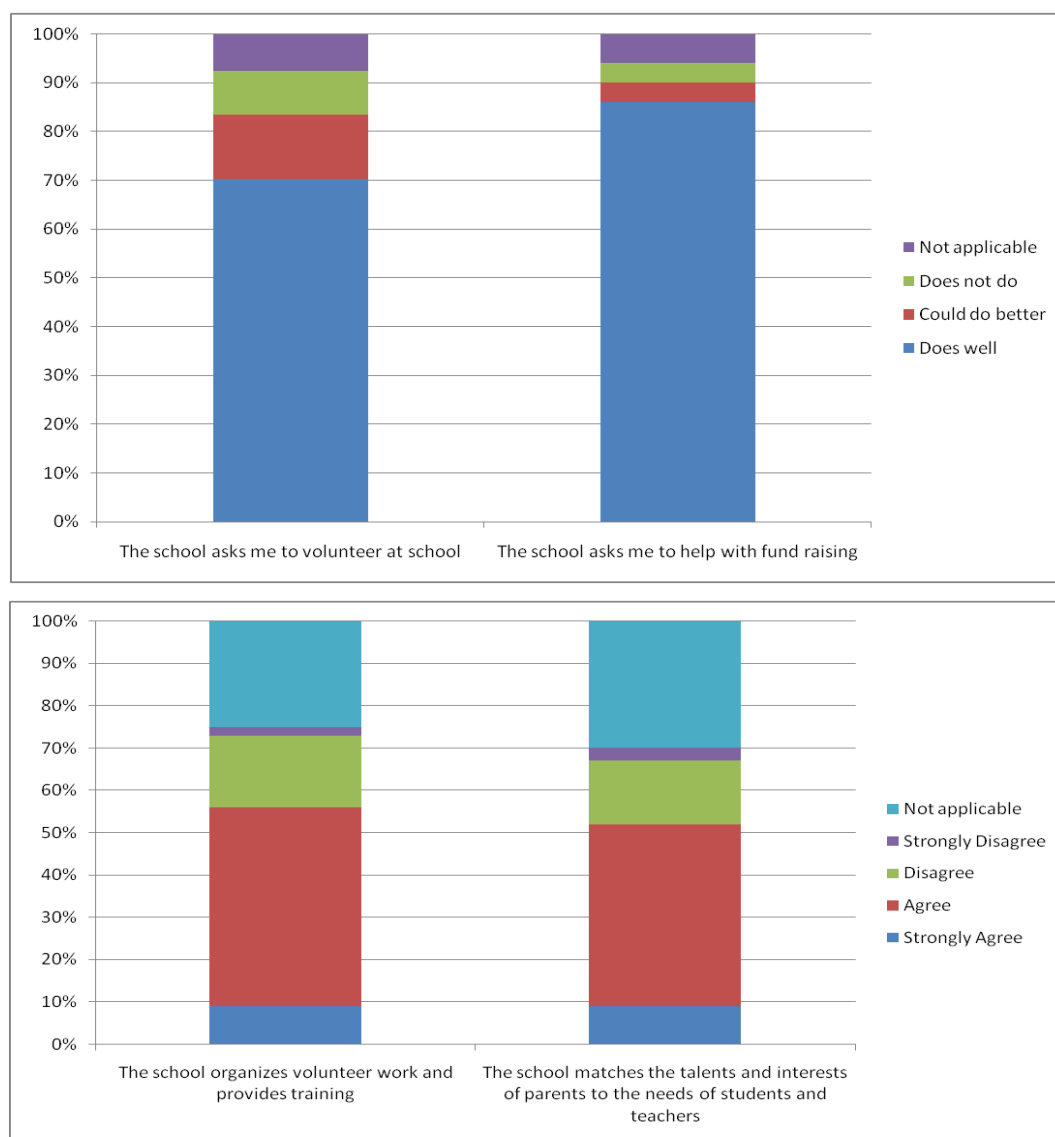
Every year there are two parent-teacher meetings in the RCS. The school invites the parents for those meetings. Therefore a lot of parents said that they only have one or two meetings in a year. That looks bad, but you also can see that almost 70% of the parents talk with the teacher at school. *‘If I am worried about my child then I go to school to talk with the teacher. Then I don’t wait for the two parent-teacher meetings.’* For me are the meetings important because then you can talk with the teacher face to face.’ For a teacher it’s nice to know who the parent is. The principal: *‘If students are doing well you see their parents. But some parents they don’t like to hear if their child has problems so they don’t attend parent-teacher meetings.’* A parent: *‘I will feel bad for my child if I don’t carry enough about his problems.’*

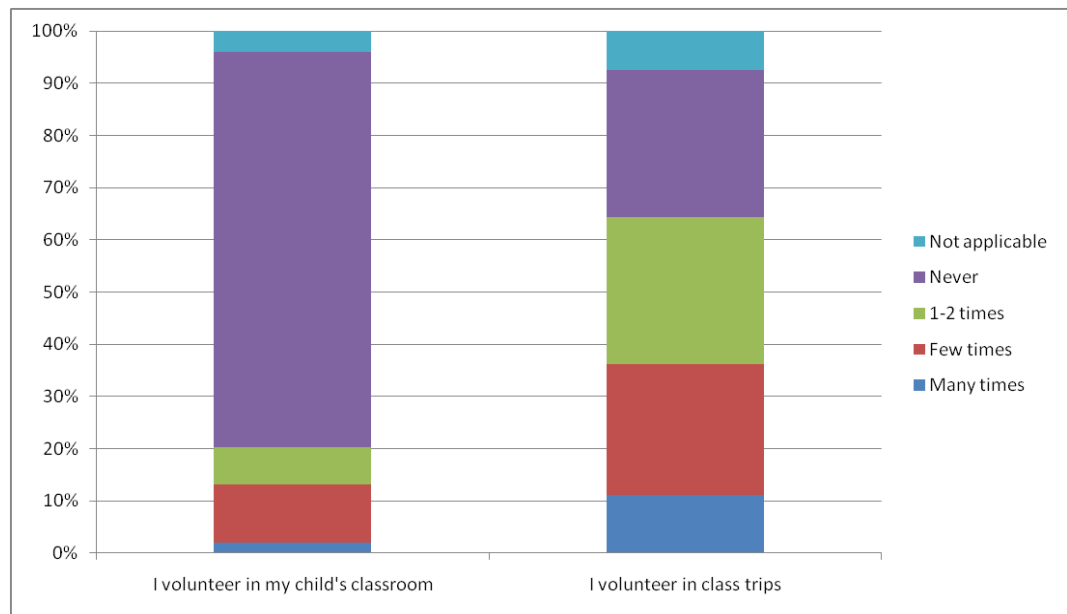
The results of the questionnaire tell us that the school could do better in giving information about how report card grades are earned. The conclusion from the focus group was that they don’t have any idea how their children get a mark. The principal

said that it is more from grade seven till grade twelve that the teachers give the students a feedback on a paper how they got their mark for an assignment. The parents from elementary gave back that they want to see it more.

✍

Fig. 2.4. Volunteering





Results of the questionnaire

Figure 2.4. shows the results from the questions about volunteering. This is the third type of involvement in the model of Epstein. Epstein (1995) says about volunteering that a school can organize volunteer work for helping the teacher but also for fundraising. It is marked that more than 80% of the parent respondents say the school does well in asking them for volunteering at school and with fundraising. But if you ask parents if they volunteer in their child's classroom than only 20% is helping many times or sometimes in the classroom. That the school provides training and that they matches the talents and interests from the parents with the need from the teachers and the students is for more than 25% of the parent respondents not applicable.

Results of the focus group

The principal explained in the focus group that the school doesn't provide a training for volunteer work. But everybody that has any connection with the school volunteers in the school. The principal said that fundraising is really important for this school. *'If parents would like to send their children to this school we expect some contribution. Especially if they are not from one of the Free Reformed Churches (FRC). In the FRC there are still different collections every year for this school.'* It doesn't need a training because everything is going well with volunteering. One parent had a question about 'the school organizes volunteer work'. *'I think this score is lower because the school doesn't really organize volunteer work. I think the parents they*

organize all the volunteer work.’ The meaning of this question is more that the school gives the opportunity to do volunteer work in the school. But the focus group agree with this parent: *‘There are different committees in the school but all organized by parents.’*

The focus group gave back that they help with apple pie baking or they are a school bus driver. But some parents gave back that they didn’t have time to volunteer at school. A mother explains: *‘We do a lot of volunteer work but not always into the school.’* She told in the focus group that she has a big family with still little children at home. The only possibility is to help in the weekends. Therefore she is glad that they also can help with fundraising through money. *‘That’s also volunteering.’*

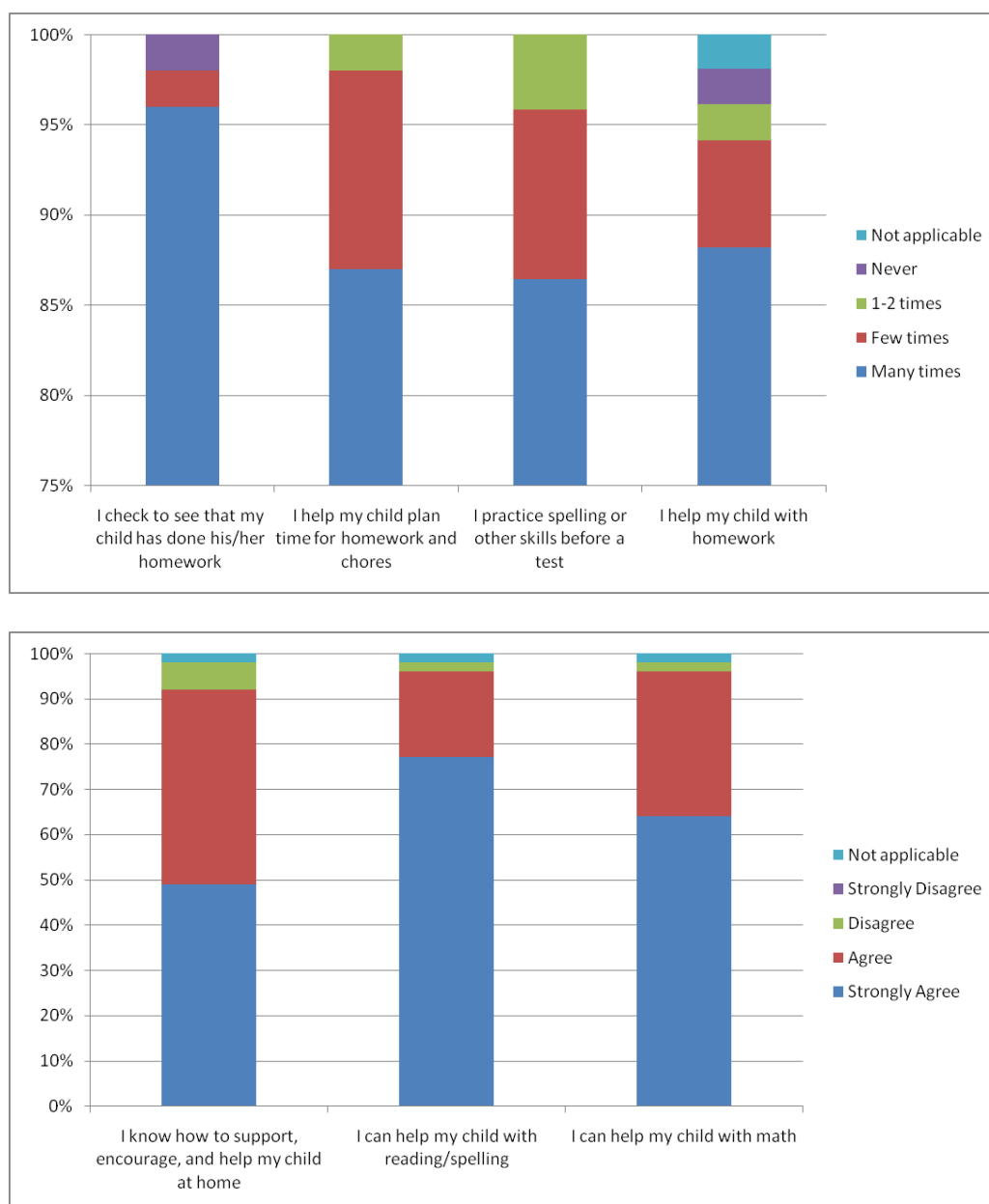
Volunteering in the classroom is not really possible. The parents in the first focus group gave back that they never are asked for volunteering in the classroom and the principal gave back that the teachers don’t like to have always parents in the classroom. The second focus group mentioned a few examples of helping in the classroom. Sometimes the teachers will ask for help with reading. Then they have divided the group into small groups and a parent can read with one group. A mother: *‘I help a couple times in a year with preparing a craft or something but not with spelling or math.’* The principal explained that if the teachers ask for help they ask somebody that they already know. For example a mom that always is helping in the kitchen or something.’ Then they know how they are and what they can expect from this parent. *‘Twenty-five years ago we had the problem with parents that didn’t speak English really well. You could get something like that again and that is not a help in education.’* One mother wants to have more involvement into the classroom. She has a child with learning disabilities. *‘The class is very large and the teacher doesn’t have time to help every child extensive.’* She thinks that if her child get more help with his work, for example from a mother, he is doing better. *‘Sometimes a one on one can be helpful.’* The parents gave the idea to hand out a questionnaire for teachers to ask them how they think about volunteering in the classroom and would you like more help.

The discussion was going forth because what if the teachers are open for volunteer work in the classroom? *‘Sometimes they ask high school students for a help but I prefer the help from parents.’* But another mother said that some children become more active if their mom is in the classroom so than it’s better to have high school

students or parents with not their own children in the classroom. This was a good point because for a third mom she only want to help in her child’s classroom. *‘I like to volunteer in school but I do it to benefit my child.’*



Fig. 2.5. Learning at home



Results of the questionnaire

More than 95% of the parent respondents check many times to see that their child has done his/her homework. They also help their child with plan time for homework

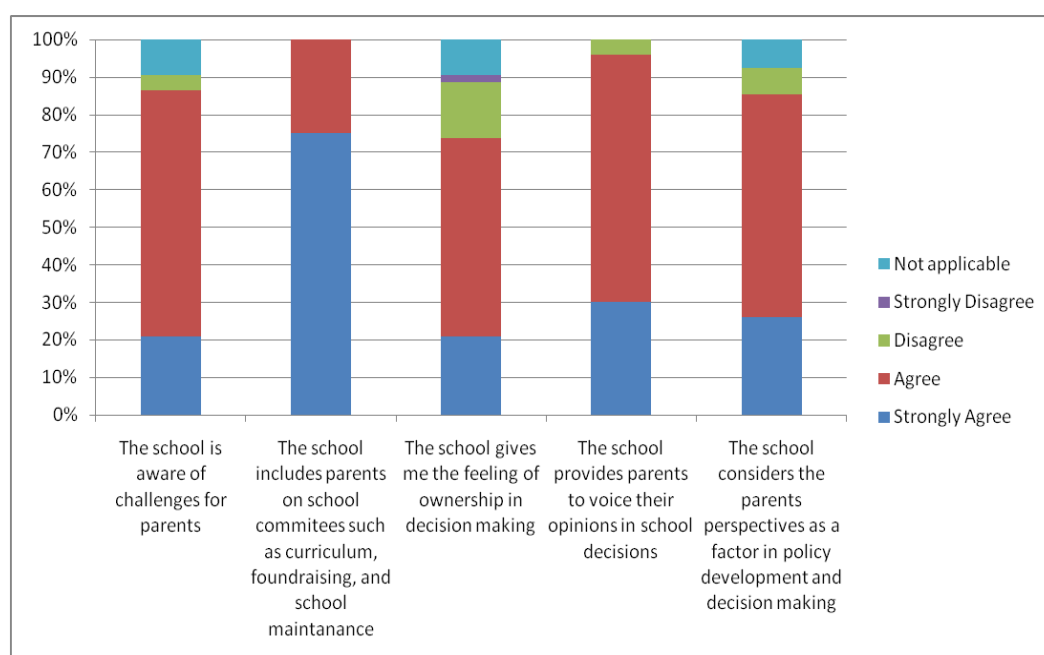
and chores. Also circa 95% of the parent respondents practice spelling or other skills before a test. But a little bit less than 95% help their child with homework. More than 90% of the parent respondents know how to support, encourage, and help their child at home. And circa 95% of the parent respondents can help their child with reading/spelling and math.

Results of the focus group

The results of the questionnaire show us that it is clear for the parents how to help their child with homework. The parents in the focus group have also a different opinion. They also understand that they only can help their children in elementary. *'Grade 8 math is too hard for me!'* and *'I have the experience that my children are coming home with homework and then they ask me to help. Of course I want to help them. But after a few minutes of help they will say: 'But this is not how the teacher explains me. You don't understand it.'* Then they can go to the teacher. *He is perfect!* One of the parents has an extra textbook at home. Her child has learning disabilities so that child gets more help at home. In case of learning disabilities they will talk for sure with the teacher and then they also ask advices for learning at home. The parents gave back that they don't want to have more information about how to explain something. The principal thinks that the curriculum forces the parents to help their children. He says that this is the main cause why parents filled in 'many times' or 'a few times'



Fig. 2.6. Decision making



Results of the questionnaire

Figure 2.6. shows the results from the questions about decision making. This is the fifth type of involvement in the model of Epstein. It is marked that four of the five questions about decision making score really high. In this graphic you see that 100% of the parent respondents agree or strongly agree with the question ‘The school includes parents on school committees such as curriculum, fundraising, and school maintenance. Also circa 70% of the parent respondents says that the school gives them feeling of ownership in decision making. ‘The school provides parents to voice their opinions in school decisions’. Almost 100% of the parent respondents agree or strongly agree with this question. They also agree or strongly agree with the question that the school considers the parents perspectives as a factor in policy development and decision making.

Results of the focus group

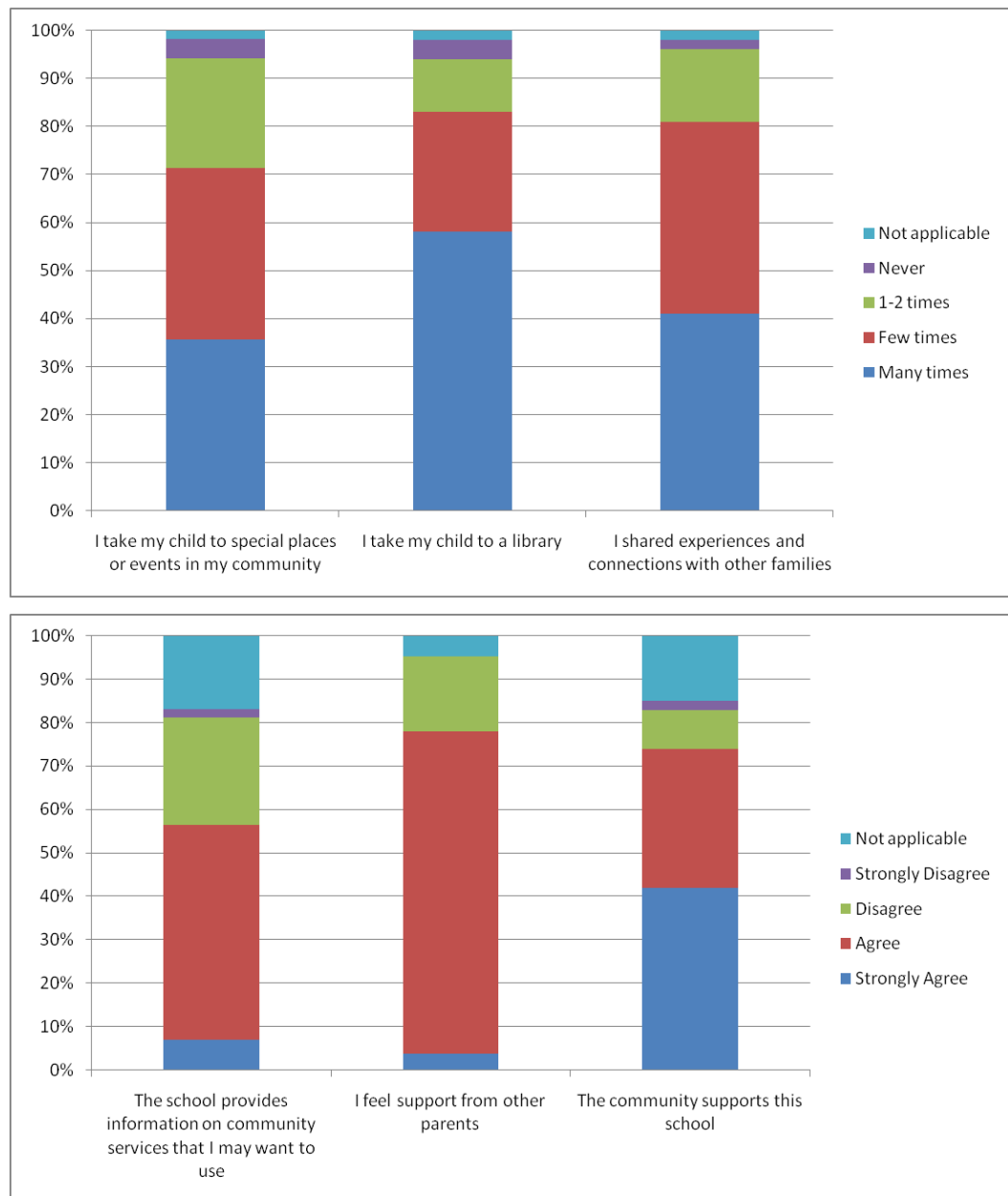
Decision making is a type of involvement. One of the results for parents that Epstein (1995) mentioned is feeling of ownership. The score of the questionnaire says that the parent respondents agree or strongly agree with this. So the question in the focus group is: ‘What are the opportunities for the parents to participate in decision making?’ The principal said that he can remember this high score from years ago. *‘This school doesn’t have a Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA). But all our committees*

for decision making consists parents.' One mother said that if she doesn't agree with something she writes a letter to the committee or to the principal and then they will take her letter along in the discussion. Or another mother, she is member of the RCS Women's Guild Board Member, says: *'Every parent is free to show up in a committee meeting.'*

Also the school board consists only of parents. In the school board is for sure one parent of every denomination represented. That experienced the parents from the focus group as fine because than it's more easy to talk to. Another opportunity to participate in decision making is the questionnaire that is handed out by the evaluation committee. One of the parents in the focus group explains the task of this committee. *'The parents get the opportunity to give feedback but every year the respondents are 25% of all the questionnaires that are handed out. Every year they look at two or three different subjects, and they send you a questionnaire probably early in the year. That are the subjects that they are looking at that year. Then they can see what they can change in the end of the year.'* The whole focus group agrees with a mother if she says that a school cannot satisfy 100% of the parents.



Fig. 2.7. Collaborating with community



Results of the questionnaire

Figure 2.7. shows the results from the questions about collaborating with the community. This is the sixth type of involvement in the model of Epstein. More than 90% of the parent respondents take their children to special places or events in the community. Circa 70% is taking their children many times or a few times to special places or events in the community and circa 20% is taking their children 1 – 2 times to special places or events in the community. Also more than 90% of the parent respondents take their children to a library. Circa 80% is taking them many times or a

few times to the library. And also more than 90% of the parent respondents share experiences and connections with other families. Circa 55% of the parent respondents agree with the question that the school provides information on community services that they may want to use. But also circa 20% of the parent respondents disagree with this. Circa 80% of the parent respondents feel support from other parents in collaborating with the community. And more than 70% of the parent respondents agree with the question that the community supports the RCS.

Results of the focus group

Collaborating with the community is a type of parental involvement. That means that the school provide families with information on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services offered by other agencies. (Epstein 1995). For the parents in the focus group the church is the most important information source in collaborating with the community. *'In the newsletter from the school you can find information about events in the church, and in the newsletter from the church you can find information about events at the school.* But they also said that the community is more than only the church. *'We don't have summer programs but sometimes there's a sport competition between different schools and than our school is invited in for example a public school or we invite a public school in our school.'*

One mother gives an examples how she feels support from other parents in collaborating with the community. She said that people in a community need each other. At meetings for parents they can talk to other parents and ask for experiences in collaborating with the community. *'If your child has learning disabilities you can talk with other parents with the same problems. They can help each other in looking for a provisional help out of the school community. For example speech therapy.'*

One parent put a comment on the question 'the community supports this school'. She thinks that this result is high because a lot of people filled this question in with the church in their mind. The church supports the RCS but not the government.



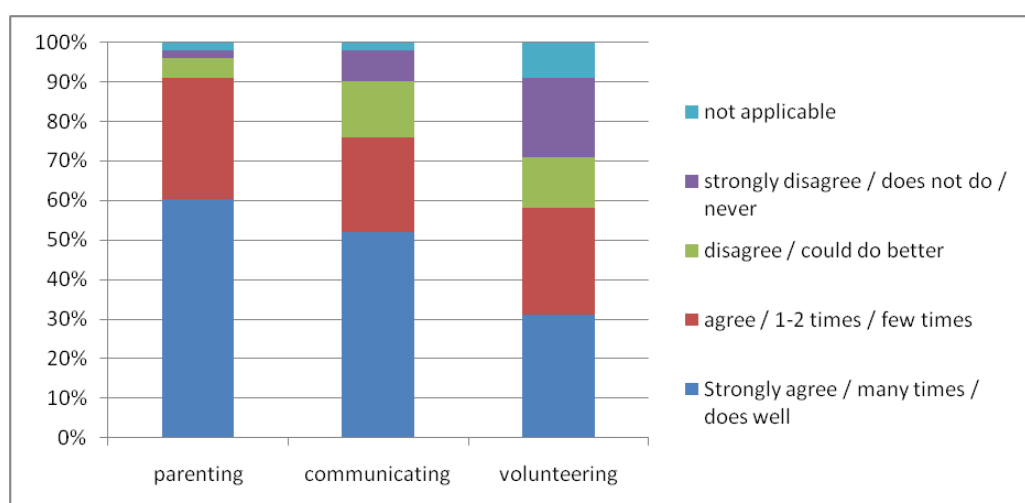
5. Conclusion and discussion

This final chapter includes the answer on the main question. What does the parental involvement at the Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) look like in according to the model of Epstein?

Following the theoretical and practical research on parental involvement, we can draw some conclusions. The various researchers who talk about parental involvement are all considered that the basis of parental involvement is the relationship between parents and school. This all for the welfare of the child. The child is located in the centre of parental involvement. That was also where parents talked about in the meeting. They are involved to benefit their own child.

They also mention different forms of parental involvement but they all are going about the same theme: take part into children's educational process. If you compare the various forms you can see similarities. De Wit (2002) mentions join in and Epstein (1995) means the same with volunteering. Think along and participation in decision making from De Wit corresponds with decision making from Epstein. They both agree with a good communication between parents and the school. In according to Epstein when parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work.

Fig. 3.0. Conclusion from all questions of the questionnaire



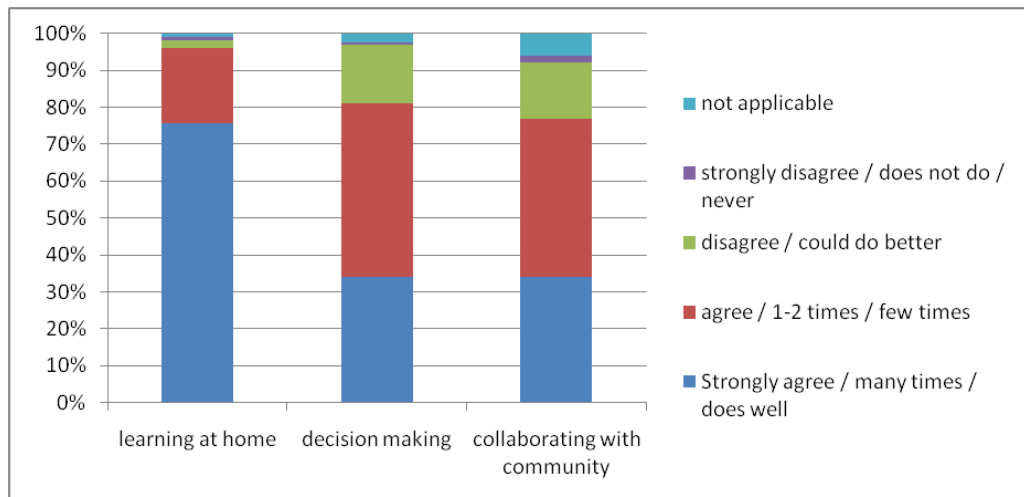


Figure 3.0. shows us the conclusion of the different forms of parental involvement in according to the model of Epstein. Parenting and learning at home score the highest in this table. The conclusion in according to this research is that parents from the RCS see parenting as the basis of parental involvement. Education is something to do together. The way to do it together is in following of this research involvement in different ways. The theoretical part, the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group correspond to each other. VanBrummelen (2002) talks about the Bible as guideline for parenting and also the parents respond that the Bible is the guideline for them in parenting. In the theoretical part of this research we write about how the Bible talks about parenting. The conclusion in according to this research is that parents from the RCS feel the most responsibility in parenting. It is a task from both but they are the most responsible in according to the Bible. They want to educate their children in a Biblical way. That is also the main goal from the parents from the focus group. To teach the children how they can serve God and how they can live like a Christian. The main result for parents from parenting must be that they feel support from school and other parents. If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 1: Parenting	
•	The school understands child and adolescent development
•	The school reflects the home parenting methods
•	The school provides for the health and safety of the children

•	The school reflects the home parenting methods
•	The school has an active parent organization
•	The school and the parents feel both responsible for the education / upbringing of the child
•	The school helps parents understand the child's stage of developments
•	The school pays attention to the concerns and needs of families
•	Parents feel welcome at school
•	Parents feel support from the school
•	The school views parents as important partners
•	The school and parents have the same goals for the child
•	The school takes care of the child
•	The school assist the families with parenting

Conclusion: Parenting, the first type of involvement from Epstein, is present at the RCS in an excellent level.

Various researches mention that a good and useful communication is important for a high level of parental involvement. Figure 3.0. shows us that the quality of communication at RCS is really high. The conclusion is that the parents are satisfied about the communication. All the information that parents receive is good and useful. There is also something to improve. The conclusion is that the school can do better in informing parents about how report card grades are earned. They also can do better in contacting the parents if their children do something well or improve. Epstein (1995) says that this makes the communication from school to the parents better and this can improve the parental involvement. Another conclusion from the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group is that parent-teacher meetings are not really important for parents. There are only two meetings but the visitors are parents from children without problems. The school want to see more parents from children with problems. On the other side the parents in the focus group gave back that they feel free to contact the teacher if they are worried about the welfare of their child. The school has different opportunities to inform the parents. They correspondent with parents in agenda's and they hand out news bulletins. The main result for parents from communication must be that they understand the school programs and that the responding to student's problems is effectively If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the

results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 2: Communication	
•	The school has clear and useful communications
•	The school tells the parents how their child is doing at school
•	The school sends home news about things happening at school
•	The school has parent-teacher conferences with the parents
•	The school sends home clear notices that are easy to read
•	The school invites parents to parent meetings
•	The school provides parents with information about school programs and student progress
•	The school contacts parents if their child is having problems
•	Parents attend the partner-teacher interviews
•	Parents talk with the teacher on the phone
•	Parents talk with the teacher at school
•	Parents understand the teachers’ job, increased comfort in school
•	Parents are going to special events at school

Conclusion: Communication, the second type of involvement from Epstein, is present at the RCS in a sufficient level. The school wants to improve the presence of more parents at ten-minute conversations. Parents want to improve the information about how report card grades are earned, how they can check their child’s homework and they want to have an overview of the skills that a child needs to learn every year. They also want to get more feedback if their child does something well or improves.

Epstein (1995) says that a school can organize volunteer work for helping the teacher but also for fundraising. The RCS organize more volunteer work for fundraising than for helping the teacher. That’s why the results in the tables shows us a lower amount. The questions in the questionnaire are based on volunteer work in the classroom. That is not really applicable at the RCS. Fundraising is important for this Christian school because they don’t get money from the government. The extra hands in the school makes money and safes money. The volunteer work is organized by parents.

There are different committees in the school that organizes volunteer work. Most of this work is for fundraising. The school doesn't organize volunteer work in the classroom. The main reason is that the teachers are specialized in teaching. The school expect from the parents that they help their children at home. From the theoretical part en the focus group we can conclude that helping hands from parents stimulates the children to do their work. Parents like to help for the reason that they benefit their child. Parental involvement is all for the welfare of the child and therefore some parents ask for more help in the classroom for children that need more help. The parents gave the idea to hand out a questionnaire for teachers to ask them how they think about volunteering in the classroom. The main result for parents from volunteering must be that they get self confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education. If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 3: Volunteering	
•	The school asks parents to volunteer at school
•	The school asks parents to help with fundraising
•	Parents volunteer in class trips
•	The school organizes volunteer work
•	The school matches the talents and interests of parents to the needs of students and teachers

Conclusion: Volunteering, the third type of involvement from Epstein, is present in a sufficient level. Parents ask to hand out a questionnaire for teachers to ask them how they think about helping hands in the classrooms. Especially for children with learning disabilities it can be good that they get a extra help.

A conclusion about learning at home, the fourth type of parental involvement in according to Epstein, is that this is an important part of involvement for parents at the RCS. They are involved through learning at home. This result shows us the same conclusion like parenting. Education is something to do together. The only obstacle in this kind of parental involvement can be the curriculum. For some parents the level

of the homework is too hard for helping their child. But they also gave back that they don't want to have more information about how to explain something. They see the teachers as perfect explainers. The conclusion is: if the parents are able to they want to help their child with learning at home. The reason for learning at home is that a child feels cared and Epstein says if a child feels cared they will do their best to learn. That's also what parents said in the focus group. A child needs the encouragement of the parents. The main result for parents from learning at home must be that they know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year and that they are aware of the child as learner. If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 4: Learning at home	
•	Parents know how to support, encourage, and help their child at home
•	The parents can help their child with reading/spelling
•	The parents can help with math
•	The parents check to see that their child has done his/her homework
•	The parents help their child plan time for homework and chores
•	The parents practice spelling or other skills before a test
•	The parents help their child with homework

Conclusion: Learning at home, the fourth type of involvement from Epstein, is present at the RCS in an excellent level.

The parents at the RCS are involved in decision making. The result for parents from decision making must be in according to the model of Epstein that parents feel ownership of the school. They get the possibility to share experiences and connections with other families. This is present at the RCS because every parent is free to show up in a committee meeting. The school includes parents into different committees such as curriculum, fundraising, and school maintenance. This school doesn't have a Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA). The committees are all formed by parents. This is positive because the parents prefer parents than teachers to talk to. Epstein talks about students and decision making. RCS doesn't include students in decision making. Every year the school hand out a questionnaire. The response is like

the questionnaire of this research not really high, but parents get the opportunity to give their voice or opinion. If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 5: decision making	
•	The school is aware of challenges for parents
•	The school includes parents on school committees such as curriculum, fundraising, and school maintenance
•	The school gives parents the feeling of ownership in decision making
•	The school provides parent to voice their opinions in school decisions
•	The school considers the parents perspectives as a factor in policy development and decision making

Conclusion: Decision making, the fifth type of involvement from Epstein, is present at the RCS in an excellent level. The school can think about the question: ‘How can we increase the respondents at a questionnaire?’

Epstein mentions that the three major contexts in which students learn and grow are the family, the school, and the community. The parents from the RCS read with community the church. They feel the most support from their church. Not from the government because they don’t get money from them. Epstein means with community more than only the church. She means the world around a child, for example the library and other events for children. The library is for the parents from the RCS a frequented visited part of the community. The school provides enough information on community services that they may want to use. Sometimes there’s a sport competition or activities from the church. The parents at the RCS need the community. They feel that they can support each other. Interaction with other parents in the community is the most important result for parents in according to Epstein. If we compare the parental involvement at the RCS in following of to the results of the questionnaire and the results of the focus group with the model of Epstein we can find the following similarities that indicates the height of parental involvement at the RCS:

Present at a sufficient level – Type 6: Collaborating with community	
•	The school provides information on community services that parents may want to use
•	Parents feel support from other parents
•	The community (church) supports this school
•	Parents take their child to special places or events in the community
•	Parents take their child to a library
•	Parents share experiences and connections with other families

Conclusion: Collaborating with community, the sixth type of involvement from Epstein, is present at the RCS in an excellent level.

What does the parental involvement at the Rehoboth Christian School (RCS) look like in according to the model of Epstein? The parental involvement at the RCS in Copetown is really high in according to the model of Epstein. The researcher expected more involvement in volunteering. The reason for a different result is the topic of the questions. Most of the questions about the type volunteering where going about volunteering in the classroom. Volunteering in fundraising is really high and that's what the RCS needs! The types, of parental involvement from Epstein, parenting, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community are present at the RCS in an excellent level. The types, of parental involvement from Epstein, communication and volunteering are present at the RCS in a sufficient level. This research shows us that the parents take care of this Christian education. Something to do together.

The recommendation from the author of this research is: If the school want to have more parental involvement through volunteering the school can hand out a questionnaire for teachers to ask them how they think about helping hands from parents in the classroom. Another recommendation can be to experiment in one class with a teacher that stands open for helping hands from parents. After two weeks the director can reflect with this teacher about the experiments. What are the benefits and what are the problems?

If the school want to have more parental involvement through communication the recommendation from the author of this research is: If the school want to have more parental involvement though communication the school can hand out a newsletter to parents how report card grades are earned. They can start with it in elementary

because especially these parents are asking for it. The school can improve the presence at the ten-minute conversations if they make the conversations required. Some parents want to hear more if their child is doing something well or improves. A ten-minute conversation is a good moment for this information. If the school wants to see more parents from children with learning disabilities at the ten-minute conversations they can send a letter home to invite them personally. The school can also hand out a newsletter with information how they can check the homework from their children. If a teacher makes a scheme with the homework and the tests for two weeks the parents can check the homework more easy. This can be included with the skills that a child needs to learn that period. This are recommendations from the author from this research and the school is free to do what they think that is the best way for a higher parental involvement.

6. Literature

Broekhof, K. (2006). *Ouderbetrokkenheid: waarom eigenlijk?* Artikel in 'Didaktief' nr. 7 September 2006

Caines, P. (2000). *Families and schools working together: A study of parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in education in two Fredericton, New Brunswick, Middle schools*, New Brunswick: The University of New Brunswick

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Report on the State of Early Childhood learning in Canada*, Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council on learning

Epstein J.L. (1995). *School, Family, Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children we care*, Phi Delta Kappan

Lopez, A. & Cole, C. L. (1999). *Effects of a parent-implemented intervention on the academic readiness skills of five Puerto*, School Psychology Review

Marzano, R. J (2003). *What works in schools, translating research into action*. Alexandria, Virginia.

Mewezino, A. (2010). *Improving schools by improving parental involvement*, Thesis. Dayton, Ohio

Pelt, D. van (2003). *Home Education in Canada, A Summary of the Pan-Canadian Study on Home Education 2003*, London: Home School Legal Defense Association of Canada

Pelt, D. van, Allison, P.A., & Allison, D.J. (2007). *Studies in Education Policy, Ontario's private schools*, Vancouver: The Fraser Institute

Robbins, J.W. (1995). *Education, Christianity and the State*, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation Edited by John W. Robbins, written by J. Gresham Machen (1987)

VanBrummelen (2009). *Walking with God in the classroom, ...*

Vries, P. de (2004). *Met ouders kom je verder... Ouders in het basisonderwijs*, Enschede: PrintPartners Ipskamp

Vries, P. de (2007). *Handboek Ouders in de School*, Zwolle: De Boekentuin

Wit, C. de (2002). *Opvoeden doe je samen, werken aan een inspirerend pedagogisch klimaat*, 's-Gravenhage: Makelaar VVE

Rehoboth 2010, Yearbook

Appendix I: Questionnaire Parental Involvement

November, 2010

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am Anneke Visser, a student teacher from the Driestar Hogeschool in the Netherlands. I am visiting Rehoboth Christian School for ten weeks to do a research project on Christian Education in Canada and to teach some lessons in the grade 3 classroom. I would like to use this research project for my thesis that I am writing to finish my education degree.

I am studying the impact of parental involvement at Rehoboth Christian School. Therefore, I would appreciate it if you could complete this questionnaire for me. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Of course, you may skip any question, but I hope you will answer them all. After you have done that, I would like to have an interview with at least 20 parents about the content of this questionnaire. If you would like to provide me with additional explanations, please provide your email address in the fifth question. **Please note that all information you provide will be strictly anonymous and confidential.**

Please return this questionnaire to the school office before 24th November.

Thank you very much for your help!

Kind regards,

Anneke Visser

Parental Involvement Questionnaire

This questionnaire should be answered by the parent or guardian who has the most contact with this school about your child. Your data will be treated confidentially.

1. Name of family _____

2. Who is filling in this questionnaire?

☐ Mother ☐ Father

3. How many children in your family go to this school this year (only elementary).

☐ 1 ☐ 3 ☐ 5
☐ 2 ☐ 4

4. If you have more than one child in this school (elementary) please answer this questions for the oldest child. This oldest child on elementary is a

☐ Boy ☐ Girl

5. I am willing to provide further explanations of this questionnaire. If yes, please fill in your email address

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Email address _____

I would like to know how you feel about the school right now. Please tick one choice for each statement.					
Statement / The school...	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
6.Provides for the health and safety of my children					
7. Reflects my home parenting methods					
8. Has an active parent organization					
9. Is aware of challenges for parents					
10. Assists my family with parenting and childrearing skills					
11. Helps me understand my child's stage of development					
12. Includes parents on school committees such as curriculum, fund raising and school maintenance					
13. Pays attention to the concerns and needs of families					
14. Provides information on community services that I may want to use					
15. Understands child and adolescent development					
16. Organizes volunteer work and provides training					
17. Takes care of my child					
18. Matches the talents and interests of parents to the needs of students and teachers					
19. And I have the same goals for my child					
20. Views parents as important partners in education					
21. Gives me the feeling of ownership in decision making					
22. Provides parents to voice their opinions in school decisions					

23. Considers the parents perspectives as a factor in policy development and decision making					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Schools contact families in different ways. Please tick one choice to indicate if the school has done these things this year.

Statement / The school...	Does not do	Could do better	Does well
24. Has clear and useful communications			
25. Tells me how my child is doing at school			
26. Tells me what skills my child needs to learn every year			
27. Has a parent-teacher conference with me			
28. Explains how to check my child's homework			
29. Sends home news about things happening at school			
30. Gives me information about how report card grades are earned			
31. Sends home clear notices that are easy to read			
32. Contacts me if my child is having problems			
33. Invites me to parent meetings			
34. Contacts me if my child does something well or improves			
35. Asks me to volunteer at school			
36. Asks me to help with fund raising			
37. Provides me with information about school programs and student progress			

Schools contact families in different ways. Please tick one choice to indicate if you have done these things this year.

Statement / I...	Never	1-2 times	Few times	Many times
38. Attend the partner-teacher interview				
39. Take my child to special places or events in my community				
40. Take my child to a library				
41. Go to special events at school				
42. Volunteer in my child's classroom				
43. Volunteer in class trips				

Statement / I...	Never	1-2 times	Few times	Many times
44. Tell my child about the importance of school				
45. Check to see that my child has done his/her homework				
46. Go to parent meetings				
47. Talk with my child's teacher on the phone				
48. Talk with my child's teacher at school				
49. Help my child plan time for homework and chores				
50. Practice spelling or other skills before a test				
51. Help my child with homework				
52. Shared experiences and connections with other families				

53. Understand the teachers' job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home				
--	--	--	--	--

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
54. I believe Bible plays a role in parenting					
55. I know how to support, encourage, and help my child at home					
56. It is important to attend parent-teacher interviews					
57. The school and I am both responsible for the education/upbringing of my child					
58. I need to tell my child about the importance of school					
59. I feel support from the school					
60. I feel support from other parents					
61. I feel welcome at the school					
62. The community supports this school					
63. I can help my child with reading/spelling					
64. I can help my child with math					

65. Over the past two years, how much has the school involved you at school and at home? Please tick the appropriate category.
<input type="checkbox"/> The school has involved me less than last year <input type="checkbox"/> The school has involved me about the same in both years <input type="checkbox"/> The school involved me more this year than last year <input type="checkbox"/> My child did not attend this school last year

66. All communities have information that would help families. Which services in your community did you receive last year? Please tick the choice for each service.		
<i>Services</i>	<i>I received info last year</i>	<i>I Would like more information</i>
Health care for my child and my family		
Family counseling		
Job training for parents / adults		
Adult education		
Parenting classes		
Child care		
After- school tutoring		
After- school sports		
Other after school clubs or lessons to develop talents		
Community service that children can do		
Summer programs for children		
Information on museums, shows, and events in the community		

Appendix II : Results questionnaire

Fig. 4.0. Results pertaining to how parents at RCS feel about the school

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
The school provides for the health and safety of my children (1)	37,7% (20)	62,3% (33)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3,377
The school reflects my home parenting methods (1)	20,8% (11)	67,8% (36)	5,7% (3)	0% (0)	5,7% (3)	2,981
The school has an active parent organization (1)	49,0% (26)	39,6 (21)	5,7% (3)	0% (0)	5,7% (3)	3,226
The school is aware of challenges for parents (5)	20,8% (11)	66,0% (35)	3,8% (2)	0% (0)	9,4% (5)	2,887
The school assists my family with parenting and childrearing skills (1)	5,6% (3)	49,0% (26)	28,4% (15)	1,9% (1)	15,1% (8)	2,283
The school helps me understand my child's stage of development (1)	11,3% (6)	67,9% (36)	15,1% (8)	1,9% (1)	3,8% (2)	2,849
The school includes parents on school committees such as curriculum, fund raising and school maintenance (5)	75,5% (40)	24,5% (13)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3,755
The school pays attention to the concerns and needs of families (1)	22,6% (12)	69,8% (37)	5,7% (3)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,113
The school provides information on community services that I may want to use (6)	7,5% (4)	49,1% (26)	24,5% (13)	1,9% (1)	17,0% (9)	2,283
The school understands child and adolescent development (1)	24,5% (13)	67,9% (36)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	5,7% (3)	3,057
The school organizes volunteer work and provides training (3)	9,4% (5)	47,2% (25)	17,0% (9)	1,9% (1)	24,5% (13)	2,151

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
The school takes care of my child (1)	37,7% (20)	62,3% (33)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3,377
The school matches the talents and interests of parents to the needs of students and teachers (3)	9,4% (5)	43,3% (23)	15,1% (8)	3,5% (2)	29,1% (15)	2,019
The school and I have the same goals for my child (1)	22,7% (12)	60,2% (32)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	15,1% (8)	2,755
The school views parents as important partners in education (1)	49,1% (26)	45,2% (24)	3,8% (2)	0% (6)	1,9% (1)	3,396
The school gives me the feeling of ownership in decision making (5)	20,8% (11)	52,9% (28)	15,1% (8)	1,9% (1)	9,3% (5)	2,736
The school provides parents to voice their opinions in school decisions (5)	30,2% (16)	66,0% (35)	3,8% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3,264
The school considers the parents perspectives as a factor in policy development and decision making (5)	26,4% (14)	58,6% (31)	7,5% (4)	0% (0)	7,5% (4)	2,962
I believe the Bible plays a role in parenting (1)	96,2% (51)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,906
I know how to support, encourage, and help my child at home (4)	49% (26)	43,4% (23)	5,7% (3)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,377
It is important to attend parent-teacher interviews (2)	60,3% (32)	34,0% (18)	3,8% (2)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,509
The school and I am both responsible for the education/upbringing of my child (1)	72,0% (38)	24,2% (13)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,642
I need to tell my child about the importance of school (1)	77,3% (41)	18,9% (10)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,698
I feel support from the school (1)	43,4% (23)	52,8% (28)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,358
I feel support from other parents (6)	22,6% (12)	60,4% (32)	13,3% (7)	0% (0)	3,8% (2)	2,981

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
I feel welcome at the school (1)	49,1% (26)	47,1% (25)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,415
The community supports this school (6)	41,5% (22)	32,1% (17)	9,4% (5)	1,9% (1)	15,1% (8)	2,830
I can help my child with reading/spelling (4)	77,3% (41)	18,9% (16)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,698
I can help my child with math (4)	64,1% (34)	32,1% (17)	1,9% (1)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,566

Figure 4.0. presents the results pertaining to how parents at RCS feel about the school. Respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement by ticking their choice: **Strongly agree**, **Agree**, **Disagree**, **Strongly disagree** and **Not applicable**.

Fig. 4.1. Results pertaining to how parents at RCS thinks about communication

	<i>Does well</i>	<i>Could do better</i>	<i>Does not do</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
The school has clear and useful communications (2)	77,4% (41)	17,0% (9)	5,6% (3)	0,0% (0)	3,433
The school tells me how my child is doing at school (2)	66,0% (35)	32,1% (17)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,283
The school tells me what skills my child needs to learn every year (2)	50,9% (27)	34,1% (18)	8,4% (4)	6,6% (3)	2,867
The school has a parent-teacher conference with me (2)	83,0% (44)	15,1% (8)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,622
The school explains how to check my child's homework (2)	58,5% (31)	26,4% (14)	13,2% (7)	1,9% (1)	3,000
The school sends home news about things happening at school (2)	85,0% (45)	9,4% (5)	3,7% (2)	1,9% (1)	3,622
The school gives me information about how report card grades are earned (2)	37,7% (20)	52,8% (28)	5,7% (3)	3,8% (2)	2,622
The school sends home clear notices that are easy to read (2)	83,0% (44)	15,1% (8)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,622
The school contacts me if my child is having problems (2)	62,3% (33)	26,4% (14)	3,8% (2)	7,5% (4)	3,056
The school invites me to parent meetings (2)	73,6% (39)	9,4% (5)	7,6% (4)	9,4% (5)	3,207
The school contacts me if my child does something well or improves (2)	32,1% (17)	45,3% (24)	16,9% (9)	5,7% (3)	2,358
The school asks me to volunteer at school (3)	69,8% (37)	13,2% (7)	9,5% (5)	7,5% (4)	3,150
The school asks me to help with fund raising (3)	86,6% (46)	3,8% (2)	3,8% (2)	5,7% (3)	3,584
The school provides me with information about school programs and student progress (2)	67,9% (36)	22,6% (12)	3,8% (2)	5,7% (3)	3,207

Figure 4.1. presents the results pertaining to how parents at RCS thinks about how the school contacts families this year. This is expressed in: the school **does well**, the school **could do better** and the school **does not do**.

Fig. 4.2. Results pertaining to how parents are involved into the school

	<i>Many times</i>	<i>Few times</i>	<i>1-2 times</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
I attend the partner-teacher interview (2)	22,6% (12)	5,7% (3)	52,8% (28)	17,0% (9)	1,9% (1)	2,301
I take my child to special places or events in my community (6)	35,8% (19)	35,8% (19)	22,6% (12)	3,9% (2)	1,9% (1)	3,000
I take my child to a library (6)	58,5% (31)	24,5% (13)	11,3% (6)	3,8% (2)	1,9% (1)	3,339
I go to special events at school (2)	54,8% (29)	35,8% (19)	7,5% (4)	0% (0)	1,9% (1)	3,415
I volunteer in my child's classroom (3)	1,9% (1)	11,3% (6)	7,5% (4)	75,5% (40)	3,8% (2)	1,320
I volunteer in class trips (3)	11,3% (15)	24,6% (15)	28,3% (13)	28,3% (6)	7,5% (4)	2,037
I tell my child about the importance of school (1)	79,2% (42)	17,0% (9)	0,0% (0)	3,8% (2)	0,0% (0)	3,716
I check to see that my child has done his/her homework (4)	96,2% (51)	1,9% (1)	0,0% (0)	1,9% (1)	0,0% (0)	3,924
I go to parent meetings (2)	20,8% (11)	22,6% (12)	30,2% (16)	15,1% (8)	11,3% (6)	2,264
I talk with my child's teacher on the phone (2)	11,3% (6)	28,3% (15)	37,7% (20)	22,6% (12)	0,0% (0)	2,283
I talk with my child's teacher at school (2)	22,6% (12)	47,2% (25)	24,5% (13)	5,7% (3)	0,0% (0)	2,867
I help my child plan time for homework and chores (4)	86,8% (46)	11,3% (6)	1,9% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	3,849
I practice spelling or other skills before a test (4)	83,0% (44)	9,4% (5)	3,8% (2)	3,8% (2)	0,0% (0)	3,716
I help my child with homework (4)	88,6% (47)	5,7% (3)	1,9% (1)	1,9% (1)	1,9% (1)	3,773
I shared experiences and connections with other families (6)	41,5% (22)	39,6% (21)	15,1% (8)	1,9% (1)	1,9% (1)	3,169
I understand the teachers' job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home (2)	54,7% (29)	22,6% (12)	5,7% (3)	1,9% (1)	15,1% (8)	3,000

Figure 4.2. presents the results pertaining to how parents at RCS think about their own involvement into the school. This is expressed in: I have done this **Never** this year, I have done this **1-2 times** this year, I have done this a **few times** this year and I have done this **many times** this year.

Appendix III: Invitation Meeting

January, 2011

Dear Parent / Guardian

First of all I wish you a blessed New Year. It is been a while since I handed out the questionnaire. Thanks for your response! In the questionnaire I asked if you were willing to provide further explanations of this questionnaire. Your answer was yes and therefore I send you this email.

In consultation with Mr. Westerink I have planned two meetings. We will start the meeting with coffee. At this meeting I will present the results of the questionnaire and I will ask questions about the results. I will invite you to one of those meetings. If necessary you may bring your preschool children along.

The first meeting is scheduled at Wednesday January 12 th	2.15 – 3.15 in Room 16
The second meeting is scheduled at Thursday January 13 th	2.15 – 3.15 in Room 16

Please return an email to me if you are able to come or not, before January 7th.

Thank you very much for your help!

Kind regards,

Anneke Visser