

# Impact of online grading systems

[Education](#)



## Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Online Grading Systems

\_\_\_\_\_ A dissertation presented to the faculty of the  
Department of Educational Leadership Policy and Analysis East Tennessee  
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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ by PR EV  
Brenda Mize August 2011 \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Eric Glover, Chair Dr. Don

Good Dr. Virginia Foley Dr. Elizabeth Ralston Keywords: Parental

Involvement, Technology, Gradebook IE W UMI Number: 3476281 All rights  
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Parkway P. O. Box 1346 Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346 IE W ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Online Grading Systems by Brenda  
Mize This study examined the effects of the communication aspect of using  
an online grading program. This study explored teachers' perceptions of  
the implications of allowing the grading process to become transparent to  
parents. The purpose of this study was to assist teachers in searching for  
ways to create a positive parent-teacher relationship. A positive available to  
parents on a daily basis, they will have access to specifics about the  
academic performance of their child. Parents and teachers will be able to  
communicate with each other on a regular basis with the use of an online  
grading program. In-depth interviews of 10 middle school teachers were  
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conducted using an interview guide. The interviews were then transcribed and coded by the researcher. The researcher found that teachers spoke positively regarding many of the features of Engrade, an online grade book. The teachers benefited from the convenience of communication with parents and students. The perceived primary result of Engrade is viewed as a positive by teachers because parents can communicate with the teachers about their children, and that, hopefully, allows them to be more involved in their child's academics. Further research opportunities are available in that the perceived implications of implementing an online grade book need to be evaluated from the perspective of parents and students. PR EV 2 IE W and constructive parent-teacher relationship is helpful to the student. If grades are made DEDICATION This study is dedicated to my family members, a close friend, and one professor. I am exceedingly thankful to my husband Kevin for encouraging me to continue working. He has taken on extra responsibilities for many years so that I could work uninterrupted. I could not have completed my degree without the encouragement and assistance of my husband. He is the most patient person I know. I would also like to dedicate my work to my two young children. They have also been most patient with me as I worked long hours on my research. I am looking forward to many play sessions in the future. Mandy and I have been working closely together for the past 3 years as we attempt to meet all of the requirements for an Ed. D. Every time I became disheartened and thought I could not finish, Mandy offered a much needed push forward. I would like to thank Dr. Glover for his endless patience as I struggled to make sense out of what I wanted to say. I always knew what it was I wanted to say, but I did not always know how to say it. Dr. Glover offered just the right words of direction

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at just the right time. Dr. Glover was always a calming influence when I needed it most. It seemed like we were in constant communication at times. At the beginning of my journey for an Ed. D, I had two very young children. They were 1 and 3 years old. People always asked me, “ How are you doing that? How do you get your work completed? ” I would always respond, “ I don’t have any idea. I pray to God, and it gets done. ” I give all the credit to God. I am most thankful for my friend, Mandy, for always offering a word of encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION As Dewey and Jefferson suggested, Americans cannot expect students to develop into productive citizens unless they are well educated (Guttek, 2000). There is much debate about different reforms

and methods designed to improve education. Two issues, parental involvement and student grades, are often under discussion in the educational literature. The No Child Left Behind Act mentions parents over 300 times (No Child Left Behind, 2001). An action brief that was released in April 2004 outlined the involvement of the parent in the student's education. The be punitive or inflexible, but are designed to benefit the academic and social progress of the student, and strengthen the work and mission of the public school" (No Child Left Behind Action Brief: Parental Involvement, 2004). Although a continuing debate regarding the most efficient way to educate students persists, the practice of assigning grades is rarely challenged. Grades are typically defined as the numbers or letters reported at the end of a set period of time as a summary statement of evaluations made of students by the teacher. The purpose and efficiency of assigning grades is discussed in detail in the literature. Assigning individual grades to students remains an accepted and established practice among educators as a part of the goal of educating students. Teachers typically assign grades at the end of a designated grading period. Parents and students place a great deal of importance on teacher assigned grades (Marzano, 2000). A negative aspect with the current system of reporting a letter grade on a report card at the end of the grading period is that the teacher's assessment arrives weeks or even months after the assignment was graded. Although there is a range of means to communicate student learning, PR EV 8 IE W brief explains that " the rights and responsibilities of parents under Section 1118 are not meant to currently a single report card grade for each academic subject is the most common and generally accepted system in middle and secondary schools (Allen, 2005). If students

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are falling behind academically or not exhibiting adequate motivation, parents may not be aware of the circumstances until it is too late to correct the situation. Online grade books allow the grades to be visible constantly, thus allowing the parent to be aware of the student's progress. The implementation of online grade books facilitates parental involvement and potentially, encourages teacher-to-parent communication regarding the academic progress of the student. This qualitative study was designed to assess teacher perception of increasing the an online grade book. Teachers daily engage in some aspect of assigning grades to students. Therefore, teachers must have some sort of system to record their grades. An online grade book is a web-based tool that allows teachers to share their system of recording grades with parents and students. An online grade book also allows teachers, parents, and students to communicate. When establishing an online grade book, a teacher assigns a student a unique username that allows the parent and student to view the student's individual grades via the Internet. Within education, grades are the most powerful message teachers can send to parents and students (Guskey, 2002). Teachers need to look at the reasons for grading, which are to communicate to parents, to provide incentives to learn, and to provide information for student self-evaluation. The importance of grades is so ingrained in American educational culture that the practice of giving and receiving grades often goes unchallenged. Grades provide the avenue for teacher-to-parent communication regarding the student's progress. Teachers, parents, and students continue to place a great deal of confidence in the grading system. Grades are most important to students and their families who have suggested that teachers should take extra care PR EV 9 IE W visibility of <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

classroom grading by making students' grades available for viewing via the use of to make sure they adhere to the grading policy in their school system. Teachers must use data from multiple, appropriate sources and know the limitations of the data and assigned grades (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). As educators attempt to demystify the grading procedures currently in place, they have initiated a discussion about what to do next. Keeney (2000) urged teachers to communicate clearly with parents and allow the grading process to become visible to students and parents. Online grade book software makes daily grades visible to parents. The software also allows the parent and teacher to send and receive messages to each facilitates direct communication between the teacher and the parent. Direct parent communication is paramount to the success of the child. According to the parents' guide associated with the No Child Left Behind legislation: The law requires that parents and school personnel write each parent involvement policy statement together. This requires parents to be at the table with school administrators and educators to help write a policy that addresses how every school, through partnerships with parents, will promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (No Child Left Behind: A Parent's Guide, 2003) In addition to educating the parent on the academic progress of the child, online grade books allow the parent and teacher to comment on individual assignments and facilitate easy communication between parents and teachers. Hornby (2000) reported, "The limited amount of research which has focused on parental preferences for the various forms of involvement has generally found that most parents prefer communication with teachers to be frequent and informal" (p. 33). Mid-grading period printed reports and occasional PR EV 10 IE W other <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

concerning students' assignments. Making the students' grades visible to parents parent-teacher conferences do not fit the criteria of " frequent and informal. " The use of an online grading program allows parents and teachers to converse informally regarding the progress of a student on a day-to-day basis, thereby facilitating parental involvement. Statement of Purpose Teachers have been searching for ways to create a positive parent-teacher relationship. A positive and constructive parent-teacher relationship is helpful to the student. If grades are made available to parents on a daily basis, they will have access to specifics about the academic performance of their child. The parent will no longer be able my child failed the English test last week? " Parents and teachers will be able to communicate with each other constantly. This study examined the effects of the communication aspect of using an online grading program. This study explored teachers' perceptions of the implications of allowing the grading process to become transparent to parents. I contacted Joyce Epstein, a leading educational researcher in the area of parental involvement, via email. I asked Epstein if she had conducted a study regarding parental involvement focusing on the use of online grade books. Her response was " Good topic, very interesting, becoming more common — we have not conducted research on the topic, and I know of no studies of the impact of on-line grading systems on parents' knowledge, interactions with students, teachers' connections with families, or student achievement. " (J. Epstein, personal communication, July 21, 2010). This qualitative study addressed the use of online grade books by teachers in the middle grades and investigate teachers' perception of the implications of using an online PR EV 11 IE W to say, " Why didn't you tell me my child was falling behind? "or " Why didn't you tell <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

me grade book. This study will provide educators with a view of the perceptions of fellow professionals as online grade books are implemented. This study examined teachers' opinions of the role of parental involvement in the grading process. The use of the online grade books may help parents stay connected with their children while allowing students to take responsibility for their academic performance; however, students may become more reliant on their parents. The purpose of this study is to add insight into teachers' perspectives on the use of online grade books to facilitate parental involvement. This study examined the attitudes and opinions of teachers as they implement an online grade book for the reporting of grades to parents and students. I anticipate that the process of interviewing 10 teachers will open a dialogue about assessment and the implications of making the grading process visible to parents and teachers. The participants were taken from two purposive samples. One sample group consisted of teachers who have voluntarily implemented online grade books for a full academic year. Another sample group consisted of teachers who have been asked by their administrator to use an online grade book for the 2010-2011 academic school year. Five subjects were taken from each group for a total of 10 interviews. The primary question this study will address is, "What are teacher perceptions of the implications of using online grading systems?" In order to understand the implications of implementing online grading systems, the following questions were addressed: PR EV 12 IE W Research Questions 1. Does the use of online grade books to report students' grades affect the teacher's relationship with parents? How? 2. Does increasing the visibility of grading to students and parents affect the teacher's relationship with students? How? 3. How do teachers perceive

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the impact of online grading on student motivation? 4. Does increasing visibility within the grading process affect parent-to-teacher communication? How? 5. How does increasing the visibility of grading affect the quality of assessments and 6. How does the use of an on-line gradebook impact student interest in learning? Scope of Study This study addressed the research questions listed above through qualitative methods. Teachers were interviewed using an Interview Guide to facilitate the interview process. The purpose of the interviews is to gather teacher perceptions and viewpoints regarding the practice of using online grade books for recording students' grades. The in-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection. An emergent design process permitted the course of the study to flow according to the thoughts of the participants and to grant them the time and opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions about ways in which online grading has affected them, parents, and students. PR EV 13 IE W feedback given on assignments? Statement of Researcher Perspective As a teacher, I have an interest in and experience using online grading. Consequently, my interest and experience may bias my findings. I have used and will continue to use an online grading system while I conduct the research for this study. Many of my experiences in using online grading have been positive but not all. However, the implications of making my grading process transparent to parents and students have yielded more positive than negative results. Summary review of related literature and findings on assessment, reporting, and parental involvement. Chapter 3 presents the methods and procedures used to gather data, including the interview process. Chapter 4 contains the data collection and findings. Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and summary of the study and recommendations

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for future research. PR EV 14 IE W This chapter has introduced and provided an overview for the study. Chapter 2 includes a CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW The purpose of examining the pertinent literature for this study is to focus on the following three aspects: student assessment and reporting, parental involvement, and the development of technology in schools that facilitates the implementation of online grade books. Student Assessment and Reporting Kirshenbaum (1971) provided a brief history of the development of the grading system family. Children did not attend school to obtain an education. Children were educated at home by their family members. If the members of the family were farmers, the family taught the children to farm. If the members of the family were soldiers, the sons were trained to be soldiers. In early America only the wealthiest of families provided a tutor for the children. In the mid 1800s the one room school house became the norm in the United States. When compulsory attendance laws were instituted in the late 1800s to the early 1900s, the number of students in school increased significantly. The education of the child moved from the home to the school house. At this time the high schools began to assign percentage grades to students (Kirshenbaum, 1971). Colleges began using grades as a screening tool for applicants. Marzano (2000) recounts that in 1780 Yale University began using a system that was probably a precursor for the system used today. They began assigning grades on a 4. 0 scale. From that point forward universities switched from a narrative approach of reporting student progress to a quantitative approach. Today teachers assign grades for much the same reasons they did many years ago (Marzano, 2000). The manner in which teachers assign grades and the meaning associated with grades is PR EV 15 IE W commonly used by <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

teachers. In the early stages of education, all education took place within the currently under scrutiny in the American education community (Allen, 2005; Gouwens, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Hursch, 2008; Marzano, 2000; Reeves, 2008). Purpose and Meaning Authors of texts related to education suggest that the major reason for assigning grades is to create a public record of a student's academic achievement that can precisely and successfully communicate to others the level of mastery of a subject a student has demonstrated (Allen, 2005; Bailey & McTighe, 2006; Olsen, 2005). Marzano (2000) defined grades as, " The numbers or letters reported at the end of a set period of time and as a sum statement of evaluations made of behavior" (p. 12). It is logical to conclude that teacher assessment leads the teacher to assign grades. The assigning of grades is used as a means of making students accountable to themselves, their parents, their future employers, and other educators (Brown, 2008). One immediate problem educators have regarding grades is that the terms grades and assessment mean different things to different people. Traditionally, the meaning associated with assessment is " mastery-learning, where assessment referred to the processes used to determine an individual's mastery of abilities, generally through observed performance" (Banta, 2002, p. 9). Marzano (2000) defined grades as " the numbers or letters reported at the end of a set period of time as a summary statement of evaluations made of students" (p. 13). Grades are pointless for students and parents unless some criteria can be attached to them that are seen as being of value to parents and teachers. Allen (2005) stressed the importance of teachers understanding the grading process when assigning grades. It is very difficult for students to gain admission to some schools if their grades are not sufficiently high. Invalid grades that

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devalue the student's knowledge may prevent a student with aptitude from pursuing certain educational or career PR EV 16 IE W students" and assessment as " vehicles for gathering information about students' achievement or opportunities (Allen, 2005). It is important that teachers understand how to assign grades accurately. If grades are not accurate measures of the student's achievement, then they do not communicate the truth about the level of the student's academic achievement (Allen, 2005). Most educators are required to follow policies that demand letter and number grades (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). For the vast majority of schools in the United States, grades are collected for every student, at every grade level, and in every subject (Bowers, 2009). The numerical symbol system is a common type of mark assigned to students by teachers as a grade. Usually a 100 is the highest number grade a student can receive. The student report card will example: Numerical grade 90-100 = A 80-89 = B 70-79 = C 60-69 = D Below 60 = F The use of the numerical system has three advantages. Numbers are convenient; they can be averaged; and unlike letter grades they are widely understood by teachers, parents, and students. Marzano (2000) described the above mentioned grading scale as the " norm referenced approach to grading" (p. 17). Although norm referenced grading is most common, the actual manner in which the numerical grade is assigned varies widely among teachers. Kubiszyn and Borich (2010) found that teachers, parents, and students are often unsure what the grades mean precisely because the practice of assigning grades varies so much from state to state, county to PR EV 17 IE W carry an associated letter grade equivalent to a number grade (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). For county, and teacher to teacher. Because the methods teachers use to assign grades vary, what <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>



teachers intend to communicate with their grades is not always what parents hear from these grade reports (Moran, 2007). The meaning assigned to grades is often misunderstood by the parent (Carifio & Carey, 2009).

Communication of the meaning associated with the grades from teacher to parent is paramount to avoid confusion. Typically, grades are assigned every 6 to 9 weeks as a grading period. The teacher uses daily grades, tests, portfolios, and other criteria to assign grades. Kubiszyn and Borich (2010) argued that teachers should not include attendance and behavior as factors when calculating Studies have found that two out of three teachers believe that effort, student behavior, and attitude should influence the final grades of students (Allen, 2005). Conversely, educational researchers claimed that grades should reflect student learning without including nonacademic factors. In an ideal grading arrangement, effort, conduct, and attendance would not be included with academic achievement in an overall grade (Marzano, 2000). When teachers begin including factors such as behavior and attendance, the parent may misconstrue the meaning of the assigned grade (Bowers, 2009; Kubiszyn & Borich, 2003; Marzano, 2000; Moran, 2000;). Marzano (2000) addressed the problems of current grading practices by identifying three major problems teachers face when assigning grades. The first problem in assigning grades is that teachers consider factors other than academic achievement when calculating grades (Carifio & Carey, 2009). The second problem teachers face when assigning grades is that teachers weigh assessments differently. The difficulty occurs when teachers use a solitary score to represent students' performance on a wide assortment of skills and abilities (Carifio & Carey, 2009). PR EV 18 IE W students' grades. Allen (2005) discussed grades as valid measures of academic

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achievement. The third problem that teachers face when assigning grades is the misinterpretation of a single score. Despite the difficulties teachers face when assigning grades, one of the more obvious purposes for grades is to provide feedback about student achievement (Marzano, 2000). It is necessary for the teacher to communicate student achievement to the parent. A popular way to communicate assigned grades to parents in secondary schools is a computer generated report card that is mailed to the parent at the end of the grading period. The teachers enter the students' grades and the reports are printed and mailed. One issue with this method of reporting grades is that parent-to-teacher communication does not exist. This system prevents the report card from being used as an interactive communication tool. Also, computer generated report cards fail to give accurate descriptions of the meaning of the assigned grades (Moran, 2007). Guskey (2002) defined grades as "the collection and evaluation of evidence on students' achievement or performance" (p. 1). Guskey related the following six purposes of grading and reporting: 1. To communicate the achievement status of students to parents and others. 2. To provide information students can use for self-evaluation. 3. To select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths or programs. 4. To provide incentives for students to learn. 5. To evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs. 6. To provide evidence of students' lack of effort or inappropriate responsibility (p. 6). Although all of these purposes may be undeniably important, educators and parents seldom agree on which purpose is most important. This lack of cohesiveness on the purposes of PR EV 19 IE W minimal space for the teacher to write comments and no space for parents' written comments. grading and reporting among teachers <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

and parents has led educators to report on all purposes with a single reporting device, usually a report card (Allen, 2005). The purpose of an academic report as related by Allen (2005) is "to communicate the level of academic achievement that a student has developed over a course of study" (p. 218). Teachers are then required to report the grades that reflect the academic achievement a student has displayed within a grading period. Scholars in the field of education have contended that the purpose of grading is to report academic achievement (Allen, 2005; Guskey, 2002; Kubiszyn & Borich, 2003; Marzano; 2000). Teachers often have conflicting views of the purpose of grading and reporting. Reviewing the conduct, and attitude should influence the final grades of students. He said, "It would appear that grades are often measures of how well a student lives up to the teacher's expectation of what a good student is rather than measuring the student's academic achievement in the subject matter objectives" (Allen, 2005, pp. 218-23). There seems to be a lack of cohesiveness about what grading and reporting mean among teachers, students, parents, and community members (Allen, 2005). Brown (2008) addressed the notion that assessment means different things to different stakeholders in education by stating that "teachers and students are aware that assessment also has an accountability component — either for and about the learner or for and about the instructors and schools" (p. 153). Teachers may not agree that assessment and accountability are necessary. Nearly all teachers, elementary and secondary, say they really do not like grading and reporting (Guskey, 1996). The current reality for most teachers is that they are required by the school district to dispense grades indicating students' academic accomplishment in the subjects they teach (Allen, 2005). PR EV 20

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IE W content of the literature, Allen (2005) concluded that teachers believe that effort, student There are many ways to document student learning. To document learning at the classroom level, teachers use tests and quizzes, observations of their students, performance-based assessments, portfolios of student work, and standardized tests (Gouwens, 2009). Grading activities range from casually checking and correcting students' learning errors to scoring and recording the results of quizzes, examinations, and performance assessments (Guskey, 1996). Individual teachers usually decide whether a particular assignment warrants checking or grading. Guskey (2002) differentiated between the terms checking and grading in the following explanation: But checking is different from grading. Checking involves gathering evidence in order to guide improvements. Grading involves judging student competencies and evaluating the merits of their performance at a specific time. So while teachers use checking to diagnose and prescribe, they use grading to evaluate and describe. (p. 3) Educators must be careful not to misrepresent students' learning when calculating final grades. It may be argued that distorted feedback is more troublesome than no feedback at all (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). Proper communication between the educator and parent maintains a clear understanding by parents regarding the meaning attached to grades. Watts (1996) stated: The need for caution in communication is as true for grading and reporting as for anything else, perhaps even more so. Grading and reporting are fraught with overtones of judgment; even when they purport to be objective, they cannot be free of the subjective. Educational jargon, hidden assumptions, and inappropriate reporting make communication all the more perilous. (p. 6) The use of letter grades establishes a clear communication between

teachers and parents because letter grades are widely understood (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). Using letter grades is the most common symbol system used by educators (Bailey & McTighe, 2006; Guskey, 2002; Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010;). Guskey (2002) reported, " Percentage grades are generally more popular among middle school and high school teachers than among elementary teachers" (p. 54). Guskey (1996) contended, " The issues of grading and reporting on student learning have perplexed PR EV 21 IE W educators for the better part of this century" (p. 13). The practice of grading and reporting remains a troublesome aspect within teaching and learning. Guskey (2002) listed the following developments that have prompted change in grading and reporting systems: 1. Recognition of inconsistencies in the grading policies and practices of elementary, middle, and high school educators shows the need for change. 2. The growing emphasis on standards and performance assessments makes current reporting practices inadequate. student learning. 4. Growing awareness of the gap between our knowledge of grading and reporting methods and common practice necessitates change (p. 4). Some scholars contend that a change in the grading and reporting system is needed to ensure the success rate of students. Reeves (2008) argued, " If you want to make just one change that would immediately reduce student failure rates, then the most effective place to start would be challenging prevailing grading practices" (p. 85). Practices vary greatly among teachers in the same school and even worse, the practices best supported by research are infrequently in evidence (Reeves, 2008). A common criticism of grading practices is grade inflation. Marzano (2002) defined grade inflation as " an increase in grades without a concomitant increase in achievement" (p. 9). Grade inflation — or the <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-online-grading-systems/>

propensity for teachers to assign higher grades today than in the past for the same level of performance — has become a matter of significant public concern (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). PR EV 22 IE W 3. Advanced technology allows for more effective reporting of detailed information on The grading and reporting of student achievement requires careful planning from educators. Grading is a subjective process. It involves teachers making a judgment about the performance of students and reporting the judgment to parents. If grading and reporting are well done they can result in a highly successful process for teachers, students, and parents (Guskey, 2002).

Education Reform U. S. Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, established a National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1981. The National Commission on Excellence in Education in its educational system needed to be reformed. The release of the report has shaped the conversation about educational restructuring since its publication (Gouwens, 2009). Hursh (2008) reported that, beginning with *A Nation at Risk*, “ many corporate and governmental leaders have argued that our schools are in decline and can only be remedied by establishing standards, standardized testing, and accountability” (p. 1). Since before the release of *A Nation at Risk*, a climate of widespread disappointment in American education among many stakeholders had been discussed (Fishman & McCarthy, 1998). Parents have recognized that they need to pay attention to the happenings in public schools and become involved in improving schools. The National Commission on Excellence in Education recognized “ the critical role that parents and students themselves play in improving schools and learning” (Gouwens, 2009, p. 13). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB; PL 107-110, 2002) legislation

also documented the importance of parental involvement. The federal government passed the Elementary and Secondary