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## Educator and Parent Collaborative Literacy Support in a Title I School

LaRhonda Young  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education

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LaRhonda Young

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Review Committee

Dr. Cathryn White, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. J Don Jones, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Markus Berndt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Educator and Parent Collaborative Literacy Support in a Title I School

by

LaRhonda Young

MAT, Louisiana College, 2012

BS, Texas Christian University, 2000

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 3, 2021

## Abstract

In an urban elementary school serving a large percentage of low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in a southern state, the problem was that over 50% of student literacy scores remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the elementary target site. Using Bourdieu's educational habitus theory, educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration strategies to enhance literacy and the advantages and barriers of fostering collaboration were examined for low-SES students in Grades 3–5. Interviews were conducted with 11 purposefully sampled educator participants who had (a) experience teaching reading or (b) facilitating or managing the campus literacy program for students at the target site. Open coding and a priori were used to identify codes, categories, and themes. Educators' perspectives were synthesized into 4 themes that participants perceived the need for (a) teacher professional development and parent home literacy-support training, and (b) leadership influence and support; participants noted that a (c) lack of cultural capital, and (d) limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies hindered home literacy support. The resulting project, a white paper, was created to inform stakeholders of the study findings and propose actions for consideration by the elementary leadership team. The results of this study may enhance social change by strengthening educators' understanding of low-SES parents' needs, improving teacher–parent collaboration, and enriching literacy support and training for low-SES parents to cultivate literacy home learning environments, and strengthen students' literacy skills and achievement.

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## Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to the memory of my father, Robert L. Young Sr., who passed away March 3, 2021, during my final months of completing this educational journey; to my maternal grandparents, Willie and Mamie Richie; and to my paternal grandmother, Alma Joe Miles, who were a major part of my support system during my primary years. I hope this body of work makes them proud as they look down on me from heaven above.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my parents, Robert Sr. and Patricia Young, for encouraging me to reach for the pinnacle of education. I would not have started this educational journey without their example, encouragement, and never-ending support. As teenage parents who married very young, they persevered despite all the obstacles stacked against them. I witnessed my parents earn undergraduate and advanced degrees, which created a tenacious drive in me to complete my doctoral degree. As I observed the sacrifices my parents made for my siblings and I during my childhood, I developed an intrinsic motivation that gave me the desire to reach for the pinnacle of education. I dedicate this body of work to my parents in appreciation for the love and sacrifices that made this opportunity possible.

I also thank my doctoral chairperson, Dr. Cathryn White; second chair, Dr. Don Jones; and university research reviewer, Dr. Laura Siaya, for their encouragement, insight, and support during this doctoral journey.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

#### **Background**

Students from low-income families demonstrate language and cognitive development deficits during early childhood, which negatively affects their overall academic performance throughout their school years (Barreto et al., 2017). Nonmonetary parental resources also account for the achievement gap and cognitive development deficits during early childhood (Bono et al., 2016). Pediatric associations, community health organizations, and scientific communities have called for pediatricians to encourage daily routines that include reading, telling stories, and other interactive activities such as playing to promote early child development (Barreto et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2015). Other factors such as living environment, parenting style, and outside support also contribute to the cognitive development deficit during early childhood (Bono et al., 2016).

Inner-city schools that have large populations of disadvantaged students who lack outside side support and resources qualify for federal assistance under Title I (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Furthermore, Title I provides extra instructional and social resources to school campuses to ensure low-income students equitable opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Title I schools are identified by the percentage of students at a campus who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. In the target district, 40% of the student population must qualify for free and reduced lunch as identified by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The standard criteria for Title I used

by the U.S. Department of Education (2018) to determine which schools receive funding under Title I is also 40%. The target site had an 86.8% economically disadvantaged student population in 2016, over twice the required percentage needed to qualify as a Title I campus (Texas Education Agency, 2016). By 2019, the percentage of students of low socioeconomic status (SES) in the target site was 97.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Title I schools are characterized by a large percentage of student families identified as low income, and the schools subsequently receive federal funding to help underprivileged youth meet state and national standards (Texas Education Agency, n.d.b; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Although federal funding is provided to assist local district staff in meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged students, some researchers indicated low-income homes are characterized by limited academic engagement, leaving students at a disadvantage academically prior to beginning formal schooling (Barreto et al., 2017).

Bourdieu described the operation of educational systems within a society and how they are branched into social classes (Bourdieu, 1977). Researchers have concurred with Bourdieu's identification that three sources contribute to *cultural capital* in Bourdieu's educational habitus theory (Huang & Liang, 2016). Bourdieu (1977) further explains the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement. Among the constructs of the theory are low parental education level, limited access to reading resources, and cultural preferences and behaviors (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Each component has the potential to limit the ability to engage in effective home learning activities that develop essential reading skills. The habitus theory is pertinent to this study because it conceptualizes the processes

of family and school environment socialization (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Bourdieu (1977) theorized that children's socialization is conditioned by family SES, and their upbringing prior to entering school influences how they are able to build on academic skills and school practices. Therefore, home academic engagement is essential to the development of primary reading skills.

Early childhood literacy skills are important to the overall academic development of students in Title I schools. Low reading levels in Title I schools negatively affect the district as a whole, manifesting in poor student performance and low campus accountability ratings (Texas Education Agency, n.d.a). Federal and state accountability systems have been designed to hold school leaders and campus personnel accountable for the proficiency and learning of all students (Paino, 2018; Wiczorek, 2017). Leadership strategies and how they have affected the academic achievement of students have been analyzed and monitored (Brown, 2016). Curry et al. (2016) recommended that school officials encourage and create a school climate where parents and teachers work collaboratively in determining appropriate interactive home literacy activities. According to Brown (2016), school officials may have more influence on academic achievement when responsibilities are shared among parents and other campus stakeholders. Principals have been able to improve academic achievement through their actions regarding campus conditions, data analysis, and interventions (Woods & Martin, 2016). More importantly, the specific manner in which campus leadership employs collaboration in the use of data and interventions plays a key role in literacy achievement among Title I schools (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Heinrichs, 2018). Leadership is essential in the effort to raise reading



and literacy achievement among students in Title I schools. Therefore, campus leadership's initiative to address the literacy problem with parents and stakeholders is imperative for all involved.

### **Problem at the Local Level**

In an urban elementary school serving a large percentage of low-SES students in a southern state, the problem was that over 50% of student literacy scores have remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019. The problem has persisted despite the implementation of several reading interventions and a parent university program to enhance parent literacy support in the home. The gap in practice is that, despite numerous, targeted reading interventions, low-SES students have not made measurable gains, and how a parent literacy support program in the home might strengthen reading skills for this population remains unknown. Educators have encouraged parents to read with their children at home and provided educator-led programs to support parents in the implementation of literacy-support strategies. Therefore, research was appropriate to investigate educators' perceptions of teacher-parent collaborative to support literacy in the home learning environment (HLE). Note that standardized test data were not available for the 2019–2020 school year due to exams being canceled because of state-issued stay-at-home orders resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researchers have noted that early literacy intervention provided by parents in the home environment supports the literacy development of young children and better prepares them for reading (Jung, 2016). Literacy intervention in the home also supports educators by allowing them to build on preliteracy skills developed in the home (Fricke et

al., 2016; Su et al., 2017). Researchers have shown that reading performance is associated with home learning activities and in-home parental educational practices that involve cognitive stimulation support, early childhood learning, and achievement as children progress through school (Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Parental involvement in school academic programs has been shown to be related to improved student performance (Hartas, 2015; Tan et al., 2019). Heinrichs (2018) indicated that student achievement increases when a partnership exists between parents and educators that encourages parent involvement in school.

Children are expected to begin their formal education with phonological skills and letter recognition knowledge (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). However, many low-SES students begin their formal schooling with an emergent literacy skill deficiency due to limited resources and lack of parental literacy support in the HLE (Curry et al., 2016). Researchers have suggested that low-SES children often display a range of academic deficiencies upon entering kindergarten, such as poor vocabulary and limited phonemic awareness (Mendive et al., 2017). Students identified as low SES demonstrate low performance in literacy skills more often than students who are not identified as low SES (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Researchers have indicated that family SES, proximal environmental factors, parent education level, organizational hindrance, and HLE are all factors that may hinder reading skills (Bono et al., 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Shin et al., 2017). Although many factors may hinder literacy development, in this study, I examined teacher–parent collaboration for home literacy support.

## Rationale

The rationale for the study was a gap in literacy skills, indicative of low reading levels assessed by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) standardized reading exam at the target site. Educational leaders at the target site have empowered teachers and the librarian to implement various campus-level programs to address the issue of low reading levels. Programs implemented to increase reading achievement of students at the target site have included Accelerated Reader, Neuhaus Phonics, Corrective Reading, Reading Readiness, and after-school tutoring. Despite the implementation of the various programs, reading scores have remained below state standards since 2016 (Texas Education Agency, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Although school staff have implemented various interventions focused on improving reading skills, the low-SES students continue to demonstrate insufficient progress on state assessments.

At the target elementary site, more than 50% of all students in kindergarten through fifth grade have been reading below grade level and scored below the state standard in reading between 2016 and 2019 (see Table 1). In 2016, 47% of all students in Grades 3–5 scored proficient in reading, a percentage below state standardized testing requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2016). The following year, in 2017, test scores for students in reading for Grades 3–5 dropped, and only 42% met proficiency (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Reading scores increased the following 2 years. In 2018, 52% and in 2019, 56% of all students in Grades 3–5 met proficiency, and the campus obtained a *met standard* state accountability rating for both academic years (Texas Education Agency, n.d.a, 2018, 2019). Although the campus obtained an acceptable accountability

rating in 2018 and 2019, students' reading scores were still below the district average (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Grades 3–5 Percentage of Students Scoring Proficiency in Reading on the STAAR, by Target Site and District*

School year	Target school	District	Gap
2015–2016	47	62	–15
2016–2017	42	62	–20
2017–2018	52	65	–13
2018–2019	56	64	–8

Note. Data from School Report Cards (Texas Education Agency, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).

An analysis of these data showed low performance among students in Grades 3–5, with reading deficiencies evident as early as kindergarten, according to kindergarten assessment data measured by the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), I Station's Indicators of Progress, and the Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Texas Education Agency, 2021). TPRI is an assessment used to determine the literacy development of children in kindergarten through third grade (Fletcher et al., 2020). The target site used the TPRI assessment to identify reading deficiencies among students in kindergarten until 2015. In 2016, I Station's Indicators of Progress was adopted to monitor kindergarten performance, later replaced by the Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Data from TPRI, I Station's Indicators of Progress, and the Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment confirmed that low-SES kindergarten students in Texas lacked basic literacy skills

compared to their peers (Texas Education Agency, 2021). The evidence of deficient literacy skills in kindergarten is indicative of later difficulty achieving academic competencies (Foster et al., 2016).

Nationwide, low-SES elementary students' reading skills remain below minimum standards, and students struggle to reach proficiency. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) on the Nation's Report Card, Texas fourth graders scored below average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessments in 2019, with a scale score of 216 out of 500. The average national scale score was 219, and proficient is measured at a scale score of 238. Basic reading skills are identified with a scale score of 208 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Texas students identified as economically disadvantaged scored below the national proficient and basic skill levels with an average scale score of 206, whereas the national public scale score average was 219 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). These data are similar to the reading assessment standardized test scores reported for the target site in Grades 3–5. In the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 school years, more than half of all students in kindergarten through Grade 5 were reading below grade level at the target site (Texas Education Agency, 2016, 2017). As a result of students' performance on the state assessment, during the 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 school years, the campus received an unacceptable accountability rating according to state guidelines (Texas Education Agency, n.d.a, 2016, 2017).

The campus received an improvement required accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency for failing to meet accountability standards (Texas Education

Agency, n.d.a). The campus proficiency scores must reach the target score in all indices evaluated to receive a Met Standard rating (Texas Education Agency, n.d.-a).

Accountability ratings are established by four performance indices: student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness (Texas Education Agency, n.d.-a). In the 2015-2016 school year, students met the standard in student progress. The following year, 2016-2017, students met the standard in student progress again, but the school did not meet the standard in any other indices, and overall performance dropped to a 42% passing rate for the STAAR exam (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Progress declined, and students' reading levels and state assessment passing rates continued to stay below state and district minimum proficiency levels. In addition to a variety of reading interventions provided by the campus, a parent education program was provided focusing on providing knowledge to parents regarding reading support parents could provide children in the home.

A parent university program was implemented at the target site that focused on providing parents with structured activities for 3- to 4-year-old children to prepare them for formal schooling. According to a campus administrator (personal communication, March 3, 2019), few parents participated in the parent university, and it is unknown if those who participated consistently used the strategies that were provided. Researchers suggested that low-SES HLE that provide consistent support fostering essential reading skills throughout grade school assists with closing the achievement gap (Dealey & Stone, 2018; Justice et al., 2017). According to a literacy coach in the district (personal communication, March 15, 2017), most of the collaborative efforts with parents have

been related to parental involvement in special programs that focus on music, art, and field trips. A kindergarten teacher at the target site (personal communication, July 11, 2019) added that collaborative efforts to support parental home engagement strategies were limited to suggesting that parents read with their children and take advantage of reading programs at local public libraries. Although parents have been encouraged to engage in reading activities with their children in the home, they have not been provided with literacy strategies to use with students.

Researchers have established a positive association between students' reading development in primary school and parents who have used literacy activities in the home (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). According to Curry et al. (2016), children's reading was strengthened when parents engaged in shared reading activities that consisted of modeling, questioning, repeating, and correcting. However, differences in school cultures and HLE can hinder literacy development; therefore, districts and parents need to provide students with aligned literacy instructional experiences (Curry et al., 2016).

The student population in the target school is composed of 97.4% low-SES students (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Students from low-SES environments are often characterized by having parents with low education levels and little or no literacy support in the home (Bellibas, 2016; Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Parental support is essential to emergent literacy skills, which are indicative of reading achievement throughout the school years.

Elementary students qualifying as low SES tend to perform below grade level on standardized test and in many cases fail to meet district and state proficiency standards.

According to Mendive et al. (2017), low-SES children perform lower on early literacy skills than their high-SES peers before entering kindergarten. Niklas and Schneider (2017) indicated that gaps in reading achievement associated with SES are evident when children begin formal education. More specifically, children in low-SES families enter kindergarten with limited oral knowledge and phonological awareness skills (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Public health communities and educators have a concern for students from low-SES homes entering kindergarten as they are more likely to be academically behind their peers in terms of reading and literacy performance and remain behind their peers throughout the remainder of their school years (Barreto et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2015). According to Niklas and Schneider (2017), students are expected to enter kindergarten with knowledge of phonological awareness, oral vocabulary, letter sounds, numbers, and counting. According to the 2019-2020 Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment, 36.3% of kindergarteners performed below proficiency, and 33% did not meet proficiency in 2018-2019 (Texas Education Agency, 2021).

Data have indicated that students who attend prekindergarten for 80 or more days the previous year demonstrated proficient skills (Niklas et al., 2016a). Students who do not attend prekindergarten rely on parental academic support for literacy development prior to kindergarten (Niklas et al., 2016a). Therefore, educators' focus on parental knowledge of learning strategies is essential to creating an appropriate level of parental academic support (Heinrichs, 2018; Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Heinrichs (2018) found when educators focus on increasing parent knowledge of curriculum and basic skills, academic achievement also increases, and deficiencies are minimized. Therefore, school



officials need to encourage strategies that provide teacher–parent collaborative literacy support.

School officials are responsible for working with educational staff and parents to raise overall academic achievement on their campuses (Brown, 2016). The increasing demand on school accountability nationwide is geared toward the principals' influence on student achievement (Brown, 2016). Therefore, limited literacy skills and low reading levels in Title I schools are a problem that leadership must address to avoid the risk of an improvement required accountability rating. According to Fletcher and Nicholas (2017), democratic leadership that embraces collaborative efforts among the principal, teachers, and parents may improve literacy outcomes. A study that focuses on teacher–parent collaboration for home literacy support to strengthen the reading skills of students in kindergarten through fifth grade may support closing the gap in practice related to reading. Researchers have indicated that an effective HLE throughout early childhood supports children's literacy development and cognitive competencies (Bono et al., 2016; Niklas et al., 2016a; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are used in the study.

*Academic home engagement activities:* Activities or learning strategies used in the home to provide children precursors of math, reading, spelling, and linguistic competencies (Niklas et al., 2016b).

*Achievement gap:* The gap between the academic skills attained by upper income or White students compared to lower income or ethnic minority youth (Quinn et al., 2019).

*Collaboration:* In the context of this study, *collaboration* refers to educators and parents engaging in shared decision making, identifying improvements, and planning and implementing academic strategies (Robinson, 2017).

*Early literacy activities:* Literacy activities that happen at home before children are enrolled in primary school (Hemmerechts et al., 2017).

*Home learning environment (HLE):* The availability of literacy resources and reading-related parenting practices within the home comprise (Niklas et al., 2016a).

*Reading deficiency:* The inability to connect letter shapes and sounds, identify words in written text, and interpret and establish meaning from text (Kaskaya, 2016).

*Socioeconomic status (SES):* An individual's or a family's income, occupational status, and access to social resources, which include health and educational assistance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

*Title I schools:* Schools characterized by a large percentage of students from low-income families; these schools receive financial assistance from government grant funds under Title I to ensure an equitable educational opportunity for students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because of the focus on educators' collaborative methods for home literacy support. Findings may be used to strengthen relationships and increase parental curricular knowledge that may support increased reading achievement. Findings from the study may be essential to enhancing HLEs and providing parents knowledge of effective learning activities to promote reading. Effective home reading activities can increase student reading skills in primary grades, which influence later literacy success (Jung, 2016). Data from this study provided insight about the collaborative strategies needed to strengthen HLEs and minimize the educational habitus described by Bourdieu (1977), in which cultural practices, limited opportunities, and poverty as a systemic inequality perpetuate the cycle of the achievement gap for students. Researchers have established that individuals in low-SES environments are more likely to drop out of school at an early age and not attend college (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016).

By gathering evidence on collaborative techniques, educators can create and implement strategies to assist parents with aligning the HLE with curriculum expectations and can address the gap in practice related to reading. Furthermore, developing campus communities that embrace collaboration with parents and parent programs may influence the HLE and lead to an overall increase in reading scores in primary school (Harji et al., 2016). According to Niklas and Schneider (2017), reading skills in primary grades influence reading achievement in higher grades. Students will likely struggle with reading during their secondary education years if reading deficiencies are not addressed during their primary years (Townsend et al., 2018). The focus of this

study was to examine methods of collaborative literacy support in an effort to strengthen reading skills.

With this study, I have made an original contribution to education by developing an understanding of how collaborative methods among educators and parents may increase reading levels among low-SES students. Home environment, social interactions, and home learning account for a significant amount of the cognitive gap between lower and upper SES children (Bono et al., 2016). Researchers have shown that addressing reading gaps can have a significant effect on reading and literacy skill development during the elementary years (Barreto et al., 2017). The findings from this study provide educators with insight on what is needed to increase collaborative efforts among teachers and parents and the skills and strategies that should be shared with parents to help decrease reading deficiencies. The results of the study offer guidance for educators in addressing low reading levels in a proactive manner (Brown, 2016). Leaders in education may gain knowledge that will better equip them to provide parents with effective home engagement strategies and lead to the development of effective collaborative professional learning communities with parents (Robinson, 2017).

Social change may occur by educating parents so they can implement academic strategies in the home. Low-SES parents may have an opportunity to learn how to implement reading strategies to improve home engagement activities and increase reading outside of school. Providing parents of Title I students methods for increasing academic stimulation may help change the academic dynamics within their families. Children may engage in reading outside the academic realm, providing more

opportunities to develop their reading, vocabulary, and linguistic skills and increase reading levels. Researchers have indicated that addressing academic deficiencies early can make a significant difference in achievement and cognitive development (Bono et al., 2016). Decreasing or eliminating low reading levels early provides congruent educational opportunities for children at risk of dropping out and is essential to decreasing high school dropout rates and increasing social advantage among low-SES youth (Barreto et al., 2017). An increase in high school and college graduation rates may lead to an increase in more employable adults and a decrease in low-income families and poverty, effecting positive change in society.

### **Research Questions**

Reading levels of elementary students in low-SES areas tend to be below grade level, and standardized test scores in many cases fail to meet state and district standards. An analysis of the data for Grades 3–5 from the 2017–2018 school year at the target site reflected that 48% of students who took the STAAR exam were reading below grade level (Texas Education Agency, 2018). In 2018–2019, 44% were below grade level or failing to meet state expectations measured by standardized exams (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Researchers have indicated that children should enter kindergarten with the ability to identify letters and sounds to take advantage of the skills provided during primary school (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Researchers have found that cognitively demanding academic engagement in the home is an essential element to increasing reading levels among low-SES children (Curry et al., 2016; Niklas et al., 2016a). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators’ perceptions of teacher–

parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site.

In alignment with the research problem and purpose, the central research question of the study was:

What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students?

Based on Bourdieu's (1977) educational habitus conceptual framework that the cycle of low academic achievement is due to parental lack of knowledge of how to effectively administer academic stimulation in the home additionally, the following subquestions helped guide the study:

SQ1: What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher-parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3–5?

SQ2: What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Conceptual Foundation**

The conceptual framework for the study drew from Bourdieu's (1977) habitus theory, which explains that one is socialized to think a certain way toward various societal institutions and is influenced by structured systems within one's community that determine social relations. This theory explains low academic achievement among Title I

elementary students and the inability of parents to provide appropriate academic stimulation within the home (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Cheng and Kaplowitz (2016) discussed Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital as the vehicle through which educational inequalities are reproduced and how families play a major role in unequal educational outcomes. Bourdieu's cultural capital concept clarifies the habitus theory with an explanation of the reproductive cycle of low academic outcomes. Bourdieu developed the term *cultural capital* to explain the process that assists elites in maintaining their power within society (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Cultural capital can be described in three constructs: "the embodied form, the objectified form, and the institutionalized forms" (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016, p. 272). The embodied form refers to cultural values, behavior, and skills. The objectified form consists of physical goods, such as books and property; the institutionalized form consists of education, qualifications, or academic degrees (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016).

Based on the habitus theory, cultural practices and beliefs deter impoverished communities from providing effective educational strategies for their youth outside of formal educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) proposed that poverty, reduced opportunities, cultural practices, and belief systems continually reproduce the achievement gap. Bourdieu explained that socioeconomic groups vary in the educational habitus (lack of reading and home academic support) due to access to intellectual resources and cultural capital vital for providing an effective HLE and decrease in the achievement gap.

According to Hartas (2012), the habitus theory focuses on how belief systems and cultural practices are responsible for reproducing disparities in educational outcomes. This view provides a contrast between belief systems and poverty as a cultural method and systemic inequality along with limited opportunities that replicate the achievement gap (Hartas, 2012). The habitus theory supports the notion that SES background and parent education level explain much of the discrepancy in children's school readiness (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Bourdieu explained in habitus theory that parental lack of knowledge of how to effectively administer academic stimulation within the home perpetuates a cycle of low academic achievement throughout generations.

Huang and Liang (2016) investigated the relationship between student performance in math and science and cultural capital. Data were generated from an analysis of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2011. Constructs of habitus were measured by home resource of books, parental reading habits, parental education level, and parent expectations. The sample consisted of Grade 4 students derived from 32 out of 60 countries and regions represented in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study 2011 data set. Two-stage sampling was used to obtain a student sample. Huang and Liang randomly selected a school and a fourth-grade class from the school. Huang and Liang found a positive relationship between social status and student achievement. Students of parents with greater social competence were likely to perform better in math and science than their peers with low parental cultural capital. Additionally, low-SES parents often possess less cultural capital, which is indicative of lower educational skills (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). This evidence supports the purpose



of this study to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. Deficits in cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1977), underscore the need for avenues to address student learning and support parents in their instructional endeavors in the home to develop students' reading skills. Collaboration between educators and low-SES parents is essential to the development of an effective HLE.

Families with at least one parent with a college degree tend to provide a more effective HLE (Foster et al., 2016). Al-deen and Windle (2015) conducted a qualitative study that examined social assets and multinational class processes of migrant mothers and the effects on the HLE and children's education. The sample consisted of 25 Middle Eastern women in Australia with young children. The researchers identified various forms of parent educational engagement and connected them to the mother's social and cultural capital. Mothers from middle-class backgrounds who experienced downward social mobility after migration were often able to transfer their high-capital strategies. Their ability to transfer middle-class strategies indicated how practices can be transmitted across educational and national settings.

According to Al-deen and Windle (2015), the strategies that high-capital mothers followed were known as concerted cultivation. Concerted cultivation is a parenting style that incorporates organized activities into the life of a child to foster talents (Al-deen & Windle, 2015). The ability to integrate concerted cultivation parenting strategies increases one's access to resources that maximize academic achievement (Al-deen &

Windle, 2015). Therefore, high-capital families do not lose their ability to implement effective home academic engagement when subjected to downward social mobility. This finding leads to the assumption that providing low-SES parents with the appropriate resources and collaborative support from educators may increase their ability to implement effective home academic engagement. The habitus theory posited that parents with low education levels who have never experienced proper home academic engagement themselves may not have the skills to provide effective academic activities for their children (Bourdieu, 1977).

Various studies have been based on Bourdieu's (1977) habitus theory; however, I was unable to find research from the United States with a habitus foundation focused on the academic achievement of primary grades. Most of the studies were conducted in Germany, Africa, Australia, and other countries and were conducted to investigate the use of middle-class strategies and decision making in education based on the habitus theory. I found two studies conducted in the United States geared toward graduate students and another that focused on the lack of technology integration in high school classrooms by teachers. These studies were not focused on investigating educator perceptions of teacher-parent collaboration and the HLE and the potential effect on reading levels of students in Title I schools. This lack of literature is an indication of a gap in practice in the United States, and the study was designed to provide data to aid in narrowing the gap. Bourdieu explained in the educational habitus framework that systems of beliefs and cultural practices are often responsible for the reproduction of ineffective practices. Teacher perceptions and how teachers engage parents may be a reflection of

the lack of teacher understanding of families' backgrounds and experiences (Robinson, 2017). Furthermore, early reading skills are dependent upon home engagement activities and effective collaborative efforts with educators who understand the background and experiences of the students they serve (Robinson, 2017).

Therefore, in this study, I focused on educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy in the HLE, and on educators' perceptions of advantages and barriers of fostering collaboration with parents and to enhance parents' use of literacy strategies in the HLE for this population of students. The overarching goal of this study was to identify strategies to inform decision-making and strengthen students' reading skills and improve students' reading levels. The investigation provided data to assist school officials and teachers in understanding what strategies to share with parents to increase the implementation of effective home engagement activities. From the examination of recent literature, researchers provided evidence suggesting that the HLE and teacher–parent collaboration are essential to literacy development and overall academic achievement (Jung, 2016; Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

### **Review of the Broader Problem**

The literature review was designed to examine the problem of low literacy skills and reading deficiencies that affect reading achievement among children in Title I schools. The problem explored in this literature review was related to low-SES elementary reading deficiencies and the limitations of home learning support. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–

parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site.

### ***Literature Search***

I conducted a literature search using the key term *reading achievement* and later narrowed the search using the following key terms: *low socioeconomic, Title I schools, parent support, parent training programs, home learning environment, home engagement, home academic activities, home influences, early childhood education, emergent literacy skills, school readiness, literacy, literacy development, low reading levels, reading deficiencies, reading interventions, education, collaboration, perception, United States, educational leadership, principal, administrator, and parent education level*. I reviewed scholarly journals to gain an understanding about factors that perpetuate low reading levels among students in Title I schools. The Walden Library was the primary source for the literature search using the education Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and SAGE databases. The U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics websites were also useful. The review continues with a discussion of educational leadership and academic achievement, early reading deficiencies, home influences and school readiness, the HLE, and parental support practices.

### **Leadership and Academic Achievement**

Increasing demands on school accountability have drawn attention to the influence of school principals on student achievement (Brown, 2016). Leadership practices affect campus climate, teacher motivation and behaviors, student engagement,

and parent involvement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). Therefore, school leaders should create an educational atmosphere that supports literacy development and overall student achievement (Townsend et al., 2018). Boberg and Bourgeois (2016) conducted a quantitative study to test a structure of integrated transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership focuses on instruction monitoring, teacher behavior, and collaborative efforts to address inequities (Robinson, 2017). Boberg and Bourgeois used a convenience sample of 5,392 charter school students and 569 teachers in the south-central United States. The researchers analyzed student engagement data and standardized testing data on the school level, and the teacher sample provided data on collective teacher efficacy. Boberg and Bourgeois (2016) used mediation analysis to determine the influence of factors in the serial multiple mediator model. Variables considered during the study were integrated transformational leadership, teacher capacity, teacher extra effort, student engagement, and student achievement in reading and math. Findings indicated that school leadership that integrated monitoring instruction and behaviors that promote capacity, commitment, and collaboration had an indirect effect on student reading and math improvement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016).

According to Townsend et al. (2018), quality of instruction, well-designed professional development, and support programs that encourage parent involvement have been essential to the quality of student learning. School officials must commit to developing learner-centered environments and be cognizant of the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills the students bring to the classroom in order to improve student learning (Brown, 2016). According to Bourdieu's (1977) habitus theory, children enter

the school environment with a set of skills, attitudes, and beliefs as a result of family socialization. Therefore, educational leaders who promote shared responsibility between parents and educators may limit dissonance between school and families (White & Levers, 2017). Robinson (2017) stated parental involvement supports academic achievement by aligning educational expectations between school and home.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) and Title I were federal policies designed to support low-SES populations. Parent engagement is a component of Title I that requires collaboration between school and families to support academic achievement (Robinson, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Although policymakers encourage educational leaders to engage families and create a collaborative community, Title I school leaders have reported difficulty involving all parents in the academic support of their children (White & Levers, 2017). According to Robinson (2017), parents wanted to be involved but were uncertain about how to become active in their children's education. Uncertainty may result from a lack of connection or lack of reciprocal, healthy relationships between educators and parents (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). Educational leaders have a duty to encourage teachers to create a welcoming environment for parents and build a positive rapport with parents (White & Levers, 2017). According to Shin et al. (2017), student achievement is related to trust among principals, teachers, and parents, which is essential to developing relationships and removing barriers.

Heinrichs (2018) described how connecting with families was essential to breaking down barriers and increasing parent engagement. As an administrator, Heinrichs adopted the philosophy of parent engagement and examined how the pedagogy of parent

engagement benefited students, parents, and teachers. In a narrative inquiry, data from teacher interviews revealed they did not understand the realities that students dealt with daily (Heinrichs, 2018). Negative perceptions of families were based on a lack of cultural awareness, which hindered parent engagement. Quezada (2016) recommended teacher professional development on how to build relationships and connect with families. A deeper connection with parents allows school staff to move from parent involvement to parent engagement (Heinrichs, 2018). Parents serve the school leadership staff agenda with parent involvement, meaning they provide assistance based on the school's needs.

Parent engagement is a partnership, where parents and educators collaborate in an effort to reach academic goals (Heinrichs, 2018). Heinrichs (2018) found that as school staff embraced parents' cultural background and knowledge, parent engagement became a strong foundation for academic success. The leadership team developed professional learning activities to address staff concerns. Purposeful professional development helped teachers gain understanding about parents and their children without judgment. This level of understanding created a strong partnership and strengthened student learning (Heinrichs, 2018). Furthermore, school officials should encourage school–parent partnerships that increase parental knowledge of academic strategies and provide continuous professional development to promote literacy and overall academic achievement (Quezada, 2016; White & Levers, 2017).

Blandford (2016) found in disadvantaged schools, school leaders who initiated parent engagement, ongoing professional development, and collaboration improved educational outcomes. However, school leaders in disadvantaged schools also have faced

the challenge of low student attendance and negative student behavior (Shin et al., 2017). Researchers indicated that student achievement is connected to strong school leadership with the ability to maintain student attendance, support appropriate student behavior, and implement effective parent-engagement programs (Shin et al., 2017).

A case study of two primary schools in poor communities in England explored strategies that pushed school student performance beyond national expectations in reading (Blandford, 2016). Over 50% of the population in both schools qualified for free meals and were located in the most deprived neighborhoods in England. Leadership in both schools was characterized as embracing shared responsibility for student learning. According to Woods and Martin (2016), school leaders can assume diversified roles and influence change through data analysis of student scores. Factors that contributed to the schools' success in Blandford's (2016) study were school officials communicating the vision to all campus staff and involving staff in developing and implementing changes. Teacher leaders received professional development about the new phenomenon and were trained on how to incorporate and implement the change. Staff communicated high expectations across the campuses. Strong teacher leaders helped to implement initiatives among teachers, and continuous professional development was integrated to make a complete campus conversion (Blandford, 2016). The leaders in the study schools took an approach that integrated the social needs of students and their families, which drew focus on parent engagement.

Home environments in which parents focus on reading skills provide children with critical skills for success as they enter elementary school. According to Barreto et al.



(2017), parents who provide interactive learning activities in the home promote language skills and overall academic achievement. Researchers indicated that low-SES parents read to their children but did not engage children in interactive reading activities, such as letter naming and letter sounds, naming shapes, and teaching songs and nursery rhymes, which are essential to improving foundational literacy skills (Hartas, 2015; Tan et al., 2019). Quezada (2016) indicated that school leaders should provide parents with the fundamental tools needed to be more academically involved in their children's education.

Tan et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of studies published from 2000–2017 that evaluated the benefits of parental involvement and supporting student literacy in the HLE. The findings indicated school leadership's focus should be on providing parents with quality reading activities for use in the home. The findings indicated the importance of influencing and enabling parents to actively participate in their children's learning by implementing self-monitoring skills in the home (Hartas, 2015; Tan et al., 2019). School officials need to create opportunities for parents to learn how to provide appropriate academic activities to equip children with the necessary skills to take advantage of resources provided in school (Niklas et al., 2016b; Quezada, 2016). School leaders should support teachers to empower parents by providing them with appropriate literacy activities that can be used in the HLE to reinforce students' learning at school.

### **Early Reading Deficiencies**

Literacy is viewed as an essential life skill and the basis for all academic achievement, including math and science (Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Su et al., 2017).

Research has supported the notion that limited emergent reading skills, upon beginning

primary school, negatively affect reading achievement. Alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language are fundamental to literacy development (Fricke et al., 2016). These skills are defined as letter recognition, letter sounds, and vocabulary with grammatical understanding (Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Fricke et al. (2016) suggested that knowledge of letter recognition and letter sounds has a strong connection to reading and spelling abilities.

Su et al. (2017) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the prognostic effects of family components and emergent linguistic skills in 262 Chinese students' literacy skills at the end of elementary school. A group of 3-year-old children were examined and tracked for 8 years using linear regression analysis to examine the effects of the home setting in relation to linguistic skills and reading skills considered proficient by the time the participant students reached fifth grade. Findings of the study suggested that word decoding, rapid naming, phonological awareness, and letter knowledge at the primary level are linguistic predictors of later literacy skills (Su et al., 2017). Su et al. observed that children from high-SES families had better language skills than their low-SES peers upon the start of formal schooling. Therefore, identifying children at risk of literacy deficiencies prior to first grade is essential to facilitate emergent literacy skill development (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Researchers also indicated that attaining emergent literacy skills sooner has an influence on literacy achievement (Su et al., 2017).

Many children in other parts of the world live in communities affected by low income. Kenya is a country with impoverished areas whose residents suffer academically due to lack of resources (Mwoma, 2017). The inability to provide appropriate reading

materials affects Kenyans' ability to achieve academic success just as many students in a local Title I school. Mwoma, (2017) conducted a mixed methods study to explore influencing factors that affected children's literacy development. The sample consisted of 188 third graders and 89 educators from 18 schools. Quantitative data were obtained from third-grade reading-assessment scores. Qualitative data were obtained from individual interviews with school officials and lead teachers and focus group interviews were conducted with the remaining teacher participants. Findings indicated a relationship among reading materials, reading habits, and academic success for primary school students in Kenya. Parent and teacher support was also found to be essential in literacy development. Researchers indicated that low standardized test scores were indicative of low reading skills, low pupil preparedness, and limited academic materials (Mugambi, 2015; Mwoma, 2017). Factors found to contribute to low reading levels and test scores were single-parent homes, parents with limited reading ability, and lack of resources (Mugambi, 2015; Mwoma, 2017).

### **Home Influences and School Readiness**

Researchers have shown that low income can negatively affect academic achievement due to lack of resources, parent education level, and lack of parent involvement (Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Wambiri & Ndani, 2015). According to Isitan et al. (2018), reading performance is associated with the quantity of books in the home, home learning activities, and parental attitudes toward reading. The education level of parents often affects parental ability to provide home learning activities and the household level of income (Mwoma, 2017; Wambiri & Ndani, 2015).

Parent education and SES level have been found to influence reading acquisition for students entering elementary school. According to Barreto et al. (2017), parent education level is a major influential factor of literacy development among elementary children, and children from economically disadvantaged homes are less likely to receive effective support that strengthens the development of early literacy skills for reading acquisition. Tan et al. (2019) added that parents' perception about their responsibility in their children's literacy development is also a determinant as to whether parents provide home learning activities involving print. Researchers indicated that academic engagement away from school may have a positive effect on academic achievement. Mwoma (2017) suggested that limited reading material outside of school diminishes a child's ability to read for enjoyment and deprives children of the habit of daily reading, which is essential to literacy development. Low-SES families have fewer resources and sometimes additional economic pressures that influence the risk of low literacy skills.

Many Title I students come from homes affected by various risk factors that affect literacy development. Bono et al. (2016) investigated the influence of family variables on scholastic achievement and social readiness in African American children. The sample included 122 children, ages 1–54 months, and their mothers. Access to resources, family living environment, parental mental health, and child-rearing style contributed to the developmental outcomes of children (Bono et al., 2016). According to Barreto et al. (2017), an imbalance exists between disadvantaged and economically advantaged parents in parenting practices encouraging early childhood development. Bono et al. found SES was indirectly linked to language development and mental processing through parenting

behaviors, and the quality of HLE was a substantial indicator of those same outcomes. Childcare also can be a pivotal issue for students from low-SES families (Bono et al., 2016).

Researchers have also supported early childcare in improving school-readiness skills and reducing the achievement gap at kindergarten entry (Dealey & Stone, 2018). Justice et al. (2017) conducted a study in rural, Appalachian communities using latent profile analysis that consisted of four school-readiness profiles: academic performance, readiness, global risk, and behavior. In a sample of 396 kindergarteners, the children were individually assessed and categorized into one of the four profiles. The purpose of the study was to identify prognosticators of school readiness and to determine how kindergartener school readiness was characterized with readiness skills inclusive of math, linguistic skills, literacy, and self-regulation. Findings suggested that the quality of early childcare curriculum and instruction as well as the mother's education level were determining factors in the academic readiness of rural Appalachian children (Justice et al., 2017). Therefore, childcare may serve as a positive early intervention along with an effective HLE in the effort to close the achievement gap for students from low-SES families.

The HLE experiences of preschool-age children determine subsequent academic outcomes (Foster et al., 2016). Dealey and Stone (2018) underscored how low-SES parent education, preschool, and early childcare affected literacy development of young children. Additionally, Cheng and Kaplowitz (2016) indicated that parents provide a more effective HLE based upon higher levels of cultural capital and education. Dealey

and Stone conducted a study in a suburban Midwestern school district to examine school readiness in relation to out-of-school play. The parents of a sample of 129 kindergarten students provided information about their children's out-of-school play using the Child Play Survey. The student sample was also rated by kindergarten teachers using the Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey. Participants were rated in three categories: (a) language and literacy development, (b) social and emotional development, and (c) attention to learning and self-regulation (Dealey & Stone, 2018). Using correlational and regression analysis, Dealey and Stone found that preschool, early childcare, family SES, and parent education had a positive influence on academic readiness, whereas out-of-school play had no effect (Dealey & Stone, 2018). This finding indicated a need to support low-SES parents, who often have little formal educational training, in their effort to provide an effective HLE.

### **The HLE**

According to Foster et al. (2016), the HLE is the main contributor to the development of academic skills, and parent education level is essential to the quality of the HLE. Other factors that affect school readiness beyond SES and parent education include language spoken in the home and the HLE. At the target local Title I school, 27.5% of the student population is Hispanic, and for many of these students, Spanish is their first language. Sonnenschein et al. (2017) stated Hispanic children make up 24% of the public-school population in the United States. Citing data from the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress, Sonnenschein et al. (2017) reported 45% of Hispanic fourth graders scored below basic proficiency, compared to just 21% of their

White peers. Isitan et al. (2018) suggested that family literacy and support are essential to developing emergent reading skills and habits in children despite the status of being an English language learner.

Sonnenschein et al. (2017) investigated literacy, language, and vocabulary development of low-SES, preschool Hispanic English learners. The researchers assessed English and Spanish predictors of Hispanic children's English language and primary literacy skills. The sample consisted of 112 monolingual children who attended two Head Start Centers in Baltimore, Maryland. The centers were led by the same director and adhered to the same policies and Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence curriculum. Spanish was the primary language for more than half of the sample. Children in the study learned their English in school because Spanish was the primary language spoken in the home. Findings indicated that Spanish as the primary language in the HLE had no significant negative effect on early literacy skills, and Spanish skills were maintained through activities in the HLE. Researchers have also examined numeracy and literacy skills in relation to quality of HLE support.

Niklas et al. (2016b) conducted a small-scale intervention study to explore how the HLE affects child literacy and numeracy abilities. The researchers examined the effect of mild interventions designed to strengthen the quality of academic engagement provided by parents in the HLE. The sample was made up of 113 children in Melbourne, Australia, who attended early childcare education facilities. Niklas et al. (2016b) conducted correlation and regression analyses and found the HLE was closely associated with the development of both literacy and numeracy skills. The HLE was an indicator of

distinct literacy skills such as comprehension and rhyming. The results indicated correlations among the HLE and child competencies and cognitive development. Based on the findings, Niklas et al. (2016b) suggested that the HLE should be the focus for parent-support and interventions because the HLE has a direct effect on academic achievement, unlike family background variables such as SES and migration. Therefore, children must be engaged academically in the home. When parents provide early reading experiences at home, children display stronger preliteracy skills during preschool years (Foster et al., 2016).

Researchers have explored the factors that have been found to influence literacy development such as quality of the HLE, low-SES and other at-risk factors. Bojczyk et al. (2019) focused their study on the relationship between literacy competence and parents' home literacy-support practices of students in two urban, Title I schools. The sample consisted of 198 kindergarten and first-grade students. Parents completed a reading survey, and students completed a variety of tests including a reading assessment and two vocabulary assessments. Findings indicated disparities between high- and low-SES parents in parenting practices that encourage literacy. Results suggested that children who participated in more literacy activities at home demonstrated higher literacy skills. Researchers indicated that providing support to increase effective parenting practices will reduce poverty-related achievement gaps (Bojczyk et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2015). According to Niklas and Schneider (2017), proximal features were more influential for learning than family background characteristics. Researchers have shown that SES and background risk factors can affect learning in the HLE; however, when parents can



determine their children's current level of literacy skills and provide the appropriate support, these risk factors are minimized and literacy skills are enhanced (Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

The quality of the HLE is essential in children's literacy development, as well as adult literacy skills (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Home academic engagement has long-term effects on literacy and is predictive of later literacy success (Foster et al., 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) National Assessment of Adult Literacy, an estimated 93 million U.S. adults have basic or below basic literacy skills, due to a lack of parental involvement during early childhood years. The expectations of literacy have increased related to employment and productivity (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). The U.S. Department of Education attempted to address the problem of low literacy rates among adults by developing adult education programs administered through local community schools and libraries (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). If literacy skills are addressed prior to the time students enter kindergarten, the need for adult literacy programs may decrease (Niklas et al., 2016a).

Parents' early practices with young children in the home have been associated with closing student achievement gaps in literacy. Home literacy practices such as shared reading have been beneficial to the development of early literacy skills and closing the achievement gap between low- and middle-SES children (Curry et al., 2016). Home environment, social interactions, and home learning account have been found to significantly the achievement gap between high- and low-SES children (Bellibas, 2016).

According to Foster et al. (2016), home academic activities are significantly linked to children's cognitive development in the early years. Bellibas (2016) indicated that lack of home engagement in families characterized by low SES is due to low parent education level. Hemmerechts et al. (2017) stated that low-income and middle-class parents provide academic support for their children in the home yet support efforts may be limited due to the lack of knowledge of appropriate learning strategies and how to implement them. Hemmerechts et al. found a positive relation between early involvement of parents in child literacy and reading literacy skills among higher SES families; late parental involvement was characteristic of lower SES families as a result of poor reading literacy. Lower SES parents may benefit from training on strategies to create an effective HLE offering proactive literacy engagement and decreasing early childhood reading deficiencies (Harji et al., 2016).

Jung (2016) conducted a longitudinal study that investigated the relationship among family practices related to home learning activities, parental perceptions about school readiness, and reading achievement in kindergarten. The sample consisted of 3,309 children and their parents who participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of Kindergarteners, sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. The sample was derived from 158 U.S. schools. The sample was 70.5% White or Asian American students and 29.4% African American, American Indian, or Hispanic students. Results indicated a positive correlation among parents' perceptions and family activities, school readiness, and reading skills at kindergarten entry (Jung, 2016). According to Tan et al. (2019), the intellectual capital acquired through education influences how parents

interact with their children, the beliefs, and values they exude toward learning, and the competencies they seek to develop in their children. Researchers have supported the idea that children who spend more time reading and doing educational activities at home with parental support tend to have greater academic achievement (Jung, 2016).

### **Parental Support Practices**

In-home parental educational practices that involve cognitive stimulation support early childhood learning and achievement as children progress through school (Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Foster et al. (2016) investigated the HLE provided to 767 preschoolers. The purpose of the study was to use structural equation modeling to simultaneously describe each parent's role in the HLE in terms of the early literacy practices of parents and school-readiness outcomes. HLE activities included literacy skills, shared reading, and playing math-related games (Foster et al., 2016). The results indicated that both parents were involved in children's early learning activities, although fathers seemed to engage less when the mother's education exceeded a bachelor's degree. Findings also suggested that parental support practices during preschool positively influence academic skills and that the HLE is an essential contributor to academic outcomes (Foster et al., 2016).

Curry et al. (2016) conducted a case study to explore the early literacy practices of three low-SES mothers and their preschool-age children. Individual interviews were conducted to collect background information about home academic activities, and participants made audio recordings of participants and their children engaged in shared reading at home. Participants recorded their shared reading sessions for 8 weeks. Formal

strategies such as inferencing and synthesizing were not common practices among participants. Participant home learning activities focused on more informal tasks, such as asking questions, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Curry et al., 2016). Researchers have indicated reading aloud to children and engaging in informal literacy practices foster literacy development (Harji et al., 2016). Curry et al. (2016) findings reinforced the importance of parental practices in literacy development of children and emphasized the need for teachers to make connections with parents, so home experiences are supported. According to Niklas et al. (2016b), enhancing the quality of the HLE is one way to improve cognitive abilities. Children's development is determined by their interactions with people, events, and objects in their environment (Niklas et al., 2016a). The quality of in-home parent support may have positive or negative effects on academic achievement (Hyun-Sim et al., 2016). Blandford (2016) found that parent engagement increased student motivation, but an additional challenge was parent literacy skills.

The quality and effectiveness of the HLE are often indicative of parent education level, SES, and the value placed on education within the family culture (Huang & Liang, 2016; Tan et al., 2019). In many cases, parents in low-SES neighborhoods lack the literacy skills to provide effective academic support to their children (Blandford, 2016). According to Hemmereichs et al. (2017), parent educational level is positively related to children's exposure to home literacy activities and influences parent involvement. To increase parent engagement, one campus used a structured conversation model, known as Achievement for All Frameworks, to strengthen teachers' engagement with parents (Blandford, 2016). Structured conversations allowed parents to discuss aspirations for

their child's learning, set academic targets for learning, and share limitations that hinder parents from helping their children (Blandford, 2016). Furthermore, Quezada (2016) explained that learning about parents' lived experiences that developed their cultural capital breaks down barriers and allows educators to close the gap between parents and school. Through a structured approach, workshops were developed to support parents in supporting their children's academic progress and subsequently caused students to become more fully engaged in school (Blandford, 2016). Family and educators are important in the effort to providing opportunities to increase academic achievement and facilitate literacy development (Curry et al., 2016). Therefore, effective interventions to help parents improve home literacy support is essential to increasing student achievement.

### **Implications**

Based on data from the target site, students overall showed no increases in literacy skills and reading achievement between the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. Various interventions such as Reading Recovery, Reading Mastery, Neuhaus Phonics, and after school tutoring programs were implemented campus wide to address reading concerns. Overall, students did not demonstrate proficiency on state assessments from 2015–2017. District reading scores improved between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, but students at the target site still performed below state and district standards. Interventions are important to the continued development of reading skills; however, supplementing school interventions with effective academic home-engagement activities leads to increased reading skills and reading achievement (Curry et al., 2016). Exploring

educators' perceptions of collaborative endeavors with parents to strengthen literacy in home settings was critical to the purpose of this study as students need reading skills to demonstrate success in school across and in other academic contexts.

Parental training programs that focus on providing in-depth instructional strategies and home academic activities have a significant impact on parental engagement and the development of reading skills among children (Mendive et al., 2017). According to Curry et al. (2016), providing educator support and equipping parents with new skills to nurture their children's literacy development leads to positive academic outcomes. Based on the data analysis and findings of the study, the implications for project directions include educator–parent collaboration and the development of a parent training program. Data collected from teachers and school officials regarding parent needs and barriers related to a collaborative home literacy program provided information that can be used to strengthen collaboration between teachers and parents on behalf of students' literacy needs. Such a program could result in effective academic home-engagement activities that could strengthen reading levels at the target site.

### **Summary**

In this study, I examined the issue of low literacy skills and collaborative methods designed to yield home literacy support for parents at the target site. Factors that influence academic achievement include campus leadership, teacher–parent collaboration, and parental ability to provide effective academic engagement (Hemmerechts et al., 2017; Woods & Martin, 2016). Researchers provided evidence that these factors may affect the learning process throughout children's primary school years

(Jung, 2016). Many low-SES students enter kindergarten at a disadvantage, lacking phonological skills and phonemic awareness, because their home literacy practices may not be aligned with school practices (Curry et al., 2016).

Collaboration between parents and educators, more directly established through an HLE, could strengthen the parent–teacher partnership, thereby helping to address the effects of cultural capital for low-SES families. The originator of the habitus theory, Bourdieu (1977), explained that the reproduction of low reading skills and low reading achievement throughout generations of low-SES families continues to characterize Title I schools due to cultural capital. In the habitus theory, Bourdieu (1977) proposes that cultural practices, limited opportunities, belief systems, and poverty as a systemic inequality perpetuate the cycle of the achievement gap. Parents' lack of knowledge and perception of best practices in providing appropriate early learning activities at home may have a negative influence on the literacy development of children, that fosters the present achievement gap. Researchers suggested that collaboration between classroom teachers and parents may intensify reading and writing practices that take place in school (Curry et al., 2016; Heinrichs, 2018). According to Niklas and Schneider (2017), support that provided parents with instructional strategies and demonstrated how to execute the strategies in their home positively affected student learning related to reading. Parental training programs to inform and educate parents on in-home learning strategies have a positive influence on reading skills and may increase reading standardized test scores (Curry et al., 2016). In this study, the findings indicated a need to develop a literacy parental training program to increase collaboration between educators and parents. A

project was developed from the findings (see Appendix). Further methodology information is discussed in detail in Section 2.



## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

In an urban elementary school serving a large percentage of low-SES students in a southern state, the problem was that over 50% of student literacy scores remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019. The problem persisted despite the implementation of several reading interventions and a parent university program to enhance parent literacy support in the home. The gap in practice was that, despite numerous, targeted reading interventions, low-SES students had not made measurable gains, and how a parent literacy support program in the home might strengthen reading skills for this population was unknown. The target location is characterized by a diverse student population. The student body is 69% African American, 27.5% Hispanic, 0.6% White, and 2.9% other ethnicity; 21.3% of the total population are English learners (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. Many low-income students enter kindergarten lacking basic reading skills, such as phonological awareness, knowledge of letter sounds, and knowledge of shapes due to a lack of academic engagement in the home (Mendive et al., 2017). Some researchers have found that in many low-SES homes, parents lack the skills and knowledge to provide an effective HLE (Mendive et al., 2017).

The central research question for the study was:

RQ: What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students?

The question is based on Bourdieu's (1977) educational habitus conceptual framework that the cycle of low academic achievement is due to parental lack of knowledge of how to effectively administer academic stimulation in the home. Additionally, the following subquestions helped to explore how the construct of collaboration between educators and parents may serve to support literacy development by addressing the issues related to cultural capital:

SQ1: What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher-parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3-5?

SQ2: What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3-5?

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

Standardized reading scores remained below standard between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, despite efforts to implement programs targeted toward raising reading skills. In this study, I evaluated parent-teacher collaboration and the gap in literacy development in a Title I elementary school. I used a qualitative method to attain an understanding of the perceptions that hinder literacy development.

Researchers use qualitative case studies to focus on individual's or a group of individuals' experiences in particular environment to gain an understanding of the

phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I focused on the experiences and perspectives of educators in relation to collaboration methods for providing reading support. Interpretive techniques to describe and translate the collaborative experiences between educators and parents were essential in understanding how collaborative methods affect the academic HLE of students at the target site (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A research study focusing on the target campus' collaborative methods related to reading support qualifies as a basic qualitative study (Lodico et al., 2010). I employed the basic qualitative study method to investigate the campus educators' collaborative strategies used with parents to address the problem of low reading levels in the target Title I elementary school.

### **Description of Qualitative Design Selected**

Research design is the process used to collect, measure, analyze, and interpret data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The design provides a blueprint that guides the planning of the methodology techniques used to carry out research studies (Kothari, 2004). Research designs can be quantitative or qualitative in nature or a mixed-methods approach. According to Aubrey (2000), researchers using quantitative approaches are usually examining numerical data that can prove or disprove a theory, investigate the relationship between or among variables, evaluate the effect of a treatment, compared to a control group, or to describe the status of a phenomenon statistically. In this study, I was not seeking to examine the relationship between variable or seeking to numerically examine the phenomenon of literacy scores for low-SES students in grades 3-5. In this study, I focused on the nature of individuals' perceptions in regarding the phenomenon of

literacy development for low-SES students and explored the perceptions of teacher parent collaboration as a possible means to enhance the HLE. A quantitative research approach would not have facilitated exploring perceptions of educators in relation to Bourdieu's habitus theory, thus hampering the investigation of the nature of social life, perceptions, beliefs, practices and experiences. The complexity of human behavior requires analysis of social structures and systems of meaning to obtain access to the view of others, leading to more qualitative-based research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Quantitative and qualitative methods are widely used in educational research and are viewed as complementary by providing an opportunity to explore a phenomenon using a mixed-methods approach. According to Lodico et al. (2010), a mixed-methods approach provides a more complete understanding of a phenomenon. However, the use of a qualitative method alone provides significant insight into the phenomenon examined in this study.

To understand a phenomenon more deeply, a variety of data collection tools are used by qualitative researchers. Documents, observations, and interviews are data collection tools used by qualitative researchers to explore the views of participants to comprehensively contemplate participants' experiences in relation to the context in which the phenomenon occurs, as well as processes, interactions, and perceptions shared by the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this I study relied on a basic qualitative study design to examine educators' perceptions of collaborative literacy support (see Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell). Other qualitative research methods were not viewed as

appropriate for this study due to the intent to examine individual participant behaviors and experiences based on Bourdieu's (1977) educational habitus theory cycle.

### **Justification of Design**

Various qualitative designs may be used to address specific research needs, including grounded theory, phenomenological study, ethnographic study, and the exploratory sequential design (Lodico et al., 2010). In the grounded theory method the researcher seeks to explain the process of a phenomenon using systemic guidelines for collecting and analyzing data for the purpose of constructing a theory derived from the relationship between variables (Sutcliffe, 2016). This basic qualitative study, however, was grounded in Bourdieu's (1977) habitus theory. Rather than attempting to explain the phenomenon by developing a new theory, I used data to explore the cycle of low reading levels among students at a Title I school. The ethnographic research method consists of investigating a group to gain an understanding of how culture is influenced and how shared patterns are developed among a group over time (Eisenhart, 2017). The focus of this study was to examine the process of collaboration related to reading instruction support on the target campus and participants' individual experiences with collaborative methods, rather than the participants' cultural complexities, which would be the focus of the ethnographic method (see Lodico et al., 2010).

According to Normann (2017), a phenomenological study focuses on the individual perspective and understanding of a participant's experience and is geared toward obtaining an analysis of the combined participants' lived experiences. Although this study provided knowledge through data about participants' perspectives concerning

campus collaboration efforts, that knowledge would serve as the basis for further exploration of the educational habitus theory related to low reading levels in a Title I school (Arghode, 2012). This basic qualitative study provided an opportunity to explore individual participants' perceptions of teacher-parent collaborative experiences, and advantages, and barriers of fostering collaboration with parents to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5. In this basic qualitative study, collaborative strategies were identified that may assist in strengthening reading skills and increasing reading levels among students in the target Title I school. The methodology design also produced a rich detailed description of the phenomenon and a better understanding of the needs and barriers of the participants (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Participants**

The following sections contain information about the setting: the elementary school that was the target study site. Additionally, I describe the population and sample. I explain sampling procedures and justify the sample size. Finally, I detail procedures to gain access to participants and to protect their rights during the study.

### **Setting**

The setting of the study was a Title I elementary school that serves 342 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade (Texas Education Agency, 2019). The campus is characterized by a 37.5% mobility rate, with a student population of 97.4% low-SES students, 21.3% English learners, and 12% students receiving special education services (Texas Education Agency, 2019). During the 2018–2019 school year, the target elementary school employed five school administrators and officials: the campus

principal, assistant principal, two on-campus instructional specialists, and a district-level instructional coach assigned to the campus (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

Additionally, 22 teachers worked at the school, with three teachers at each level from prekindergarten to Grade 5 except for Grade 2, which included four teachers. Three school officials previously taught reading or facilitated or supervised the campus literacy program and thus also qualified as potential participants who met the eligibility criteria.

All campus educators were invited to participate in the study. I extended an invitation to participate to each participant in the recruitment pool at 7-day intervals. After 2 weeks, I obtained a total of 12 educator participants who met the inclusion criteria and who volunteered to participate in the study. Although 12 educators initially agreed to participate, one participant decided to opt out of participating once contacted to schedule an interview day and time. Therefore, the final sample was 11 participants. Nine were teachers (four teaching prekindergarten through Grade 2 and five teaching Grades 3–5), and two participants were school officials.

**Table 2**

*School Characteristics 2018–2019*

Characteristic	n
Staff	
School or district officials	5
Prekindergarten teachers	3
Kindergarten teachers	3
Grade 1 teachers	3
Grade 2 teachers	4
Grade 3 teachers	3
Grade 4 teachers	3
Grade 5 teachers	3
Student enrollment	342
Percentage of low-socioeconomic-status students	97.4%

### **Participant Criteria**

All educators who served as participants in this study met the inclusion criteria of teaching reading, having previously taught literacy, or reading in prekindergarten through fifth grade at the target site or having facilitated or supervised the campus literacy program. I sent a letter of invitation that contained a link to the informed consent form, and demographic questionnaire that contained the participant criteria. The demographic questionnaire was used to confirm that individuals who completed the informed consent form met the participant inclusion criteria. My target sample for this study was 10–15 educator participants; and a total of 12 participants who met the inclusion criteria participated in the study. Hence, I achieved the total number of participants desired for the total target sample (see Lune & Berg, 2017).

### **Sampling Strategy**

According to Kothari (2004), prior to selecting a sample, a researcher must decide on a sampling unit. A sampling unit consists of a construction unit, geographical unit, social unit, or individual from which a sample will be taken (Kothari, 2004). A sampling frame is used to obtain a sample once the sampling unit has been identified. A sampling frame contains a comprehensive source list of all items in the population (Kothari, 2004). The population for this study consisted of campus school officials and literacy teachers, who were considered educators. The sample population consisted of educators who taught reading, previously taught reading, or supervised the campus literacy program.



In selecting the sample for the study, a purposeful sampling method was used to obtain teacher and school official participants. Purposeful sampling consists of choosing participants based on their characteristics and knowledge relevant to the research questions being investigated (Lodico et al., 2010). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants to gain insight and develop an understanding, thus selecting a sample who can provide the most in-depth information. Lune and Berg (2017) confirmed that purposeful sampling is used to choose sites and participants based on their ability to provide in-depth narrative data. This method was most appropriate for the study because it was specifically designed to gain an understanding of collaborative methods among educators and parents of students attending a Title I school. The sampling frame allowed the researcher to remain objective, even though the sampling process was based on the purposeful choice of the researcher (Kothari, 2004). Qualitative researchers select participants based on their characteristics and knowledge related to the research questions and explore individuals in their natural context (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Justification of Sample Size**

According to Lune and Berg (2017), a small sample is essential to the qualitative researchers' ability to provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The sample size may be adjusted during the course of the investigation as analysis of data determines saturation and acceptable coverage of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Based on the educator sample population, the sample size of participants should be adequate to explore the phenomenon and obtain in-depth

information. The sample population consisted of 27 educators who were invited to complete a demographic questionnaire to identify possible participants who met the criteria. A sample of 11 educators was sufficient for saturation of data. Educators' years of experience were requested on the demographic questionnaire. In the event that more than 15 participants responded, educators with 2 or more years of experience teaching reading would have been selected. Novice teachers are often managing classroom curriculum, struggling with behavior management, and adjusting to the teaching profession (Zaharis, 2019). Thus, educators with experience might provide greater insight into the needs and barriers of collaborative home literacy. I did not need to use the criteria of experience as more than 15 participants did not respond to the invitation for recruitment.

Lune and Berg (2017) suggested that a small number of cases are needed in qualitative research design when selecting participants, as fewer participants allow for deeper inquiry with each participant. Therefore, the purposeful sampling method was used to obtain an appropriate sample for the study. In the next section, I describe the procedures used for gaining access to conduct the study in the sample district.

### **Procedures for Gaining Access**

I submitted a Request to Conduct Research application with the target district's Committee for External Research Review (CERR) using the target district's electronic application system as the first step to gain access to conduct the study in the target district. I submitted a request to conduct research application that included an overview of the research proposal, data collection instruments, invitation to participate letter, and

an informed consent form. Upon obtaining approval from my doctoral committee, I submitted my committee-approved proposal and district-required application to the CERR. Upon receiving approval from the target district's CERR to conduct research, I emailed the target site principal CERR's approval to conduct the research study. I then completed a Walden Ethics Self-Check Application for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Once I received Walden's IRB approval number 07-31-20-0373727, I forwarded the electronic notice of approval and Walden IRB approval number to the target district's CERR.

I obtained approval from the target district's CERR, and I proceeded by sending a letter of invitation by email to the local target site for educators who were teaching reading, had taught reading, or supervise a campus reading program. I included the informed consent form as an electronic link at the end of the letter of invitation. I included the following information on the consent form (a) the purpose of the study, (b) activities involved, (c) time required of participants, and (d) provisions to protect the confidentiality of participants and the target site. I requested that participants provide a personal email address and phone number to communicate during the study to ensure and maintain confidentiality, if desired. I also stressed that participation was voluntary, and that participation would not affect a participant's status at the target site or district site. Consent was obtained from participants through the completion of the informed consent form followed by an online demographic questionnaire. The educator participant online demographic questionnaire included content currently teaching, years of teaching reading or literacy, grade levels previously taught, grade level currently teaching, and whether the

participant facilitated or supervised the campus literacy program. In the Consent form, I informed Participants that clicking on the link, reading the informed consent form, completing the demographic questionnaire, and submitting all forms electronically signified their consent to participate in the study as per the approved IRB application for this study.

I checked for any returned participant consent forms and demographic questionnaires daily for 7 consecutive days. I scheduled an interview with each participant by sending the form to schedule an interview if the consent form and demographic questionnaire were both received and if the participant met the inclusion criteria. Fewer than 10 educators responded to the initial email request for research participants, so I sent the email again. After 7 consecutive days from sending the initial letter of invitation, I sent the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter of invitation to the participants, excluding those who responded after the initial letter of invitation was sent. I followed the same process for verifying that the consent form, and demographic questionnaire were returned and that the participant met the inclusion criteria before sending the form to schedule an interview with the participant. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted as videoconferences using Zoom. After the second email was issued, a total of 12 participants completed the informed consent form, agreeing to participate in the study. As noted earlier, one participant opted out of the study before scheduling an interview.

### **Researcher–Participant Relationship**

According to Lodico et al. (2010), researchers have close contact with participants due to the nature of qualitative research, making the researcher–participant relationship a

priority. I needed to develop a favorable researcher–participant relationship and create a comfortable environment for participants to share information. My role as the researcher was pivotal to obtaining in-depth information, so I needed to display best practice in maintaining confidentiality. I was employed at the local target district; however, I did not serve in an administrative or supervisory capacity. I did not function as a teacher leader, coach, or instructional specialist. My role was that of an itinerant dyslexia teacher serving two elementary campuses. I conducted small-group, structured literacy intervention with students in Grades 1–5. I worked closely with the counselors on my campuses to provide teachers with information on how to identify dyslexic characteristics and the response to intervention process.

The established criterion for participation requiring informed consent that explained voluntary willingness to participate and the right to discontinue participation at any time eliminated any perceived power imbalances or the feeling of being coerced into participating (Aubrey, 2000). I provided participants with my Walden email and cellular phone number to facilitate the participants' access to communicate with me regarding any concerns or questions. To further establish trust, I reminded participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions. I contacted participants who returned the consent and demographic questionnaire and who met the inclusion criteria by sending a form to schedule their preferred date, time and method of interview. I provided video and audio conference options for interviews to all participants. The open communication established through providing my Walden email, cellular phone number and flexibility in scheduling the interviews provided opportunities for me to address any

concerns that participants may have had. In communication with the participants, I reminded them of the confidentiality measures established for the study and reminded them of their right to withdraw at any time during the study.

### **Protection of Participants' Rights**

Researchers must be cognizant of their ethical responsibility to participants and the profession (Lodico et al., 2010). Researchers need to adhere to a professional code of ethics and ensure the safety and confidentiality of all participants and sites. As evidence that I understood my responsibility to provide ethical protection during and after the study, I obtained a certificate from the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research. This certificate and training established that I understood my responsibility to provide ethical protection during and after the study. Additionally, I obtained consent from the target district, CERR, Walden IRB, used a process to verify that the participants understood the Consent Form and reiterated that participation was voluntary. I informed participants that their personal identifiable information and responses during the interviews would be confidential and protected so that their identities would not be known to anyone but me and the researcher supervisors at my university. I reassured participants that their decision regarding participation or withdrawal from participating would not affect their status with the district or campus. I included an explanation about the details of the study and minimal risks and benefits of participating in the study on the informed consent form. Participant privacy was also addressed in the informed consent, which stated that personally identifying information collected would not be shared and that all data would be secured to ensure participant privacy during and after the study.

## **Data Collection**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative researchers use a five-step process that consists of general, emerging questions to generate participant responses for the purpose of collecting data. The process begins with identifying participants and a site to help the researcher understand the phenomenon. Next, the researcher must obtain permission to access both the site and participants. After obtaining permission and identifying participants, the researcher then determines what types of data to collect to answer the research questions. Once the researcher has determined the best forms of data to use for the study, instruments must be selected or created to collect and record data. Finally, any ethical issues that could arise should be addressed (Lune & Berg, 2017). I followed this step-by-step process.

### **Justification of Data for Collection**

I used the face-to-face, online, videoconference semistructured interview method as a means of obtaining data. The semistructured interviews allowed educators to elaborate on their experiences. The semistructured interview method was the most appropriate for this study because it allowed the interviewer to probe for more in-depth information to answer the research questions (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The structured interview and survey techniques were not appropriate for the study because they would limit participant responses and the depth of the data collected (Lodico et al., 2010).

Data collection methods in qualitative research consist of observations, review of archival documents, interviews, and surveys (Lune & Berg, 2017). According to Doody

and Noonan (2013), face-to face interviews tend to be the most frequently used method for gathering contextual accounts of participants' experiences. The three types of face-to-face interviews are structured, semistructured, and unstructured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unstructured interviews begin with a broad question, and subsequent questions are based on the participant's response to the original question (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Structured interviews consist of a set of questions that all participants are asked without further probing (Lodico et al., 2010). Semistructured interviews consist of a list of prepared questions, with the flexibility to probe beyond protocol (Creswell, 2018). This method allows the researcher to ask more questions when closed-ended or short responses are provided (Lune & Berg, 2017). According to Doody and Noonan, semistructured interviews limit researcher subjectivity and bias, while allowing the researcher to control the interview and minimize confusion during the coding and analyzing process.

According to Lodico et al. (2010), interviews are the most effective source of data collection when behavior or feelings cannot be observed. This study focused on educators' perceptions of collaborative home literacy support and how these strategies may support improving low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. Participant perceptions were not observable; therefore, I used interviews to obtain data from educators. Lune and Berg (2017) stated qualitative research often depends on researcher-developed data collection instruments that consist of broad interview questions to avoid limiting participant views. Interviews are essential in learning how participants interpret their surroundings and feelings related to a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data



from semistructured interviews can be analyzed and compared to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Lodico et al. (2010) maintained qualitative research is defined by adjustable and informal methods of data collection that yield in-depth descriptions of the phenomena being studied. I conducted individual interviews of educator participants. I developed the interview protocol to answer the research questions and obtained input and feedback from my committee members and to design the protocol and obtain in-depth descriptions of participants' perceptions (see Lodico et al., 2010).

### ***Development of Interview Protocol***

The interview questions were designed to answer the research questions and focus on the construct of collaboration between educators and parents related to home literacy programs. The construct of collaboration between teacher and parents was the vehicle used in seeking to neutralize Bourdieu's (1977) component of cultural capital described in the conceptual framework. In this study, I sought to investigate perceptions of reading teachers and school officials related to collaboration between teachers and parents to support literacy skills in the home environment. I asked participants about their perceptions related to the supports and challenges of providing reading support for their student in the home. Bourdieu focused on cultural capital and the HLE. The tenets of cultural capital were addressed through investigating how educators perceived collaboration could be operationalized to support teacher–parent partnerships that subsequently would support literacy in the home.

According to Rubio et al. (2003), researchers should employ at least three content professionals or experts to determine the suitability of a data collection tool. I requested panel of experts composed of an elementary literacy coach, a reading instructional specialist, a Title I Reading Recovery specialist, and a Title I campus administrator for feedback on the data collection instrument. The expert panel members were colleagues employed in the target local district; however, they did not work at or have any connection to the target site. I adjusted the protocol with feedback from the panel and my committee.

### **Sufficiency of Data Collection Instrument**

I developed one overarching question and two research question to guide this basic qualitative study. Interview Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were designed to address Research Question 1. Interview Questions 2, 3, and 4 were designed to address Research Question 2. Table 3 reflects the alignment between the research questions and the interview questions on the self-designed protocol.

**Table 3***Relation of Interview Protocol Questions to Research Questions*

Research question	Interview question
1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	1. What are your perceptions about teacher–parent collaboration in regard to student learning? 5. Describe your experiences with educator–parent collaborations related to home literacy support. 6. What is your perception about teacher and parent needs to create and implement a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program? 7. What is your perception about leadership support for a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program to be implemented? 8. What is your perception about needed resources and professional development for a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program to be implemented and maintained? 9. What resources for reading professional development may be needed to support parent attendance and engagement in teacher–parent collaborative programs?
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	2. How do you perceive a parent's role in their student's literacy development? 3. What do you perceive to be a barrier(s) that may hinder a parent's ability to provide home literacy support? 4. How do you perceive parents' advocacy for their student in terms of their reading skills and progress?

**Process of Generating and Recording Data**

Face-to-face, online, videoconference interviews were conducted to limit the risk of COVID-19 exposure during the pandemic. I conducted individual interviews with educator participants. Participants had the option to be interviewed during noninstructional time on their campus, online, or by phone. I initiated interview with participants by reviewing the purpose of the study, describing how their confidentiality

would be protected, and how I would remove any identifying information from the transcripts that could potentially identify the target site or any participant. I explained how I would randomly assign numbers in place of using their names and assured them that only I would know their identities. I reminded participants that their participation was voluntary, and they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time, or choose to not answer an interview question, or request a break, without consequences. All participants indicated their approval for recording audio and video recording during the interview on the interview scheduling form. Participants also indicated their approval for me to take notes, by providing their signature for approval on the informed consent form. I confirmed permission to audio record the interview based upon the notice of informed consent form. I also reminded participants they had the option to print and save a copy of the consent form for their files, which was sent to their email address when they were recruited to participate in the study. I reviewed privacy measures with participants and made certain they had no questions regarding privacy prior to beginning the interview.

I informed the participant that electronic data will be kept in password-protected files and all nonelectronic data will be stored securely and locked within a file cabinet. I explained that I will store the interview data for 5 years, as per Walden University protocol and after 5 years, I would destroy the data as per Walden University policy. At the conclusion of the interview, I reviewed reminders for the end of the interview, including post interview steps to include member checking.

The interview protocol consisted of a printed list of the interview questions, which were asked in the order that they appeared on the protocol. I listed the possible

probes on the interview protocol and used the probes to gather more information about a participant's response. Each interview was recorded and transcribed within 24–48 hours using the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. In the next section, I describe the systems used for keeping track of the data collected from the interviews.

### **Systems for Keeping Track of Data**

Keeping track of data while conducting a study is essential for confidentiality and integrity of results. I used an organized process for collecting, storing, and organizing these data. I systematically conducted the following post-interview steps:

1. I immediately uploaded and organized the audio recordings of the interviews in a software database on a password-protected, secure personal computer.
2. I kept data secure by storing data electronically on a password-protected personal computer and ensuring no one else would have access to the stored data.
3. On the same day as the interview, I summarized key information from notes that I wrote during the interview.
4. I transcribed the recordings within 24–48 hours and used the transcribed interview data to provide codes and to summarize data for developing patterns (for preliminary data analysis).
5. I explained to participants that they would participate in member checking as explained in the informed consent form by (a) taking approximately 30 minutes to review a summary of my draft findings emailed to them using an encrypted password and (b) emailing me any feedback regarding any additions or changes within 7 days. Participants were reminded that this process is used by researchers

to improve data quality and validity. I was available via phone or videoconference regarding the member-checking process or questions regarding the content of the draft summary of the findings.

I first organized the interview data by participant position (school official and teacher) and grade level served: prekindergarten through Grade 2 and Grades 3–5. According to Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative data analysis includes the following steps: organizing data, reviewing, and exploring data, coding data into categories, developing themes, and interpreting data. I further organized the data by adding the numeric pseudonyms to field notes taken during each interview to ensure that field notes were reflective of the interview they were derived from. Field notes were also transcribed using the MAXQDA software and saved on my password-protected computer.

After transcribing the interviews, I coded and triangulated the data by comparing statements from participants to determine what themes existed that answered the research questions. I interpreted and analyzed these data to identify the themes emerging from each research question. I emailed each participant a copy of their draft findings for member checking as described in the informed consent form. Following my analysis of the data and identifying the themes, I synthesized the themes with the literature, and framework and reflected on findings for this study. The process of integrating the themes with the literature and conceptual framework, allowed deeper reflection and facilitated identification of the findings and helped me create scholarly answers to the research questions. Overall, the data analysis process helped me more deeply examine the

phenomenon that was the focus of this study. In the next section I describe the procedures for gaining access to the participants.

### ***Procedures for Access to Participants***

Upon receiving approval to conduct research from the study district's CERR and Walden University IRB approval, I sent the letter of invitation and informed consent form to the local target site for educators who were in the target recruitment pool at the target site obtaining names and email addresses through open records public school directory information. When I received an email notification that a participant had documented informed consent by completing and submitting the consent form and demographic questionnaire, I emailed the participant to schedule a time and date to conduct the individual interview by video or audio conference. The electronic letter included several options for times in which to conduct the interview during educators' noninstructional time. Once the participant electronically returned the form indicating their selected time for the interview, I sent a confirmation email with the date and time of the scheduled interview. The role of the researcher is described in the next section.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I was an external nonparticipant in my role as researcher in this study. During the time I conducted this study, I was employed as a dyslexia interventionist with the target district. I served as an itinerant teacher for the target site providing small-group instruction to dyslexia students and working closely with the school counselor in providing information to teachers about the characteristics of dyslexia. I did not hold any administrative, midlevel management, or supervisory positions and had limited contact

with campus staff due to my itinerant status. As an external nonparticipant observer and a dyslexia interventionist with the district under study, I had my own opinions about the study topic, which might illicit biases. During each interview I took field notes to record my thoughts as participants provided their insight. My field notes were used to provide awareness of my own biases and perceptions regarding parent–teacher collaboration to prevent such biases from affecting data analysis. Data collection is critical to the process of conducting a study, as the research process in qualitative research begins with initial contact with the participant. The data collection, gathering, and organization are important to the data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis Results**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data analysis is making meaning and creating understanding of the findings of a study. The data analysis process is used to identify codes, categorize, and gain understanding of the data (Bengtsson, 2016). The data analysis process was necessary to link the data to the conceptual framework, Bourdieu’s habitus theory, and answer the central research question and subquestions for this study. I used a combination of methods deductive and inductive coding approaches to analyze these data based on the overarching research question that reflected Bourdieu’s conceptual framework. I used a deductive a priori approach by using the Bourdieu’s conceptual framework. I analyzed the elements contained in Bourdieu’s conceptual framework and applied meaning to predetermined codes associated with Bourdieu’s theory. The a priori codes were developed before analyzing the data and based on the conceptual framework (Crabtree et al., 2001). I determined that a priori coding was



important due to the phenomenon being studied of the reading scores of elementary students who were identified as low SES and the relationship of Bourdieu's theory to the information collected. I also used open coding, a form of inductive coding in order to deeply analyze these data in terms of the phenomenon that was the focus of this basic qualitative study and to understand what the participants were describing in terms of their perceptions (Schutz, 1958). Schutz (1958) contended that a hybrid approach to coding data could deepen the researcher's interpretation of the data obtained and allow the researcher to make possible connections between the deductive and inductive codes.

I conducted individual online interviews of educator participants and explored participants' perspectives on collaborative home literacy support and how these strategies may support improving low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. I organized the interview data by participant and the grade level served. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended the following steps in qualitative data analysis: organizing data, reviewing and exploring data, coding data into categories, developing themes, and interpreting data. I organized the data by transcribing the interview data and field notes into text. I reviewed the transcribed data and began the open coding process using MAXQDA software. I coded these data using a priori coding based on Bourdieu's habitus theory, which was the conceptual framework for this study. I used three constructs from Bourdieu's habitus theory as codes for the a priori inductive coding process. The codes were related to the ways that Bourdieu describes how families are affected by habitus theory that are: (a) The institutionalized form consists of organizations' systems such as education, and specific qualifications for those institutions, or academic degrees (b) The

embodied form that refers to cultural values, behavior, and skills, and (c) The objectified form that consists of physical goods, such as books and property. Thus, the codes used were institutionalized form, embodied form, and objectified form. After organizing the excerpt data by research question, I associated each excerpt with one of the three a priori codes and inductively coded each passage with an a priori code. Table 4 represents the a priori codes assigned to excerpts from participants' transcriptions.

**Table 4**

*Sample a Priori Coding for Participants*

Participant	Sample quote	a priori code
Participant 10	If district level administrators would take the time to visit low-income schools, they would see that we need more.	Institutionalized form
Participant 7	We need a professional development for teachers on how to collaborate with parents. It can be two parts: early childhood/elementary and secondary education.	Institutionalized form
Participant 5	Parents' limited knowledge of literacy strategies and their own perceptions of school and learning can prevent progressive literacy development.	Embodied form
Participant 4	A lack of resources like maybe a computer, internet, their own limited educational background is a barrier to provide home literacy support.	Objectified form
Participant 4	Additional children in the home and a lack of time in the evenings due to work schedules often limit the amount of time parents have to devote to home literacy support.	Embodied form
Participant 2	I believe the welfare system in my opinion has created a negative affect b/c we are used to having everything free. Section 8, free food, food stamps, free medical, Medicaid whatever those programs are. We don't have a desperate need or burning desire	Objectified form

After conducting the a priori coding for the transcripts and participants' supporting excerpts, I reviewed the excerpts and transcripts again and conducted round one of open coding. I examined the codes identified in round one of open coding and reflected on similar codes that could be grouped together if the codes represented an analogous concept according to the participants' expressed perceptions. I conducted a second round of coding, collapsing the codes from the first round of open coding by grouping comparable codes that had the equivalent meaning. I compared the a priori codes to the open codes that were collapsed between the first and second round of coding and examined the a priori codes and open codes looking for similarities in meaning. I again analyzed the codes and developed categories to reflect the open code and associated an a priori code if appropriate. I developed a theme based on the codes and categories and identified the text that best supported each theme that emerged from the interviews. Table 5 represents the text excerpts from interviews for specific participants associated with the a priori codes and open codes that produced the emergent themes.

**Table 5***Research Questions to a Priori Codes to Open Codes to Themes*

Research question	A priori codes	Open codes	Theme
1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	Institutionalized form	Professional development Needed resources Teacher and parent needs Teacher perception of teacher–parent collaboration Teacher method of collaboration Teacher years of experience	Theme 1: Teacher professional development and parent home literacy-support training are needed
1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	Institutionalized form	Leadership support for teachers School officials influence on HLEs	Theme 2: Leadership influence and support are essential.
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	Objectified form	Parent engagement Socioeconomic status Parent education level Work schedule/long hours Home environment	Theme 3: Cultural capital affects home literacy support.
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	Embodied form	Parents' view of education Parent attitude about education Education as a priority Teacher perception of parents' role in learning Parent advocacy	Theme 4: Limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies hinders literacy development.

In the next section I describe the themes that emerged from the coding and analysis process. I discuss the themes by research question one, (RQ1), and RQ2. I also provide excerpts from participants that support the identified theme. I examine the patterns and account for all salient data, discrepant data, evidence of data quality and summarize the outcomes logically in relation to the research question, literature to Bourdieu's theory that was the conceptual framework for this study.

The two research questions, corresponding interview questions, and emergent themes are listed in Table 6. There was a total of four themes that emerged overall; there were two themes for RQ1 and RQ2. For RQ1, the two themes were related to training and leadership. For RQ2 the two themes that emerged were related to cultural capital and parent education level affecting parents' ability to provide literacy support in the home environment.

### **Central Research Question**

The central research question for this basic qualitative study was: What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students? Based on Bourdieu's (1977) educational habitus theory, the cycle of low academic achievement is due to parental lack of knowledge about how to effectively provide academic support and the processes used to advocate for their children in the educational setting. Additionally, subquestions RQ1 and RQ2 were proposed to examine the educators' perceptions of (a) implementing teacher-parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy, and (b) the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy for low-

SES students in Grades 3–5. The potential strategies of how to construct and implement collaboration between educators and parents to support literacy development were explored in relation to cultural capital, a component of Bourdieu’s theory. In addition, I sought to understand educators’ perception of the barriers and benefits or advantages of collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy. Table 6 lists each research question, the interview questions associated with each research question, and the themes derived for each research question.

**Table 6**

*Themes by Research Question and Interview Questions*

Research question	Interview questions	Themes
1. What are educators’ perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	Theme 1: Teacher professional development and parent home literacy-support training are needed. Theme 2: Leadership influence and support are essential.
2. What are educators’ perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	Questions 2, 3, and 4	Theme 3: Cultural capital affects home literacy support. Theme 4: Limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies hinders literacy development.

**Results for Research Question 1**

What are educators’ perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3–5?

Two themes emerged from the data analysis of results from Interview Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. First, professional development and parent home literacy-support training are

needed. Second, leadership influence and support are essential. The first theme indicated teachers need professional development on how to effectively collaborate with parents; educators need to be able to provide parent trainings on home literacy support.

***Theme 1: Teacher Professional Development and Parent Home Literacy Support Training Are Needed***

The first theme indicated that educators perceived teacher–parent collaborative efforts as nonexistent and that this lack of a cohesive approach to support the student’s reading development was a major factor in low reading levels among students at the target site. Professional development for teachers on how to communicate and collaborate with parents should be a district-wide expectation across all grade levels. Participants 1 and 2 suggested that professional development should be required every year, for every grade level to provide consistent strategies. Teachers perceived that campus-level administrators should provide professional development opportunities to meet the needs of their specific demographic and grade levels. Participant 7 added, “Teachers will benefit from campus-based professional development provided by their peers who have had success with parent collaboration.” Participant 11 stated, “District-level personnel should be involved to provide universal strategies.” The consensus among educator participants was professional development should be provided by district and campus-level personnel.

Participant 2, a literacy instructional specialist, stated, “It is often assumed that seasoned teachers are successful in the area of parent collaboration, which often is not the case.” Therefore, experienced teachers should not be exempt from this type of

professional development to ensure that collaborative progress is being fostered among all teachers. Participant 8 added, “Campus-based professional development facilitated by colleagues who have had success with parent collaboration is needed to ensure that professional development will target the school’s specific demographic.”

Participants agreed that campus-based professional development should be integrated with parent literacy training to ensure consistency of expectations. Participant 1 stated, “The combination of teacher professional development and parent literacy-support training will bring about consistency across the district, and on campuses, in regard to collaborating with parents.” Participant 9 stated that teachers need to be more visible in the community to help bridge the gap between teachers and parents. For example, teachers should become active participants in neighborhood events geared toward the advancement of the youth who attend their school. Participant 9 indicated that educators should connect with neighborhood churches and community centers to provide literacy-support training to parents. Participant 9 explained, “Combined professional development and parent literacy-support training should be conducted at area community centers, rather than at the school, to limit parent intimidation and show that teachers are invested in the community beyond the school building.” Teachers suggested that facilitating a teacher–parent training event dedicated to collaboration and home literacy strategies at area community centers may decrease parent fears and increase trust in their campus teachers and administrators. Teachers also suggested that having these events in the community may increase parent attendance due to the convenience of not having to leave their own neighborhood.



Participant 4 indicated that extra funding is needed to provide teacher professional development and parent literacy-support training. Participant 3 stated that funding will be essential for professional development facilitators, proper educational materials, and possibly a need to develop a new department to oversee the project to ensure efficacy. Participants agreed that parents need incentives (gift cards from Walmart or Target, for example) to encourage their participation in teacher–parent combined literacy-support training. Participant 4 indicated, “Training for parents should provide home literacy strategies.” Participant 5 added, “Providing free books and other learning materials as incentives for parent attendance may help families build their own home learning environment.”

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators’ perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students’ literacy skills at the target site. Educators indicated the need for professional development to increase their ability to communicate and provide literacy strategies to parents and increase home literacy support and reading levels among students at the target site. Educators’ perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to foster home literacy support contained a focus on district-wide campus-based professional development and teacher–parent combined literacy-support training that would serve to strengthen collaboration between parents and teachers. It appeared that participants contended that professional development and collaboration could influence parents’ ability to provide home literacy support for their students.

Educators also viewed that district leaders should have integral role of encouraging collaborative efforts between teachers and parents. The second theme for Research Question 1 was that leadership influence and support are essential for teacher-parent collaboration and to develop parent training and literacy programs in the home. Teacher perceptions indicated strong district and campus leadership support is needed for teacher-parent collaboration, teacher professional development, and parent training to foster home literacy support. Teachers perceived that campus administrators should invest in campus-level parent training and professional development for teachers to cater to the specific needs of their campus demographic.

***Theme 2: Leadership Influence and Support Are Essential***

Participants agreed that district leadership is essential to the development of progressive collaborative efforts between teachers and parents. Participant 1 stated, “The initiative of collaborating with parents must begin with the superintendent and upper-level district leaders publicly marketing collaboration as an expectation within the district to gain stakeholder engagement and support.” Participant 7 added, “It will take leader influence to attract parents and gain parent buy-in of teacher-parent collaboration.”

Notably, the target district officials recently enhanced efforts to increase reading levels among students with a program geared toward ensuring that all students are reading on grade level by 2025. However, teacher-parent collaboration and home literacy support are not a focus of the program. Participants 8 and 10 expressed concerns that district leaders have failed to communicate with teachers to gain an understanding of what teachers need to successfully develop a collaborative relationship with parents that

fosters home literacy support. Participant 10 stated, “Campus administrators need to advocate for more district-level literacy support and communicate with teachers to determine what teachers need to build a successful collaborative relationship with parents that will enhance home literacy support.” Participant 8 agreed that leaders must rely on teacher knowledge about the school demographic to determine what is needed to build successful collaborative relationships with parents. Participant 8 also stressed concern about a lack of campus leadership support, stating, “There is no leadership support on my campus.” Overall, participants expressed that campus-level leaders must be diligent in seeking district-level resources and support to implement professional development for teachers to help build effective collaborative relationships with parents and provide parents strategies for home literacy support.

Analysis of these data indicated that teachers want to be actively involved in the decision-making process for implementing collaborative initiatives with parents and providing home literacy-support strategies to parents. More than 50% of the students did not meet the proficiency standard for the state literacy assessment at the target campus and these scores have remained below the state standard between 2015 and 2018, despite the implementation of several on-campus reading interventions. Participants’ perceptions favored collaboration between teachers, district, and campus-level administrators in developing an effective home literacy-support program. All participants expressed that district leaders should take the lead in marketing the expectation of teacher–parent collaboration and facilitating home literacy-strategy training for parents to increase home literacy support. Educators perceived that low literacy scores among students at the target

site were a direct reflection of district leaders' failure to encourage home literacy-support training for parents. Additionally, participants expressed a consensus that providing home literacy-support training for parents may eliminate parents' fears and feelings of intimidation, which participants viewed as barriers to parents' willingness to collaborate with teachers. Data obtained for Research Question 2 confirmed that educators perceived more barriers than advantages to current teacher–parent collaborative efforts.

This theme relates to the problem at the target site of low student literacy scores despite the implementation of campus reading interventions. Therefore, facilitating partnerships with parents and breaking down barriers of fear, which educators perceive are present in the parent population, could lead to the development of a stronger base of support. The result could be effective teacher–parent collaborative approaches to support literacy development in students.

### **Results for Research Question 2**

What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5? Two themes emerged from the data analysis of responses to Interview Questions 2, 3, and 4 for RQ2. In the next section, I describe Theme 3, followed by a discussion of Theme 4 related to parent lack of knowledge. Theme 3 was that cultural capital affects the level of literacy support parents provide to their children.

#### ***Theme 3: Cultural Capital Affects Home Literacy Support***

Participant 4 indicated, “Additional children in the home and a lack of time in the evenings due to work schedules often limit the amount of time parents have to devote to

home literacy support.” Participant 11 stated, “Having to meet the needs of younger children in the home affects the time parents may devote to providing literacy support.” Participant 7 stated, “Work schedules of single parents working full time make it hard to collaborate with teachers or provide home literacy support.” Participants indicated that the long hours many parents are forced to work to meet basic needs are also indicative of parent education levels. Participant 11 stated, “Parents themselves are lacking in education and may struggle reading themselves.”

Bourdieu’s explains in educational habitus theory that low parent education levels and limited access to reading resources perpetuate the reproduction cycle of the achievement gap (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Therefore, parents should be afforded opportunities to learn how to provide home literacy support and should be provided resources to build their academic HLE. Participants agreed that home literacy support training for parents is imperative to eradicate the reproduction cycle of low literacy skills in Title I schools.

According to Bourdieu (1977), cultural capital affects parents’ ability and willingness to collaborate with teachers and provide home literacy support, which ultimately affects student performance. Cultural capital consists of social assets that promote one’s social mobility within society (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Bourdieu explained that the educational habitus is affected by the level of access to intellectual resources and cultural capital crucial for providing an effective HLE and decrease in the achievement gap among low-SES students. Teacher perceptions were aligned with Bourdieu’s theory, and data indicated that many parents in Title I schools struggle to

provide basic needs (food, shelter). Educator participants supported the idea of sharing literacy strategies with parents to help develop low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. Participants agreed that low reading scores among students in Title I schools are due to financial limitations that force parents to focus on basic needs and a parental lack of knowledge of how to provide literacy support in the home. This theme aligned with Bourdieu's educational habitus theory; information from educator interviews affirmed that low academic achievement and low literacy development in the target site were perceived to be related to parents' lack of access to educational resources and home literacy strategies. The second theme for RQ2 and final theme identified in this study related to parents' knowledge of literacy strategies.

#### ***Theme 4: Limited Parent Knowledge of Literacy Strategies Hinders Literacy***

##### ***Development***

Educators indicated parents had limited knowledge about literacy strategies and how to provide effective home literacy support. Participant 2 stated,

As an educator and college graduate, I struggled helping my own son with literacy. I was a math teacher when he was younger, and I didn't know what I needed to be doing to help him. I had to do additional research and talk to other educators to learn.

Participant 5 added, "Parents' limited knowledge of literacy strategies and their own perceptions of school and learning can prevent progressive literacy development." The data indicated a need for parents to be educated on effective home literacy strategies to combat low reading levels in Title I schools. Participant 7 stated, "Parents are not familiar

with literacy resources and have no idea where to go when they learn their child is a struggling reader.” Participant 1 indicated, “Parents’ inability to gauge a child’s literacy skills is due to their limited knowledge of age and grade expectations.” Participants perceived that parent home literacy-support training was essential to provide parents an opportunity to gain knowledge and equip them with resources to implement literacy strategies.

Participant 8 expressed the need to share literacy strategies with parents of students and the importance of inviting parents to the classroom to observe how to implement those strategies. Participant 8 stated,

Many of my students’ parents are oblivious about literacy strategies, and I found it important to teach the parents what comprehension questions to ask after reading with their child and encouraging them to influence their child to read at least 15 minutes a day at home.

Furthermore, Participant 8 reported an increase in the literacy achievement among students whose parents were provided instruction on literacy strategies to use at home. Therefore, parent home literacy-support training may be an effective way to increase parental knowledge of literacy strategies, literacy grade-level expectations, and the opportunity to obtain literacy resources for home use. Analysis of these data indicated that parent home literacy support training is necessary to build a collaborative literacy community among educators and parents, to increase reading levels among Title I students. The examination of educators’ perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to

support literacy in the home indicated the perceived need for development of a parent literacy-support training program.

### **Discrepant Cases**

Merriam (2009) suggested intentionally searching for data challenging emerging themes to increase the credibility of the findings. Therefore, I conducted a discrepant case analysis to identify contradictory explanations of emerging themes. However, I did not identify any evidence contradictory to the emerging themes. All data appeared to foster emerging themes and confirm study findings.

### **Evidence of Quality**

To ensure the authenticity of the findings, I used various strategies to validate the credibility of my interpretation of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During each interview, I took field notes to record my thoughts and feelings as participants provided their insight. My field notes were used to provide awareness of my own biases and perceptions regarding parent–teacher collaboration. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested reflective and descriptive notes as a means to describe my observations and feelings during the course of the research study to address personal biases. I maintained a researcher’s journal and recorded my feelings and biases throughout the course of the study to remain cognizant of my personal views and opinions as I collected and analyzed data.

The interviews and field notes were transcribed using MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. Interviews and field notes were transcribed within 24–48 hours and kept on my password-secured computer. After transcribing, I triangulated these data to



validate the themes derived from the data. Triangulation is based upon examining evidence from various types of data and comparing data collected from different individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I cross-checked data with previously transcribed interview data each time I transcribed a new interview. Once all interviews and field notes were transcribed, I conducted cross-checking across all data to determine if any new themes were present that I had not previously derived.

I also used member checking to ensure that participant descriptions and interpretations were accurately represented in the report. According to Lodico et al. (2010), member checks limit researcher bias by allowing the participants to review the transcribed data or draft findings to ensure findings are representative of participant thoughts and feelings. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended limiting bias by seeking alternative explanations of the data or conducting discrepant case analysis. To limit researcher bias, participants received a draft summary of the findings and were asked to return any suggestions, corrections, or changes within 7 days. On the informed consent form, I described that the member-checking process could take up to 30 minutes. I informed the participant that I was available through a video or phone conference if they had any questions or wanted to discuss any part of the member checking process. No participants expressed concerns regarding the interview findings presented from the study.

### **Summary of Findings**

The problem addressed in this study is that in an urban elementary school serving a large percentage of low-SES students in a southern state, over 50% of student literacy

scores have remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019, including in a Title I elementary school. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. I used Bourdieu's educational habitus theory as the conceptual framework for this study and as a lens to analyze the data and to conduct the data analysis and consider possible findings. Bourdieu contends that the cycle of low academic achievement is due to parental lack of knowledge of how to effectively administer academic stimulation (Bourdieu, 1977; Hemmereichs et al., 2017).

The central research question of the study was: What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students? Bourdieu (1977) suggests in habitus theory that cultural practices and beliefs hinder the use of effective educational strategies outside of formal schooling in low SES communities, thereby creating a cycle of low academic achievement that continuously perpetuates the achievement gap (Hartas, 2012). I sought data through semistructured individual interviews using an open-ended interview protocol that would answer the central question and provide insight about educators' perceptions regarding the reproductive cycle of deficient literacy development in the target sight. I used two subquestions to guide the data collection to answer the central question. In the next section, I summarize the outcomes for each research question, and the overarching research question and relate the findings to the literature and the conceptual framework.

Finally, I describe the project deliverable, a white paper, that is an outcome of the results of the study.

### **Research Question 1**

What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3–5? The interview data generated two themes. Theme 1 was that professional development and parent home literacy-support training are needed. Theme 1 indicated that educators perceived a need for professional development about the use of teacher–parent collaborative strategies and the need for a parent home literacy-support training program. Some educators suggested combining the training to emphasize collaboration among parents and teachers.

Educators learning how to engage and collaborate with families is essential to break down barriers and increase parent engagement (Heinrichs, 2018). Teachers may lack cultural awareness or understanding of students' home lives, and cultural training and professional development on parent collaboration can be effective (Heinrichs, 2018). Quezada (2016) recommended teacher professional development on how to build relationships and connect with families. A deeper connection with parents allows school staff to engage parents (Heinrichs, 2018). Early reading skills are dependent upon home engagement activities and effective collaborative efforts with educators who understand the background and experiences of the students they serve (Robinson, 2017).

Title I funds provide extra instructional and social resources to school campuses to ensure low-income students an equitable opportunity (U.S. Department of Education,

2018). Resources need to be shared collaboratively between teachers and parents. Educators build on preliteracy skills developed in the home (Fricke et al., 2016; Su et al., 2017). Parent training could include encouraging the use of research-based strategies such as daily routines of reading and telling stories (Barreto et al., 2017). Parental involvement in school academic programs has been shown to improve student performance (Heinrichs, 2018; Tan et al., 2019). According to Townsend et al. (2018), well-designed professional development and support programs that encourage parent involvement improve student learning. Mendive et al. (2017) noted parental training programs that provide in-depth instructional strategies and home academic activities have a significant impact on parental engagement and the development of reading skills among children. Tan et al. (2019) noted school leadership's focus on parental support should be providing parents with quality reading activities for use in the home. Providing support to increase effective parenting practices will reduce poverty-related achievement gaps (Bojczyk et al., 2019). Thus, the perceptions of educators regarding the importance of teacher professional development on collaboration with families combined with parent training in home literacy-support strategies is supported by the literature.

Theme 2 was that leadership influence and support are essential. Educators perceived a need for district and campus-level leaders to provide more professional development opportunities for teachers related to collaborating with parents. Additionally, administrators need to provide parent home literacy-support training programs. Again, the perceptions of educators are supported by research literature. Researchers have described the influence of district and campus-level leaders in creating

a collaborative environment with school and families promoting shared responsibility (White & Levers, 2017). Schools where leaders foster teacher–parent collaboration create an environment that supports literacy development (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Townsend et al., 2018). Collaboration is a critical element in increasing achievement in Title I schools (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Heinrichs, 2018). Curry et al. (2016) specifically recommended that school officials encourage and create a school climate where parents and teachers collaborate to determine appropriate interactive home literacy activities.

Transformational leadership is effective when focused on teacher behavior and collaborative efforts to address inequities (Robinson, 2017). Educators at the target site noted reading interventions and even a parent university program were not used by many parents. School leaders should communicate a shared vision to implement effective parent-engagement programs (see Shin et al., 2017), including partnerships to increase parental knowledge of academics (White & Levers, 2017). Effective school leadership can promote a partnership to overcome barriers to parent engagement and collaboration.

### **Research Question 2**

What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5? The purpose of Research Question 2 was to obtain data that indicated what educators perceived as advantages and barriers of collaborating with parents to increase home literacy support. According to Bourdieu (1977), poverty reduces opportunities, and cultural practices continually reproduce the achievement gap.

Therefore, Research Question 2 was asked to understand educator perceptions related to advantages and barriers to literacy development among Title I students. Themes 3 and 4 emerged from the data.

Theme 3 was that cultural capital affects home literacy support. Participants perceived that low-SES families have limited access to literacy resources outside of school. Participants also noted long work schedules and other children limit the time parents can devote to home literacy support. Educators perceived that parent education level was a factor in deficient literacy skills among students at the target site. Participants mentioned low parental education level and limited access to reading resources, as supported by Cheng and Kaplowitz (2016). However, educators did not mention cultural preferences or behaviors, as posited by Cheng and Kaplowitz (2016) and Hartas (2012), as responsible for educational disparities. Rather than belief systems or culture, educators focused on the influence of poverty on the HLE. Low SES and parent education level have been shown to hinder early literacy (Barreto et al., 2017; Bono et al., 2016; Dealey & Stone, 2018; Justice et al., 2017; Mendive et al., 2017; Mwoma, 2017; Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Shin et al., 2017; Su et al., 2017). According to Tan et al. (2019), the intellectual capital acquired through education influences how parents interact with their children, their beliefs toward learning, and the competencies they seek to develop in their children. Isitan et al. (2018) indicated reading performance is associated with the quantity of books in the home, parental attitudes toward reading, and home learning activities.

Theme 4 was that limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies hinders literacy development. Educators perceived a need for ongoing parent training opportunities about

how to provide home literacy support. This finding is supported by the literature indicating parents in low-SES homes lack understanding of effective early literacy strategies. Students from low-income families demonstrate language and cognitive development deficits during early childhood, which negatively affects their overall academic performance throughout their school years (Barreto et al., 2017). Children of low SES often enter formal schooling lacking phonological awareness; oral vocabulary; and understanding of letter sounds, numbers, and counting (Hemmerechts et al., 2017; Mendive et al., 2017; Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

Researchers suggested that despite early deficits, low-SES families who develop an HLE providing consistent support for essential reading skills throughout grade school assists with closing the achievement gap (Dealey & Stone, 2018; Hemmerechts et al., 2017; Justice et al., 2017). Parents can receive training on not only reading to their children but also engaging children in interactive reading activities, such as letter naming and letter sounds, naming shapes, and teaching songs and nursery rhymes, which are essential to improving foundational literacy skills (Hartas, 2015; Tan et al., 2019). Word decoding, rapid naming, phonological awareness, and letter knowledge at the primary level are linguistic predictors of later literacy skills (Su et al., 2017). Curry et al. (2016) reported children's reading improved when parents engaged in shared reading activities of modeling, questioning, repeating, and correcting. Findings in Curry et al.'s study reinforced the importance of teachers making connections with parents to support parental practices in literacy development of children at home. The central research

question that I used to guide the study focused on the conceptual framework I used for this study, which was Bourdieu's educational habitus theory

### **Central Research Question**

The central research question that I used to guide this study was: What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students? Themes 3 and 4 were aligned with the constructs of Bourdieu's (1977) educational habitus theory, including low parental education level, limited access to reading resources, and cultural preferences (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). The interview data generated Themes 3 and 4, which confirmed Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, suggesting that cultural capital limits effective home literacy activities that develop essential reading skills (Huang & Liang, 2016). Many parents in Title I schools work long hours just to provide basic needs. Participants observed parents focus on basic needs and lack knowledge of how to provide literacy support to students. Therefore, parents need opportunities to learn how to provide home literacy support and need resources to build the HLE. Further, teachers need professional development to better collaborate with parents and help them build academic HLEs to support student literacy.

Analysis of the themes derived from the study suggest that literacy in low-SES schools is affected by limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies, and teachers' lack of literacy support of parents, which further hinders the development of HLEs. The themes aligned with Bourdieu's habitus theory describe the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement as a result of cultural practices, limited opportunities, and poverty



that result in systemic inequality (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu contends little access to reading resources, limited knowledge of literacy strategies, and the absence of collaboration with teachers, all serve to hinder literacy development and reading achievement among low SES children. Due to the findings of the study, the appropriate project genre was determined to be a white paper. The white paper will include the findings of the study, literature, and evidence to support the findings, and key recommendations to address the findings related to teacher-parent literacy programs to support low SES students in third through fifth grade. I determined that a pilot program that incorporates parent literacy support training and teacher professional development that focuses on collaboration methods with parents is needed to increase literacy achievement among students in Title I schools. If stakeholders accept the recommendations of the white paper as designed or with modifications then target campus personnel will implement a pilot parent training program, and teacher professional development as outlined in the white paper. The recommendations included in the white paper are based on the results of the study and research on pedagogical change, collaboration, and parent engagement.

In Section 2, I reviewed the qualitative design and approach used, participants, data collection, data analysis and a summary of the findings based on the four themes that emerged. I answered research questions 1 and 2 as well as the central guiding research question. I synthesized the themes, and findings that emerged and integrated the themes with the literature, and Bourdieu's conceptual framework that served as a lens to guide my analysis of the information obtained from participant interviews. I concluded Section

2 by describing the proposed project deliverable, a white paper, that emerged as the logical deliverable based on the study findings.

In Section 3, I briefly describe the proposed project as related to the findings. I will also describe the Rationale for the project of a white paper, literature related to the white paper genre and also discuss why this genre was the most appropriate genre given the findings. I describe the literature and synthesize the findings related to the genre and provide a detailed description of the change theory related to the proposed project. I also provide a project description, evaluation plan, and possible implications for social change.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

I based the project for this study on the findings related to the phenomena of how low-SES students' literacy achievement may improve through teacher–parent collaboration to support the development of HLEs. I interviewed 11 educator participants, including nine teachers, one instructional coach, and one administrator, regarding their perceptions of strategies and barriers for enhancing teacher–parent collaboration. I used Bourdieu's habitus theory as a lens to analyze the information obtained from interviews. Based on an analysis of the data, I developed a white paper that contains recommendations based on findings that emerged from the themes identified through the data analysis (see Appendix). If the recommendations in the white paper were adopted, the result may be the strengthening of parent literacy strategies and the development of more effective HLEs. This study may lead to positive social change by strengthening the literacy support for low SES students and their parents in HLEs.

The findings of the study were consistent with the constructs of Bourdieu's habitus theory (Bourdieu, 1977). Teachers perceived that many parents in low SES schools lacked the knowledge to implement effective literacy strategies within the home, and many teachers used ineffective collaborative methods with parents. Emerging from the findings, I developed a white paper with three recommendations for district stakeholders: (a) implement a parent literacy support training program, (b) implement a teacher professional development structure to enhance teachers' collaboration methods with parents, and (c) to initiate a pedagogical shift regarding teacher–parent collaboration

for literacy instruction. In this section, I discuss the project goals and provide rationale for choosing the white paper genre for this project. In addition, I present literature supporting the findings and recommendations of the project. The section concludes with a detailed description of the position paper project.

### **Goals of the Project**

The goals of the white paper are aligned to the findings that emerged from the study. The purpose of the white paper project is to inform district leaders about alternative teacher–parent collaborative literacy strategies to address the problem of low literacy scores, provide a review of literature related to the project genre and recommendations, and integrate the findings with the project study. The overarching goal of the white paper is to provide the stakeholders with information that will persuade them to adopt the recommendations contained in the white paper as designed or as modified by the stakeholders. If stakeholders adopt the proposed recommendations in the white paper, then the project goals described in the white paper that would be evaluated are:

- Goal 1: Educators will demonstrate an understanding of Bourdieu’s habitus theory related to the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement and barriers that hinder literacy development among low-SES students and the systemic change process.
- Goal 2: Educators will design and implement professional learning for campus personnel regarding effective teacher–parent collaboration methods.

- Goal 3: Educators and parents will collaborate to design a pilot synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program to equip parents with literacy support strategies that can be implemented in the HLE.

### **Rationale**

A white paper is the preferred deliverable to present recommendations to address the problem of low literacy scores at the target site. In the white paper, I inform district leaders regarding the value of the implementation of a parent literacy support program that increases effective teacher–parent collaboration and may be used to strengthen literacy development and achievement among low-SES students at the target site and other Title I schools.

I conducted a review of the research literature and a basic qualitative study at the target site to gain an understanding of teachers’ perceptions about implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home and the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5. The findings of this study aligned with Bourdieu’s habitus theory constructs (Bourdieu, 1977). The study findings indicate that cultural capital, institutionalized systems, and lack of resources were the influential constructs of low literacy scores at the target site (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016; Huang & Liang, 2016). Other researchers have indicated that differences in school cultures and the HLE can hinder literacy development and when educators increase parent knowledge of curriculum and basic skills, academic achievement increases (Curry et al., 2016; Heinrichs, 2018). The findings of this study support the addition of a parent literacy

support training program and more teacher–parent collaboration. These data indicate a necessity for teachers to support Title I parents by providing more explicit details about how to provide literacy support and create effective HLEs. Therefore, I determined that a white paper would be the appropriate method to share study findings and present recommendations to district leaders.

A white paper is used to identify a situation and provides a solution to address a problem (Nelson, 2017). The goal is to provide evidence on an issue and persuade the target audience that the proposed solution is the most effective way to address the problem (Malone & Wright, 2018). Stelzner (2006) suggested that a white paper may be used to provide recommendations to leaders of an organization or agency. Therefore, I will use the white paper to inform stakeholders regarding the findings of this study. I will review literature supporting the use of white papers to support social change and to support my recommendations of implementing a parent literacy support training program and teacher professional development that focus on teacher–parent collaborative methods to address the issue of low literacy scores at the target site.

In the white paper, I discuss the limitations of the literacy interventions that have been used at the target site to address low literacy scores. The findings of the study will be discussed to provide evidence that reinforces the recommendation of a parent support training program and teacher professional development to increase teacher–parent collaboration for literacy support (Malone & Wright, 2018). I explain specific literacy strategies and concepts that parents should be taught to create effective HLEs and the need for a pedagogical shift that embraces teacher–parent collaborative methods to foster

academic achievement. I provide recommendations for consideration in the white paper that include an online parent literacy support program, teacher professional development, and a teacher–parent combined training to build rapport and increase teacher–parent collaboration for literacy development.

### **Review of the Literature**

The literature review consists of a research overview of the white paper genre and peer-reviewed research related to the content of the project. I determined the white paper genre would be the most appropriate to address the problem of low literacy achievement at the target site. I will use the white paper to inform stakeholders about how the cycle of low literacy achievement is influenced by the constructs of the habitus theory at the target sight. Hence, teachers and parents must collaborate on literacy support strategies to increase literacy achievement that would reflect a pedagogical shift in literacy instruction at the target site.

In this literature review, I conduct an analysis of the white paper genre. I discuss the components of a white paper and the role of white papers in education. In the project content section, I focus on a need for a pedagogical shift to increase teacher–parent collaborative efforts and literacy strategies that should be introduced to parents to foster the development of effective HLEs and increase literacy achievement in Title I schools. I also conducted a research overview of the white paper genre and discuss the components of a white paper and the white paper in education.

I began the search for peer-reviewed literature published within the last 5 years with the Walden University library using the education Thoreau Multi-Database Search,

Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SAGE databases, ProQuest Central, Google, and the Google Scholar search engine. The following search words were used to guide the review of literature: *white paper genre, white paper, position paper, policy recommendation, education, pedagogical shift, change theory, paradigm shift, educational change, systemic change, collaboration, parent support, parent training programs, home learning environment, home engagement, home academic activities, reading activities, literacy, and literacy development.*

### **White Paper Genre Related to Findings and Project Development**

The purpose of the study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. I implemented a basic qualitative methodology using semistructured interviews to explore educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home. I also investigated educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents to promote home-based literacy and increase literacy achievement. The problem was that over 50% of student literacy scores in an urban elementary school serving a large percentage of low-SES students in a southern state remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019 despite the implementation of numerous targeted interventions. The gap in practice was that despite interventions, low-SES students had not made measurable gains, and how a parent literacy support program might strengthen reading skills for this population was unknown. In the next section, I discuss the white paper genre and why this genre is appropriate to address the problem



and describe the conceptual framework of systemic change process used to guide the development of the project.

### **Purpose of White Papers**

A White paper can be an effective tool in addressing issues in various fields including education (Campbell et al., 2020). The purpose of white papers is to identify a problem and persuade stakeholders to buy in to the recommendations presented to address the issue (Campbell et al., 2020; Pros Write, 2013). According to Stelzner (2006) white papers focus on how to solve a problem in corporate settings. Although white papers are most popular in corporate settings today, the idea of white papers began in government policy to address conflict (Malone & Wright, 2018). The term white paper is a spinoff of the term *white book*, known as a Great Britain government position paper publication (Malone & Wright, 2018; Stelzner, 2006). Although the names are similar, the two documents are very different. British government white papers focus on government policies and providing data related to industrial issues and subsidy planning, although white papers in corporate and other organizations, such as education, target a specific problem and seek to convince stakeholders of a solution to address the issue (Foleon, 2021; Graham, 2013). White papers have also been described as marketing tools used by companies to present a service, or product as a solution to a business problem (Campbell et al., 2020). According to Campbell et al. (2020) white papers are marketing instruments that provide a soft sell approach that offers new products and services that combat existing business problems. White papers are most popular in corporate settings and have been used to address business marketing issues, they have become more

acceptable in the field of education as a means of identifying and addressing problems that affect academic achievement.

### ***White Papers in Education***

Winston Churchill's 1943 white paper titled *Educational Reconstruction* is regarded as the first white paper in the field of education by historians and researchers (Crutchley, 2020; Ku, 2018). The Educational Reconstruction white paper proposed raising the school leaving age to 15 from 14 (Ku, 2018). The idea of raising the school leaving age was initiated by English socialist and educationist, Shena Simon, a member of the Education Advisory Committee of the Workers' Educational Association (Crutchley, 2020; Wright, 2017). Simon advocated for raising the school leaving age to 16 years of age to protect children from being pushed into the labor market without the appropriate skills, and to ensure they obtained a technical skill prior to entering the workforce (Crutchley, 2020). The 1943 Educational Reconstruction white paper along with Simon's strong presence as an advocator became the foundation for the 1944 Education Act, which gave power to an appointed Minister of Education to determine the appropriate school departure age (Ku, 2018; Wright, 2017). Winston Churchill's 1943 white paper influenced stakeholders in the United States and the United Kingdom, resulting in changes that brought about legislation, known as the Education Act of 1944, that raised the school departure age to 15 and provided free schooling for grammar, secondary and technical schools in the United Kingdom (Ku, 2018).

Since Winston Churchill's inaugural educational white paper in 1943, white papers have become a common genre used to address issues and influence change in the

field of education. The National Reading Conference (NRC) has provided a platform in the past for researchers to address and present possible solutions to various literacy issues, receive peer feedback, and influence change in literacy instruction (Mosenthal, 2002). The NRC uses two publications; the *Journal of Literacy Research*, and the *NRC Yearbook* to propagate white papers that address effective literacy instruction (Mosenthal, 2002). Researchers examined educational practices and literacy instruction that resulted in the publication of numerous white papers that contained recommendations to address pedagogical practices and academic achievement. The Icelandic Minister of Education, Science, and Culture published a white paper in 2014 to address the low literacy performance of 15-year-olds on the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam (Sigporsson, (2017). The Ministry of Education went further by collaborating with the Icelandic Parent's Association and municipalities to implement a national initiative on literacy in 2015 (Sigporsson, 2017).

Parsi and Darling-Hammond (2015) wrote a white paper to address the gap in performance assessments and the need for critical thinking skills in twenty-first century learning. Their objective was to address the need for states to focus more on performance assessments that required students to use interpersonal skills, collaborate with peers, and develop solutions to problems by creating a product (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Sayko and Region 8 Comprehensive Center (2020) presented a white paper to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to address the challenge of providing literacy instruction to scholars from pre-k to grade 12 in a remote learning and/or a hybrid format during the COVID-19 pandemic dilemma. The purpose of the Sayko and Region 8 Comprehensive

Center white paper was to provide the ODE with a multidisciplinary view on the difficulty in (Sayko & Region 8 Comprehensive Center, 2020). Researchers confirmed a gap in remote learning and hybrid evidence-based literacy instruction and discussed the need for (a) instructional interaction between teachers and students, and students and peers, (b) learning interaction between students and peers, and caregivers and their children, (c) relational interaction between teachers and students, students and peers, teachers and families, and caregivers and their children (Sayko & Region 8 Comprehensive Center, 2020).

The gap in remote learning and hybrid literacy instruction was due to the inability to implement a systemic change process over time that would have allowed personnel to adjust to the transition to remote and hybrid learning instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers, students, and parents to adapt to remote learning and literacy instruction, that began to bridge the gap in teacher-parent collaboration related to student learning. Collaboration between teachers and parents is very important and the partnership is a primary focus on the white paper. Therefore, systems change theory was used as a conceptual framework to guide the development of the project and to support a pedagogical shift for the educators at the target site. The pedagogical shift in this project is that traditional teacher-driven literacy instruction will evolve to teacher-parent collaboration that fosters an increase in parental knowledge of literacy strategies to develop effective HLEs and increase reading skills among low SES students at the target site.

### **Pedagogical Shift**

Traditional mindsets focus on the role of the teacher in educating the students. Although teaching is the teacher's primary role, the findings of this study revealed that there may be other avenues to approach literacy instruction for students. Hence, to achieve the goal of initiating a teacher-parent collaborative program to support literacy for low SES students, I recommend a process for implementing a pedagogical shift in this white paper that is based on the conceptual framework of a continuum of systemic change. I recommend that educators and stakeholders in the target campus develop an understanding of this change process, as the change process represents a pedagogical shift in how literacy instruction is approached. Specifically, I recommend a shift in how literacy services are delivered and therefore, this notion would perhaps be perceived by stakeholders as an innovation as opposed to traditional strategies teachers use to address students' literacy needs.

Systemic change consists of reconstructing the current processes and adjustments to all components of a system (Yusuf et al., 2016). Teaching practices and HLEs are influenced by their respective habitus dispositions, which are viewed as a hindrance to systemic change (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is the operation of educational systems within a society branched into social classes (Huang & Liang, 2016). Bourdieu (1977) theorized that children's 'socialization is conditioned by family SES, and their upbringing prior to entering school. Educators' implementation of existing educational pedagogy reinforces the habitus of teaching, which is not aligned with the cultural practices of low SES families (Allen et al., 2018). Therefore, the transformation of habitus related to HLEs is

necessary to combat the problem of low literacy achievement (Allen et al., 2018; Knight, 2020).

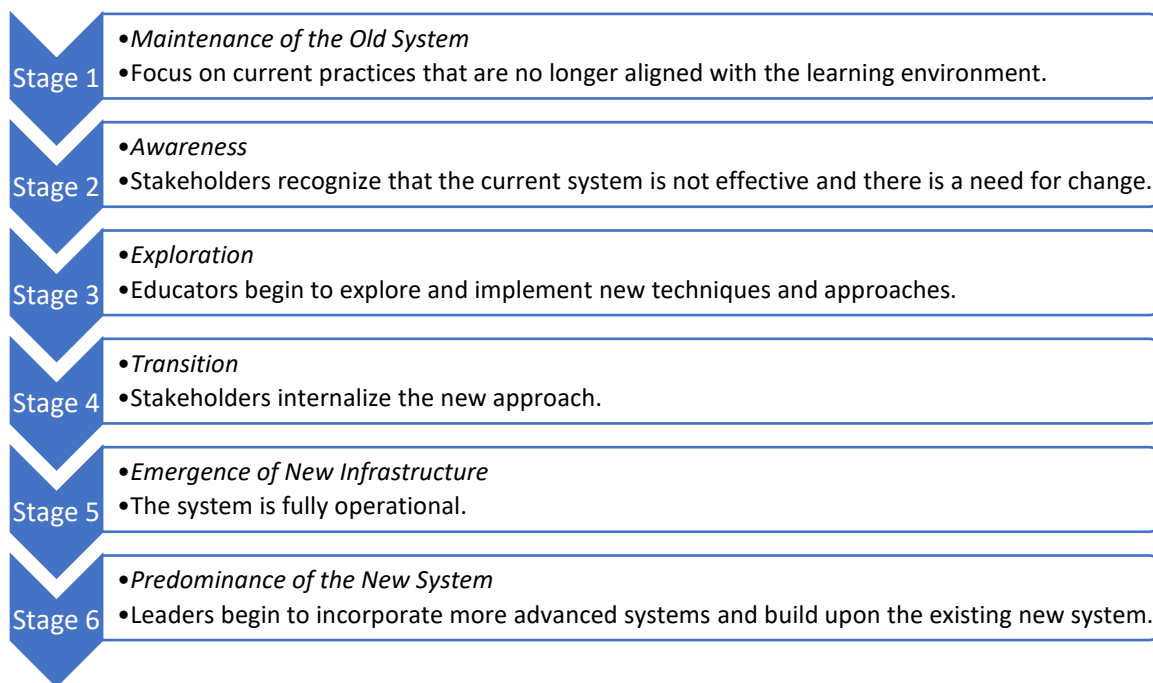
In this white paper, I recommend constructing literacy-based pedagogies in a Title I school to develop a united approach for literacy instruction between parents and teachers that is characterized by collaborative teacher-parent practices to shift the habitus of the Title I school environments and possible perceptions of HLEs of students from Title I schools. The educators at the target site employ a traditional system using traditional strategies to address the problem of low literacy levels. Examples of the existing, traditional strategies include the use of various interventions in the form of Reading Recovery, Reading Mastery, Neuhaus Phonics, and after school tutoring programs (personal communication, March 3, 2019). According to Yusuf et al. (2016) a continuum of systemic change is anchored in education theory and the paradigm shift is described as a move from a traditional education system to active learning, collaborative decision making, interconnectedness, and greater levels of achievement. The continuum of systemic change consists of six stages that guide pedagogical shifts (Yusuf et al., 2016).

Stage one, *Maintenance of the Old System* focuses on current practices that are no longer aligned with the learning environment. In stage two, *Awareness*, stakeholders recognize that the current system is not effective and there is a need for change. In the third stage, *Exploration*, educators begin to explore and implement new techniques and approaches used by other institutions and after success with preliminary tasks, there is a move to the fourth stage, *Transition*. In the transition stage stakeholders internalize the

new approach and engage in changes that are in more critical areas of the continuum of change which leads to stage five, *The Emergence of New Infrastructure*. During this stage, the new system is fully operational and has gained buy-in by all stakeholders. After obtaining stakeholder acceptance and buy in, the final stage of the [pedagogical] shift manifests. *Predominance of the New System*, consists of implementing more paramount elements of the new structure and leaders begin to incorporate more advanced systems and build upon the existing new system (Yusuf et al., 2016). I designed Figure 1 to reflect the six stages of change process described by researchers.

### Figure 1

#### *Six Stages of Change Theory*



I constructed this white paper to address the findings of this basic qualitative study and to provide recommendations for stakeholders' consideration that are designed

to address the problem of low reading levels in a local Title one school. The purpose of the white paper is to inform stakeholders about the findings of the study related to educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in HLEs and to recommend and persuade stakeholders regarding adoption of the solutions to the problem. The recommendation I make regarding the pedagogical shift will require educators to make a pedagogical shift related to how literacy services could be delivered for elementary students who are low-SES. Findings indicated that parents in low-SES homes lack understanding of effective early literacy strategies, consequently a pedagogical shift is necessary to address the lack of parental literacy knowledge in an effort to develop effective HLEs. A pedagogical shift involves the construct that reading instruction is a teacher-driven approach opposed to thinking that reading instruction includes a collaborative teacher-parent approach to support the students' reading development in the HLE (Hargreaves, 2016; Knight, 2020). Pedagogy in the field of education is the study of teaching methods and how they are used to impart knowledge (Schoology Exchange, 2021). Pedagogy focuses on various learning styles which influence teaching practices that include differentiation to ensure the learning needs of all students are being met. Differentiation consists of tailored instruction designed to meet the needs of individual students (Reading Rockets, 2021). Conventional education pedagogy consists of student-centered and teacher-centered learning (Schoology Exchange, 2021). Student-centered learning requires students to be more active during the learning process, while teacher-centered learning involves direct instruction delivered by the teacher (Schoology Exchange, 2021). Therefore, a pedagogical shift is necessary



to implement a new system that requires teacher-parent collaboration for the purpose of developing effective HLEs that will increase literacy achievement (Yusuf et al., 2016).

A pedagogical shift is a process that involves all aspects of the educational system (Knight, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2016). The educational system consists of community organizations that provide resources, district leaders that develop, facilitate, and implement policies, campus administrators, teachers, and parents. The pedagogical shift involves stakeholders, instruction, and professional development (Knight, 2020).

According to Hargreaves (2016) leaders must balance the development and maintenance of new practices during the systemic change process. In order to balance the development and maintenance of new practices educators must commit to the initiation, implementation, continuation, and advancement of the new practice (Fullan, 2016). Each phase is essential to developing collective autonomy. Collective autonomy is derived from consistent communication, dissemination of ideas in a lucid system where there is a need to obtain a common view of student learning and achievement (Hargreaves, 2016; Knight, 2020). Despite the implementation of professional learning communities, teaching has long been viewed as an isolated practice (Fullan, 2016; Knight, 2020).

However, change is driven by a collaborative approach that views teachers as change agents and consumers of the reform, therefore more collaboration among stakeholders is essential to influence transformation. (Allen et al., 2018). When changes are required within the educational system, researchers have found that obtaining educator acceptance of new processes is essential to ensuring a change in how instruction is delivered (Allen et al., 2018; Knight, 2020). Teacher commitment to current educational systems are often

hinderances to pedagogical shifts and require a change in the cultural context of teaching for a complete paradigm shift to occur.

Teaching curriculum is often provided by the state and teachers are provided various strategies and instructional methods through professional learning communities (Shawer, 2017). The practices that teachers use is influenced by their experiences in the school context during professional development activities (Shawer, 2017). Therefore, the habits of teaching are ingrained in teachers as more experiences are gained that further enforce the pedagogical approach teachers use when instructing students. Allen et al. 2018 argued that pedagogies are developed in the cultural context of teaching therefore transformation is met with resistance due to a cultural conflict, which lies in the idea of the habitus theory. Habitus refers to inclinations, practices and systems that drive an individual's perceptions and interactions with the world (Bourdieu, 1977). The habitus in teaching may hinder a smooth pedagogical shift due to resistance of breaking the traditions of the past educational systems (Allen et al., 2018). To ensure a fluid transition, or pedagogical shift, it is imperative that stakeholders embrace the ideas of the new practice and seek more advanced options to enhance the new system (Knight, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2016). The recommended process of systemic change is geared toward bridging the gap between teachers and parents related to literacy support by increasing teacher-parent collaboration and parental knowledge about literacy strategies that will develop effective HLEs.

A pedagogical shift relies on the collaborative efforts of educational leaders, teachers, vested community organizations, and parents of students who will be affected

by the new system. Stakeholders who will be affected by the new system must be involved in the development of the new system. Shared decision-making fosters commitment to the new system and intensifies collaborative efforts that lead to the development of more advanced systems to address the literacy problem that has plagued the target site for the past 5 years (Knight, 2020). In this white paper project, I will inform stakeholders about the findings of the study related to educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy development. I will make recommendations in the white paper that include designing a collaborative teacher-parent literacy support program for parents to enhance HLEs. Parents' delivery of literacy strategies in the HLE will shift the way low literacy levels are addressed in Title I schools and remedy the cycle of low academic achievement raised by Bourdieu in the habitus theory.

### **Teacher–Parent Collaboration**

Researchers have found that parents play an intricate role in student academic achievement (Saracho, 2017). Parent involvement in schools is viewed as essential to creating a collaborative atmosphere. However, parents are rarely involved in curriculum, and pedagogical initiatives (Abreu et al., 2017; Demissie et al., 2020). Moe et al. (2018) suggested that parental support in the form of structured tasks developed for a child's ability level may increase student academic achievement. Thus teacher-parent collaboration related to literacy strategies for a parent training program is recommended as a possible solution to the problem of low literacy levels at the target site. Allowing parents to be a part of the decision-making process in developing a parent literacy

training program creates parental autonomy related to HLEs and increases the influence of parental involvement (Demissie et al., 2020; Saracho, 2017). Collaboration between educators and low-SES parents is essential to the development of an effective HLE (Foster et al., 2016). Collaboration will afford parents an opportunity to provide specific details about their limited knowledge related to literacy development and intervention. Therefore, presenting a canvas for educators to develop a training program that meets HLE literacy needs of students at the target site.

Moe et al., (2018) conducted quantitative a study that examined the effect of parental autonomy–supportive scaffolding on home learning, child self-efficacy, and engagement. The focus of the study was parental scaffolding of children’s motivation and influence during home learning activities. Parent participants engaged in a four-session training program that focused on maintaining supportive scaffolding methods. Supportive scaffolding includes administering the minimum amount of instructional assistance needed to enhance students’ motivation until they achieve self-efficacy (Moe et al., 2018). The findings of the study indicated that learner achievement is indicative of the type of support they receive in the HLE. The training program had a positive effect on parental supportive scaffolding performance related to homework and influenced home learning engagement. Scaffolding is embedded in the fibers of the educational habitus and is a conventional practice in classrooms across America (Iris Center, 2021) .

However, many parents are oblivious to the process of scaffolding for the purpose of literacy development (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2021; Iris Center, 2021). Hence teacher-parent collaboration is critical to the enhance effective home literacy

support and parental contributions to literacy development (Saracho, 2017). Many low SES parents have a desire to collaborate with educators and be more engaged in their children's learning process. Unfortunately, opportunities for parents to collaborate are often limited due to long work hours in an effort to meet their family financial obligations (Bono et al., 2016; Demissie et al., 2020). Henceforth, educators should be sensitive to parental hardships that minimize their ability to collaborate with teachers and offer alternative, collaborative options that will provide more opportunities for parents to take part in their children's learning (Abreu et al., 2017).

Educators' use of technology is essential to bridge communication between educators and parents due to parental hardships and a growing need for collaboration. Abreu et al., (2017) conducted a study in primary and secondary Portuguese schools that surveyed parents and teachers in the form of a questionnaire related to collaboration and correspondence. Both groups emphasized the importance of correspondence between educators and parents and showed an interest in electronic communication over the traditional paper booklet. Parents embraced the idea of electronic communication due to the opportunity to provide other important components that cannot be used with a traditional booklet. Parents noted that absences, grades, registration, and communication between parents and teachers could conveniently be accessed through electronic communication.

Educators found electronic communication more effective in improving the teaching and learning process and a more convenient form of communication between school and families. The findings suggested an alternative form of communication and

collaboration between educators and parents using an electronic booklet. The growing need of collaboration between educators and parents was the driving force for the development of an electronic booklet to promote the learning process supported by information and communication technologies (Abreu et al., 2017). Educators often used students to deliver school information to parents in the form of handbooks and letters to communicate with families. Relying on students for the delivery of information was not a dependable means in many instances and provided limited informational content. Abreu et al., 2017 suggested that the development of virtual communication systems eliminated the barrier of time and provided more opportunities for communication and collaboration between teachers and parents.

The findings of the study indicated that educator and parent participants viewed communication, and collaboration critical to the process of teaching and learning. The electronic booklet was a contributing factor to the teaching and learning process that provided more opportunities for teacher-parent collaboration. Therefore, collaborative opportunities using virtual platforms such as Zoom, and Google Meets allow parents to be more involved in the process of developing effective HLEs. Furthermore, providing parent literacy support training in synchronous, and asynchronous modules on a virtual platform provides flexibility for parents to take advantage of the opportunity to learn how to implement effective home learning strategies (Madden et al., 2017). The synchronous format provides real-time communication and feedback that allows parents to log on to a virtual system and actively participate in the training program. The asynchronous literacy support training format allows individual parents the flexibility to complete the literacy

support training at their own pace (Madden et al., 2017). Synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training provide parents explicit details about how to implement specific literacy strategies in HLEs.

### **Home Literacy Strategies**

The literacy development of children is dependent upon parental practices and teachers making connections with parents to support home learning experiences (Curry et al., 2016). Parent education level and household income often affect parental ability to provide home learning activities in Title I schools (Mwoma, 2017; Wambiri & Ndani, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that parents are afforded an opportunity to collaborate with teachers to learn about phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and learning activities that foster the development of these skills. Phonological and phonemic awareness consist of letter recognition, letter sounds, and vocabulary with grammatical understanding (Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Students' ability to recognize letters and letter sounds have a strong connection to reading and spelling abilities (Bojczyk et al., 2019; Fricke et al., 2016). Vocabulary knowledge is essential to the development of comprehension skills (Bojczyk et al., 2019; Fricke et al., 2016). Students are able to develop comprehension skills when decoding does not interfere with the reading process, hence the importance of letter recognition, and sound-symbol association that facilitates decoding. Students' vocabulary is related to their comprehension of text and to advancing students' reading comprehension in order to understand more complex forms of text and text with higher reading levels (Bojczyk et al., 2019; Fricke et al., 2016; Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

Parent home literacy support practices must align with school-based literacy instruction to be effective. Isitan et al. (2018) conducted a study that examined the validity of an early learning and literacy support at home instrument (ELLS) used to measure parental practices of home literacy support and the associations between the following subscales: conceptual understanding, basic concepts, and phonological awareness (Kayir & Erdogan, 2015; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). The ELLS consisted of 34 items designed to measure each subscale. Participants consisted of 315 low SES parents with education levels that ranged from elementary to middle school completion. Participants orally completed the ELLS during home visits or in public settings. The findings indicated that ELLS were a valid and reliable measure of parents' literacy practices at home and that parents' use of phonological awareness strategies strengthened children's narrative skills and had a greater effect on student learning activities geared toward basic concepts and understanding of events (Fricke et al., 2016; Isitan et al., 2018)

Bojczyk et al. (2019) investigated home literacy practices and reading skills of children at risk for reading deficiencies. The study sites involved two Title I schools, and participants consisted of 198 kindergarten and first-grade students and their parents. The researchers used Bourdieu's habitus theory as the framework for the study. Bourdieu explains that the achievement gap is indicative of children's lack of exposure to the cultural norms of the upper class (Bourdieu, 1977; Huang & Liang, 2016). The findings of the study were that learning trajectories can shift when teachers provide literacy activities for parents and appropriate home literacy support is implemented (Bojczyk et al., 2019). Teacher-parent collaboration is essential to increasing children's literacy skills



and enriching their entire educational experience (Saracho, 2017). The implementation of home literacy interventions that support phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and comprehension skills is imperative to the overall academic achievement of children (Barreto et al., 2017; Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

In this literature review I discussed the use of white papers in various organizations and professional fields to address identified problems and provide possible solutions. The use of white papers in education began to introduce reform and to reconstruct education (Campbell et al., 2020; Crutchley, 2020). White papers have become more prevalent in the field of education in an effort to introduce new instructional practices to address low academic achievement (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). The NRC introduced two publications; the *Journal of Literacy Research*, and the *NRC Yearbook* to circulate white papers to present solutions to literacy issues, and influence change in literacy instruction (Mosenthal, 2002). Parsi and Darling-Hammond (2015) constructed a white paper related to the gap in performance assessments and critical thinking skills in twenty-first century learning. The purpose of Parsi and Darling-Hammond's white paper was to convince stakeholders of the need for more instruction that fosters peer collaboration, interpersonal skills, and problem solving among students (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). A white paper was presented to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to address the challenge of providing literacy instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in a remote learning and/or hybrid format (Sayko & Region 8 Comprehensive Center, 2020). Researchers determined that the gap in remote learning

and hybrid literacy instruction was due to the inability to implement a systemic change process over time that would have allowed students and teachers a transition period to adjust to the shift to remote and hybrid learning instruction (Sayko & Region 8 Comprehensive Center, 2020).

Educators use conventional pedagogy to deliver literacy instruction. Therefore, educators must make a pedagogical shift to indoctrinate the field of education with new practices. A pedagogical shift is a process that involves making changes in all aspects of the educational system. The educational system consists of community organizations, district leaders, campus administrators, teachers, and parents (Knight, 2020). In order for a successful pedagogical shift to occur educational leaders must balance the development and maintenance of new practices by committing to the initiation, implementation, continuation, and advancement of the new practice (Fullan, 2016; Hargreaves, 2016). Pedagogical shifts in education are dependent upon collaboration between leaders, teachers, vested community organizations, and parents of students who will be affected by the new system. Shared decision-making cultivates stakeholder commitment to new systems and often leads to the development of increasingly advanced systems to address the identified literacy problem (Knight, 2020).

Collaboration between educators and parents is essential to the development of effective HLEs (Foster et al., 2016; Saracho, 2017). Parent involvement has been found to create parental autonomy related to establishing effective HLEs and increasing academic achievement (Demissie et al., 2020; Saracho, 2017). However, parents are rarely involved in curriculum, and pedagogical initiatives due to the educational habitus

that perpetuates the idea that learning is solely teacher-driven (Abreu et al., 2017; Demissie et al., 2020). Opportunities for parents to collaborate with teachers are often limited due to parental financial obligations that require long work hours (Bono et al., 2016; Demissie et al., 2020). Abreu et al. (2017) suggested that the use of virtual communication platforms limits the barriers of time and space that plague most Title I parents. Therefore, virtual platforms are viewed as most appropriate to further neutralize the barriers that hinder parent collaborative efforts. Virtual platforms also allow parents the flexibility of synchronous, and asynchronous communication to avoid the absence of parental engagement (Madden et al., 2017).

Teacher-parent connections and effective home literacy practices are critical to literacy development (Curry et al., 2016). Based on the findings of the study, educators perceived that many parents in Title I schools lack the knowledge and skills needed to implement effective learning strategies in the HLEs due to low education levels. Therefore, teacher-parent collaboration is essential to ensure that strategies related to phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and comprehension are shared with parents to foster increasingly effective HLEs. Bojczyk et al. (2019) indicated that learning trajectories may shift when teachers promote literacy activities and appropriate home literacy support is implemented. Increasing teacher-parent collaboration requires a systemic change process that will shift the current habitus of teaching and embrace the cultural context of Title I schools to increase literacy achievement (Allen et al., 2018; Knight, 2020). In the project description, I discuss recommendations to implement a

systemic change process to increase teacher-parent collaboration and develop effective HLEs in the target elementary site.

### **Project Description**

The problem at the target site was that over 50% of student literacy scores have remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019. An analysis of the data from this project study suggested that literacy in low SES schools is affected by limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies, and teachers' lack of literacy support of parents, which further hinders the development of HLEs. The data from the study indicated that a parent literacy support training and teacher professional development related to parent collaboration is needed to increase literacy achievement among students in Title I schools. I determined that a white paper would be the appropriate genre to make recommendations for district stakeholders. Recommendations based on the findings are to design and implement professional development for educators related to effective teacher-parent collaboration methods. Based on the premise of the habitus theory and the systemic change process, I also recommend teacher-parent collaboration to enhance literacy support in HLEs. Additionally, I recommend a synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program be piloted at the target site. I recommend an evaluation of the parent training program to determine the efficacy on literacy achievement at the target site and HLEs. The results of the evaluation will be used to determine whether the pilot program should be expanded to other elementary schools throughout the district.

I will submit the white paper to the district (CERR) for review. Upon obtaining CERR approval to share the findings and recommendations with district stakeholders, I

will meet to with the principal, leadership team, and community stakeholders of the target site to formally present the study findings and recommendations of a parent training program and teacher professional development related to teacher-parent collaboration as discussed in the white paper. I will address the need for educators to embrace a pedagogical shift in the delivery of literacy services for low-SES students to meet the needs of both parents and students to develop effective HLEs that will increase literacy achievement. I will explain the necessary shift that will involve a move from a teacher-driven approach for supporting students' literacy instruction to developing a collaborative teacher-parent approach to support students' reading development. The systemic change framework proposes the reconstruction of current processes related to instruction and professional development (Knight, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2016). Therefore, stakeholders will be introduced to literacy reform that will include collaborating and implementing training for parents in order to meet the needs for creating effective HLEs.

### **Needed Resources and Potential Barriers**

The successful development and implementation of a teacher professional development and parent literacy support training program involves determining what resources are needed and the funds required to deliver training to teachers and parents. Teacher professional development will require facilitators and materials to deliver professional learning. The parent literacy support training program will require training facilitators, literacy resources, and technology. Each student that attends the target site has been issued a laptop with free internet access for home use. The issuance of laptops and internet access to all students provides parents the convenience of virtual literacy

support training as parents may use their child's assigned laptop to participate in synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training. The virtual training options limit the barriers of time and childcare by providing convenient options for parents to collaborate with teachers. Asynchronous training will allow parents to complete the training at their own pace however, it will remove their ability to ask questions in real time. Although asynchronous training will remove the ability for real time feedback, it allows for specific feedback to be delivered through email related to individual questions and concerns. The virtual training options will also remove the barriers of travel and the need for the use of district buildings and other locations. Both virtual options allow parents to participate in the comfort of their own home and receive feedback from teacher facilitators. These options also limit the need for parents to obtain childcare in order to participate in the literacy support training program. Limiting the need for childcare, travel, and providing an asynchronous self-paced option will increase the likelihood of parent participation.

### **Project Implementation and Timetable**

Upon completion of the doctoral study, I will deliver this white paper to the target district CERR. If the CERR approves dissemination of the white paper, then I will disseminate the executive summary and the white paper to the school board, and superintendent. The process of approval and dissemination should take approximately 15 business days. If requested to present white paper recommendations by the school board or superintendent, I will schedule the presentations as requested.

I will share an executive summary and the white paper with the principal of the target site. I will incorporate any suggestions, or feedback from the principal into the white paper recommendations. In my executive summary, I will include a recommendation to the principal that I share the white paper and recommendations with the campus leadership team. I will plan a presentation for the campus leadership team that includes a power point presentation of the white paper. I will include a synopsis of the study, including the problem, purpose, Bourdieu's conceptual framework, literature, methodology, findings, and recommendations to address literacy achievement of students at the target site.

If the recommendations are adopted, I will meet with the campus principal to develop a planning committee. The planning committee will include campus literacy teachers, administrators, instructional specialists, and the data analyst. This committee will design a professional development curriculum for educators. The committee will collaborate with campus literacy teachers to development the synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents. The planning committee will develop professional learning activities related to teacher-parent collaboration and synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training for parents. Once planning is complete, campus administrators will ensure that the professional development is delivered during weekly campus professional learning communities for teachers across all content areas. When educators prioritize literacy development across all content areas, and teacher-parent collaboration, student literacy achievement has been found to increase (Harji et al., Niklas & Schneider). Consequently, professional development will be

provided on teacher-parent collaboration methods to all campus teachers and literacy intervention strategies will be provided to the parents of students at the target site in a virtual synchronous and asynchronous format.

Campus literacy teachers and the planning committee will develop asynchronous literacy support learning modules for parents. The same modules will be used for the synchronous learning option and campus administrators will assign specific literacy teachers to serve as training facilitators for synchronous trainings. Synchronous trainings will be offered two times during the academic school year, while the asynchronous option will be available on the campus website indefinitely. I recommend that the pilot program is implemented at the beginning of an academic year and sustained throughout the academic school year to provide adequate time for parents to take advantage of the literacy support training and for teacher-parent collaborative efforts to thrive. The synchronous and asynchronous literacy support parent training will afford ample opportunities for parents to implement the strategies they learn in the HLEs and time for educators to obtain valid data to evaluate the efficacy of the literacy training program. Table 7 reflects the timeline for implementation of the project and Table 8 reflects the roles and responsibilities for individuals involved with the white paper pilot project recommendations of the project.



**Table 7***Timetable for Implementation of Project*

Recommendation	Time Frame
Deliver white paper to the target district CERR	2 weeks
Present white paper recommendations to superintendent and school board	2 weeks
Share executive summary and white paper pilot recommendations with principal of target site	2 weeks
Incorporate Principal feedback and adjust white paper pilot recommendations as needed	2 weeks
Presentations to the campus leadership team regarding white paper pilot recommendations Develop power point Design individual activities to promote understanding of recommendations	4 weeks
Present the pilot project to the campus staff	2 weeks
Appoint planning committee members for pilot include campus literacy teachers, administrators, instructional specialists, and the data analyst	2 weeks
Design professional development curriculum for educators	6 weeks
Committee will collaborate with campus literacy teachers to develop the synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents	6 weeks
Campus Planning Committee assigns literacy teachers to serve as training facilitators for synchronous trainings	1 week
Implement synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents	Ongoing once developed
Campus administrators and campus planning committee will deliver and implement professional development Campus professional learning communities for teachers across all content area	12 weeks
Campus Leadership team and Planning Committee evaluate professional development and parent training modules and overall white paper pilot project	6-weeks

**Table 8***Roles and Responsibilities*

Participant	Role and Responsibility
Researcher	<p>Present white paper pilot recommendations to target district CERR</p> <p>Present white paper pilot recommendations to Superintendent</p> <p>Share executive summary and white paper pilot recommendations with principal of target site</p> <p>Incorporate Principal feedback and adjust white paper pilot recommendations as needed</p> <p>Develop Power Point for white paper project presentations</p> <p>Design individual activities to promote understanding of recommendations to various stakeholder groups</p> <p>Conduct presentations of white paper pilot recommendations to Campus Leadership Team, and incorporate modifications</p>
Administrators	<p>Appoint planning committee members for pilot project implementation</p>
Campus Leadership Team	<p>Present the pilot project to the campus staff</p> <p>Incorporate agreed upon feedback from campus staff</p> <p>Incorporate Pilot project goals into Campus Improvement Plan</p>
Pilot Project Planning Committee	<p>Design professional development curriculum for educators</p> <p>Deliver and implement professional development to teachers</p>
Literacy Teachers	<p>Campus professional learning communities for teachers across all content area</p> <p>Review and evaluation process</p> <p>Implement Evaluation process for project goals</p>
Planning Committee and Literacy Teachers	<p>Campus Planning Committee assigns literacy teachers to serve as training facilitators for synchronous training</p> <p>Committee will collaborate with campus literacy teachers to develop the synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents</p> <p>Implement synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents</p>

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. The resulting project deliverable is a white paper with recommendations for implementing a new innovative teacher-parent collaborative literacy support program to improve student literacy achievement at the target site. Evaluating the project deliverable is important so that feedback and suggestions are obtained from the stakeholders. Obtaining feedback from stakeholders has been established to support implementation of innovations (Akbar et al., 2020).

#### **Implementation of Evaluation**

To evaluate the white paper and recommendations, a goals-based evaluation will be used, and the overall evaluation will also include obtaining formative feedback throughout implementation process of the pilot literacy project to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the activities in developing the desired competencies for parents, and teachers (Cañadas, 2021). Formative assessments with clearly described objectives or criteria have been shown to be useful in supporting teachers to develop competencies in professional development and in teacher training programs (Cañadas, 2021). Additionally, formative assessments have been used to support students' learning and to evaluate professional development (Gotch, et al., 2021; Wylie & Lyon, 2017). Furthermore, formative feedback has been used to strengthen teaching, professional

development processes, strategies used in professional development, and to evaluate if the selected content met the target audiences' needs (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

I designed this project based on the findings of this research study and aligned the goals of the project to the themes and research findings. In the white paper I describe the findings of the project, specific recommendations for the stakeholders' consideration to address the gap in practice was that despite numerous, targeted reading interventions, low-SES students had not made measurable gains, and it was unknown how a parent literacy support program in the home might strengthen reading skills for this population. Literacy development for low-SES elementary students is critical for their overall school success.

### ***Ongoing Formative Assessment***

After obtaining superintendent, and district executive leadership team approval and feedback, the next step would be to obtain the approval from the campus principal (see Table 7). In order to implement the recommendations in the white paper, the campus principal needs to accept the recommendations of the white paper as designed or recommend modifications. Therefore, upon completion of the white paper presentation to the district executive leadership team, I will request formative assessment feedback to determine the effectiveness of the white paper presentation, and my delivery to inform and persuade the executive leadership team to implement the recommendations shared. Formative assessments are used to obtain feedback, to modify adjust, or adapt a proposal, instruction, or coordinated set of activities to achieve specific goals (Houston & Thompson, 2017). I will use any formative feedback from the executive leadership team

to refine the white paper recommendations as appropriate and move forward with the white paper proposal for implementation as described in Table 7 and arrange a meeting to share the white paper with the campus principal at the target campus. I will prepare a Power Point presentation with details contained in the white paper to support my delivery of the recommendations and proceed to follow the steps outlined in the implementation process (see Table 7).

For the campus principal, executive leadership team, campus planning committee, and faculty, I will conduct a formative assessment evaluation using a brief Likert scale questionnaire that also includes a few open-ended questions for stakeholders to provide more detailed feedback regarding their experiences and recommendations. The goal for these specific formative assessment evaluations is to examine the effectiveness of my delivery of the executive summary, the white paper in informing the stakeholder group about the findings of the study, understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory, implications for students and parents, and to evaluate stakeholders' understanding and agreement with the recommendations. Shared leadership and gaining buy-in from leaders is important due to the interdependency of innovations among various stakeholders (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2018). If the leadership team at the campus adopts the recommendations, or a modified version of the white paper recommendations, I will use a formative evaluation throughout implementation of the professional development related to meeting the goals of the professional development as designed, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation process to the campus leadership team, and campus staff. In pilot projects or initiation of innovations, it is important to obtain feedback on the process used to

implement the change and the content provided through professional development and other avenues (see Akbar et al., 2020).

A Likert scale questionnaire will be used to assess the effectiveness of my delivery of the executive summary, the white paper in informing stakeholders about the findings of the study, understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory, and agreement with the recommendations related to the proposed collaborative teacher-parent literacy initiative. The formative assessment evaluation of the white paper will also provide feedback that will determine what changes should be made to the literacy support training and teacher professional development to enhance the proposed recommendations.

Campus administrators, the planning committee, literacy teachers and other vested stakeholders will be able to review the ongoing formative evaluation data collected to determine the need for other resources and interventions during the implementation of this pilot project. The evaluation process for this project will be fluid and will provide opportunities to implement new collaborative literacy strategies and to modify professional development. Stakeholders may use formative data to adjust the pilot program, strategies selected will also facilitate the stakeholders' freedom to adjust, accelerate, or intensify the recommendations. The formative evaluation process will support administrators and teachers' implementation of the pilot literacy support program and include parents in their children's learning process. Researchers suggested that parent engagement in the learning process delivers positive learning indications and minimizes low academic achievement (Heinrichs, 2018; Robinson, 2017).

Parents who participate in the literacy support training program will complete an online formative evaluation at the end of the synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training to provide immediate feedback about the professional development they received in terms of how the training met the intended objectives specified at the outset of the training module. These assessment data will also provide information about the perceived effectiveness of the training. All data obtained will be triangulated to evaluate the process, and content of the professional development. If these data indicate a need for change in delivery, changes can be made immediately by updating the virtual training modules.

### ***Goals-Based Evaluation***

A goals-based evaluation will be used at the conclusion of the pilot implementation at the target site. Goals-based evaluations provide information on whether the goals of the project were met (Berriet-Sollicec et al., 2014). The goals of the project contained in the white paper are: (a) Educators will demonstrate an understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory related to the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement and barriers that hinder literacy development among low SES students and the systemic change process (b) Educators will design and implement professional learning for campus personnel regarding effective teacher-parent collaboration methods, and (c) Educators and parents will collaborate to design and implement a pilot synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program to equip parents with literacy strategies that can be implemented in the HLE. All recommendations are designed to support achieving the goals delineated. Using the Goals-based evaluation in

combination with the formative assessment pertaining to process and content will provide the stakeholders with information to adjust the pilot program design for the following year of implementation.

### **Justification for Evaluation**

A goal-based evaluation determines whether a program has accomplished the goals it was designed to meet (American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology, 2021). I will use an online goals-based evaluation to determine if the goals of the pilot program were achieved. A goal-based evaluation is the most appropriate for the project to determine if the pilot parent literacy support program met the anticipated goals. In addition to evaluating the goals of the program, other data points will be included and triangulated with the goal-based evaluation data. The goals that will be evaluated are: (a) Educators will demonstrate an understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory related to the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement and barriers that hinder literacy development among low SES students and the systemic change process. (b) Educators will design and implement professional learning for campus personnel regarding effective teacher-parent collaboration methods. (c) Educators and parents will collaborate to design and implement a pilot synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program to equip parents with literacy strategies that can be implemented in the HLE.

The main goals of evaluation are to measure, to learn and to understand (Berriet-Sollic et al., 2014). Additional data that will be used to evaluate whether this pilot program met the program goals will include: (a) student literacy assessment data



throughout the academic year, (b) parent participation and feedback of the literacy support training program, (c) parent feedback related HLEs and teacher-parent collaboration, and (d) teacher feedback related to the professional development to implement the pilot program including the process used to implement the pilot program. The goals-based evaluation and formative assessment evaluation data, along with other data collection points determined by the pilot project committee will be triangulated to assess whether the goals of the pilot program. These data will be helpful in refining the pilot program on an annual basis. The evaluation data from the formative assessments and from the goals-based evaluation at the end of the first year of implementation can be summarized and shared with the stakeholders through faculty and parent meetings and electronic avenues, such as the campus website. Overall, the combination of formative assessment, goals-based evaluation and the collection of campus data will be used to evaluate the overall pilot project at the target site. The evaluation will be used to support stakeholders' implementation of the second year of the pilot program at the target site.

### **Key Stakeholders**

There are a variety of stakeholders who may benefit from implementing the recommendations of this pilot program at the study site. The stakeholders include the campus administrative leadership team, campus pilot planning committee, all campus staff involved with development and delivery of the professional development, synchronous and asynchronous modules, the teachers and parents involved in the teacher-parent collaborative pilot, as well as the students of the parent participants; the superintendent and the district executive team are peripheral stakeholders. If the district

leadership were to expand the pilot project to other elementary sites, then the pilot could become a more significant project for stakeholders outside the target pilot site. For the purposes of this description, I have organized the stakeholder groups into students, parents, teachers and leaders. Leaders includes the campus administrative leadership team, campus pilot planning committee, and selected teacher facilitators. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of each stakeholder group or individual.

### *Students as Stakeholders*

Students may benefit from this collaborative teacher-parent literacy pilot by being provided additional literacy materials to use at home with their parents. Students may benefit from the professional development that parents are provided as the parents could develop a deeper understanding and new skills to support their students' literacy development. The potential benefit to students is also that the parents' awareness of literacy strategies to help their student in the HLE will be strengthened and the students' skills may improve as a result of the collaborative partnership and professional development. The pilot project could also have an informal result of educating the parents regarding the educational system to gain support and services for their student. Providing parents with knowledge and skills to help their students may serve to break down the effects of Bourdieu's habitus theory on low-income families and students.

### *Parents as Stakeholders*

Parents may benefit by becoming more knowledgeable of specific literacy strategies for supporting the development of their students' literacy in the HLE. Parents participating in the pilot project may benefit from a strengthened teacher-parent

collaborative relationship related to literacy development for their students. These initial experiences may be unique for parents, and this may encourage the parents to see how they can help their students and how they may collaborate with their students' teachers in other ways beyond literacy development. The parents may observe improvements in their students' skills, and they may also build a deeper bond by collaborating with the teacher. The potential benefit is that the parents' awareness of literacy strategies to help their student in the HLE will be strengthened and the students' skills may improve because of the collaborative partnership and professional development. The pilot project training and process may have an informal result of educating the parents regarding the educational system to gain support and services for their student.

### ***Teachers and Leaders as Stakeholders***

Teachers and the leadership team including the pilot project committee and selected facilitators may benefit by becoming more aware of the change process and what is required to shift methodologies within systems from one pedagogical practice to a new pedagogical practice. Teachers and leaders will develop a deeper understanding of how to help parents support their students in the HLE. Teachers may also benefit from a strengthened teacher-parent collaborative relationship related to literacy development for their students. Observed changes in students' literacy skills will reinforce the effectiveness of the collaborative partnership between teachers and parent that is central for teachers' adoption of new practices. Teachers will also benefit from creating a deeper collaborative relationship with parents. The pilot project will have an informal result of educating the teachers and leaders regarding the educational system supports needed to

improve their students' skills. Teachers and leaders may become more aware of how to provide HLE literacy activities to support low-income families. Teachers and leaders may benefit from experiencing the effects of Bourdieu's theory on the population of students they serve, and this experience may help them understand the changes that need to be made to create social change for students and their families. A deeper understanding Bourdieu and this population of parents and students may increase their empathy and willingness to try new strategies to support students.

### **Project Implications**

#### **Implications for Social Change**

I selected a white paper as the project for this study to address the needs of the students, parents, and teachers in the district related to proficient literacy achievement for low SES students. This project has the potential to increase teacher-parent collaboration, parent involvement in student learning, and increase literacy development among students at the target site. Nationally, researchers have established that literacy development is challenging for students and particularly for students from low-SES families. These potential advances are significant to stakeholders because previous efforts to increase literacy achievement among students at the target site have had minimal success. Local stakeholders will gain additional knowledge and insights about the specific needs of their parent demographic population to help parents create effective HLEs. Collaborating, educating, and equipping parents with literacy strategies may help change the academic culture within low SES families and end the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement in Title I schools. Teachers will benefit from collaborating

with parents by minimizing the amount of intervention they will need to provide during the school day. This will allow teachers to spend more time delivering instruction that is aligned with district and state literacy standards, rather than focusing on intervention and remediation. Instruction that is aligned with grade level literacy standards and reinforced by effective HLEs will have a positive effect on literacy scores at the target site and raise the campus accountability rating, placing the campus in good academic standing within the district and state.

The implementation of this initiative may result in social change by increasing effective HLEs in low SES households which has been found to positively affect literacy skills in later school years (Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Su et al., 2017). Therefore, decreasing the high school dropout rate among low SES students and increasing high school graduation rates in Title I schools. High school graduation rates are also linked to higher college and trade school attendance, which is indicative of better employment opportunities. In conclusion, this pilot project has the potential to increase the education levels of students from low SES homes and create better opportunities for their success.

### **Importance of the Project in the Larger Context**

From the larger perspective, I believe that this project has the capacity to supply information and practices to educators, leaders, parents, and school boards. Based on the interviews with participants, participants desire for administrative leaders to support the development of teacher-parent collaborative programs. Teachers are ready for support from other stakeholders to strengthen students' literacy scores who qualify as low-income families. Parents who are experiencing the effects of Bourdieu's assumptions may think

that the pilot literacy project by collaboratively focusing on supporting parent involvement in the HLE through teacher-parent partnerships may be empowered and gain new insights on how to collaborate with the school staff to support their students. Leaders from other systems may observe the positive results of this pilot program and be encouraged with data obtained from the formative and goals-based evaluations and attempt to design their own literacy pilot programs to support literacy development in HLE through teacher-parent collaborative relationships, and targeted professional development for leaders, teachers, and parents.

### **Conclusion**

In Section 3, I discussed the purpose of this white paper, literature that supports the findings of the study, a description of the project and an analysis the findings related to the project genre. I also provided a detailed description of how the white paper would be presented to the stakeholders, and if adopted, how the recommendations could be implemented including a timeline for implementing the project. I designed the white paper project to inform and persuade stakeholders of feasible recommendations that will support the evolution of teacher-parent collaborative literacy strategies to address low literacy scores. The goals of the project are: (a) Educators will demonstrate an understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory related to the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement and barriers that hinder literacy development among low SES students and the systemic change process. (b) Educators will design and implement professional learning for campus personnel regarding effective teacher-parent collaboration methods. (c) Educators and parents will collaborate to design and

implement a pilot synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program to equip parents with literacy strategies that can be implemented in the HLE.

I presented literature related to the themes that were derived from the study. In the literature review I also discussed the white paper project genre and the growing use of white papers in the field of education. The use of white papers in education has reconstructed the stakeholders' expectations and the way secondary education has been delivered (Campbell et al., 2020; Crutchley, 2020). Early educational reform that was the result of English socialist and educationist, Shena Simon's idea of raising the school leaving age (Crutchley, 2020; Wright, 2017). Simon advocated for raising the school leaving age to 16 years of age to protect children from being pushed into the labor market without the appropriate skills (Crutchley, 2020). Hence, white papers have become more prevalent in the field of education in an effort to introduce new instructional practices to address low academic achievement and provide a more effective educational experience for children (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015).

I also included in the literature review, the need for stakeholders to engage in a pedagogical shift to implement the recommendations of the white paper effectively. The need for stakeholders to engage in a pedagogical shift would require changing stakeholders' views on literacy development from solely teacher-driven to developing a perspective that literacy can be developed through a collaborative teacher-parent approach to support students' reading development. The pedagogical shift process recommended for this project is based on the conceptual framework of a continuum of systemic change. Systemic change requires reconstructing current processes and

adjustments to all components of a system (Yusuf et al., 2016). At the current site the traditional methods used to address the problem of low literacy levels included interventions in the form of Reading Recovery, Reading Mastery, Neuhaus Phonics, and after school tutoring programs. However, the recommended systemic change is grounded in education change theory that describes the paradigm shift as a move from a traditional education system to active learning, collaborative decision making, interconnectedness, and greater levels of achievement (Yusuf et al., 2016).

To increase teacher-parent collaboration, parent involvement in student learning, and the develop effective HLEs a pedagogical shift must occur. Researchers have found that parent involvement in the learning process creates parental autonomy and student achievement is positively related to establishing effective HLEs (Demissie et al., 2020; Saracho, 2017). Therefore, teacher-parent collaboration and increasing parental literacy knowledge is significant in the effort to combat low literacy achievement among students in Title I schools. Consequently, educators must limit the barrier of time that plagues many low SES families due to long work hours. Therefore, I recommend synchronous and asynchronous virtual training options for parents to limit the barrier of time and educate parents on how to develop effective HLEs. Section 3 provided an overview of the literature that aligns with the findings of the study, recommendations from the white paper project, and an evaluation processes to assess the white paper and to determine if the project meets projected goals.

In Section 4, I reflect on the results, findings, and overall experience of conducting this study. I will also describe the strengths and limitations of the project,



alternative approaches to address the problem, alternative definitions, and solutions of the problem. Finally, I will reflect on my scholarship, project development, leadership and change as well as the importance of the work and implications for future research.

#### Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this doctoral study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies were perceived to improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. A gap in practice was highlighted in the literature review in Section 2. The gap in instructional practice illustrates a need to understand how a parent literacy support program that focuses on increasing the efficacy of HLEs might strengthen reading skills for low-SES students. In the following section, I review the project strengths and limitations, alternative approaches to address the problem, and alternative definitions. Finally, I reflect on the importance of the work and implications for future research and discuss my development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

#### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

This white paper is intended to inform stakeholders regarding the importance of a collaborative teacher–parent literacy support program that may strengthen HLEs, literacy development, and overall achievement among students at the target site. In addition, this may serve as a model of supporting literacy development for other Title I elementary schools. Collaboration among educators and low-SES parents is essential to the development of an effective HLE (Foster et al., 2016). Learner achievement is indicative of the type of support children receive in the HLE (Moe et al., 2018). This white paper emphasizes the importance of embracing a collaborative teacher–parent approach to supporting students' literacy development, which requires a pedagogical shift. The recommended pedagogical shift process is based on the conceptual framework of a

continuum of systemic change that would require reconstructing the current processes and making adjustments to all components of the current system (Yusuf et al., 2016). The findings of the study indicate that teachers need professional development on best practices for collaborating with parents. Educator participants indicated that teacher–parent collaboration is essential to ensure that strategies related to phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and comprehension are shared with parents to foster increasingly effective HLEs. Learning trajectories shift when teachers promote literacy activities and appropriate home literacy support is implemented (Bojczyk et al., 2019).

In this white paper, I also inform stakeholders about Bourdieu’s educational habitus theory and the constructs of the theory. Bourdieu explained how the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement is perpetuated in Title I schools by the lack of cultural capital possessed by low-SES families. Through the white paper presentation, stakeholders will learn that belief systems and cultural practices are largely responsible for reproducing disparities in educational outcomes and the importance of the recommended teacher professional development to build an effective teacher–parent collaborative relationship related to instructional literacy strategies in the home environment (see Hartas, 2012). In the white paper, I explain how cultural capital is vital to closing the achievement gap to the stakeholders (see Bourdieu, 1977). In this white paper, I encourage stakeholders to dive deeper into understanding the barriers that limit low-SES families’ ability to support their children’s literacy development and examine how collaborating with these families can help close the achievement gap. The effectiveness of teacher–parent collaboration for student learning is highlighted in the

white paper, presenting a solution in the form of a pilot parent literacy support training program for parents that could limit barriers that affect parents' ability to create effective HLEs (see Bono et al., 2016; Demissie et al., 2020). The recommended pilot parent literacy training program is designed to limit the barrier of time and space by offering the training virtually in a synchronous and asynchronous format.

The evaluation process is also a strength of the project. A fluid evaluation process will provide stakeholders the flexibility to modify and implement new collaborative literacy strategies and professional development content that meets the specific needs of their teachers and parents. The goal of an evaluation is to measure, learn, and understand (Berriet-Solliec et al., 2014). Therefore, stakeholders may use formative data to adjust the pilot program as they learn more about the needs of their target population. Strategies selected will also facilitate the stakeholders' freedom to adjust, accelerate, or intensify the white paper recommendations. The formative evaluation process will support administrators' and teachers' implementation of the pilot parent literacy support program and include parents in their children's learning process. An online formative evaluation at the end of the synchronous and asynchronous parent literacy support training will provide immediate feedback in terms of how the training met the intended objectives (Akbar et al., 2020). This will allow stakeholders to triangulate data and evaluate the process and content of the literacy intervention training, allowing for immediate changes to be made if necessary.

While this study highlighted the strengths associated with increasing teacher–parent collaboration related to student literacy development, achievement, and creating

effective HLEs, one challenge of this project may lie in allocating funding to provide literacy support as I recommended in the white paper to schools (Curry et al., 2016). Budget limitations could limit the implementation of a pilot parent literacy support program and hinder the inability of school personnel to provide the needed HLE resources to the parents for their students. Additionally, a lack of funding and resources could hamper financial compensation to staff for their additional duties related to developing and implementing parent training modules and teacher professional development. Another challenge related to teacher professional development could involve identifying the time in the school calendar for the extensive professional development in addition to the required professional development hours teachers are required to accrue during each contract year. The need for this additional professional development requiring additional hours of teachers' time may also create some resistance from the stakeholders in terms of adopting the recommendations and fully participating with an open mind. Resistance could ultimately sabotage the efforts to strengthen teacher–parent collaboration. To assimilate the new information, the pedagogical shift and systems change theory would be best facilitated by those with an open mind and those who are ready, willing, and able.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

If I were to design this study again, I would have collected data from a sample of educators that represented three different elementary Title I schools to provide a wider sample of participants and also to perhaps conduct a multiple case study analysis both within and across cases. A broader sample of participants from various elementary

schools may have improved transferability of the study results to other elementary schools in the target district (see Lodico et al., 2010). Another alternative approach would have been to seek parent participants who represented the target site to gain an understanding about their needs and desires related to teacher–parent collaboration, HLEs, and literacy support needs from their perspectives. The current study only provides data based on teacher perceptions, and I believe parent perceptions are important in an effort to address student literacy. Parent input and perspectives would have given Title I parents a voice and an opportunity to share what they perceive they need from teachers to support their children’s literacy development.

The problem addressed in the study was low reading levels in Title I schools. An alternative definition of the problem would be to consider the impact of poverty on HLEs. The alternative solution would be to seek the perceptions and needs of low-SES families and collaborate with the district that serves the community to develop a program to meet those needs. Alternative solutions could also be explored in early interventions for this population of students and year-round school programming for these students to keep the learning curve progressing for all at-risk learners from Title I elementary schools.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

Completing this study has increased my knowledge of the research process and the importance of peer-reviewed work. Prior to this process, I had limited knowledge related to research procedures and the requirements that ensure participant safety and privacy. I have been enlightened on the various checks and balances, such as the IRB

processes that ensure the validity of the research, protection of participants, procedures used by researchers, clarity of the data collection process, analysis of data, and quality of data including the findings. As an educator, I was familiar with the use of quantitative data as a means to determine how to address instructional problems; however, this process revealed that qualitative data play a major role in addressing and meeting instructional needs in education by exploring perceptions and needs of individuals who understand the problem the best; researchers have a rich view of the layers of possible issues with school systems.

In primary education, quantitative data in the form of test scores are often reviewed to determine when and where there is a need for change in instruction. However, I learned through this process that qualitative data provide insight about factors that affect quantitative data. I have learned that reviewing qualitative data can be very informative and provide insights from participants on strategies that may close literacy achievement gaps. This study provided an opportunity to obtain data related to literacy and the HLE needs of low-SES parents from educators' perspectives. The data revealed that effective HLEs are imperative to provide students an optimal learning opportunity. The themes revealed how HLEs must be aligned with current curriculum expectations to positively effect academic achievement. In the first literature review, the content examined in the studies aligned with the study data and challenges low-SES families face in creating effective HLEs. These studies underscored the intense support families need from school personnel. The content of the peer-reviewed studies enhanced the analysis of participant experience by highlighting ways to address teacher–parent collaboration for

literacy development. The exploration of teacher–parent collaboration often highlights parent involvement in social activities but rarely provides information related to teacher–parent collaboration related to educating parents on literacy intervention strategies to enhance the development of effective HLEs.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

The focus on literacy support and HLEs is important for educating primary students and the development skills for our emerging readers. The examination of parent partnerships, that can be created early in the student’s learning could be explored. Parent training programs could be initiated earlier in order to reach the students while they are young and have not started to experience school failure. Closing the achievement gap that is characteristic of low SES students will require creative thinking, working differently, and understanding the needs of students from all cultures and socioeconomic levels of life. Helping families develop strong HLEs is essential to making a difference in the literacy develop of our elementary children. Teacher-parent collaboration could also encourage parents to become more involved in their children’s learning process from an earlier age. Educating parents on literacy intervention strategies and providing resources to build HLEs has the potential to increase literacy skills and reading achievement. I wanted educators to share their thoughts on teacher-parent collaboration and what they believed the parents’ roles were in creating the optimal learning environment for their students. Obtaining teacher feedback and building upon these perspectives through reviewing literature, I gained insight on the importance of understanding Bourdieu’s



theory and how it affects parents and their students. To reach these students, we must reach the home and their parents, who are really their first teachers.

The framework selected to guide the research emphasized the role of SES status in the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement. While school districts are aware that SES is a factor in low academic achievement, I learned through research that most schools fail to include parents in efforts to address learning gaps, low academic achievement, and intervention support. The results of the study indicated the need to include parents, and all stakeholders in the effort to close the literacy achievement gap for this group of students. The review of literature and results of the study support providing parents training that teaches them how to implement literacy intervention strategies in the HLE. This study highlights the importance of parents' involvement in children's literacy development and their need to understand basic strategies for implementation in the HLE as well as how to collaborate with the school, access resources and to self-advocate.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

Home academic activities have a significant effect on the development of reading skills among children (Mendive et al., 2017). However funding may limit the ability for schools to develop effective collaborative teacher-parent home literacy support for children due to resources, pedagogical shifts, and finding time in district and school schedules to accommodate the training recommendations described. In order to implement these recommendations, current district budgets and Title I funds would to be reprioritized to support a parent literacy support training program, which would cut funding from other areas. Therefore, research on Title I funding and other educational

grants is recommended to determine creative ways of obtaining funds to support collaborative teacher-parent programs that will create effective HLEs and increase literacy development. Grant-writing may be one avenue of securing funds to begin initiation of these recommendations.

### **Potential Impact for Positive Social Change**

The potential impact for positive social change is the opportunity for low-SES parents to learn how to implement reading strategies, with the intention of strengthening the HLE, and increasing reading achievement overall. Providing parents of Title I students explicit training on how to implement literacy interventions may help change the academic dynamics within low SES families. Closing the learning gap by providing this type of intervention for low SES families has the potential to lower school dropout rates. Success in reading has been linked to success in school and positive attitudes towards learning. Emergent reading skills are linked to high school dropout rates. Subsequently, this intervention may increase high school and college graduation rates and lead to more employable adults, affecting positive change in society. In conclusion, this pilot project has the potential to increase parent knowledge of literacy strategies and primary literacy curriculum, while increasing literacy achievement of students and creating opportunities for their success. Additionally, teachers and other school personnel will become knowledgeable of the deeper needs of this population of students and their families by studying Bourdieu's theory. Understanding of the systemic change process may encourage educators to hold the course in the change process, rather than move away from the goals.

### **Methodological Implications**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher-parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-SES students' literacy skills at the target site. This study findings indicate that participants perceived that the gap in practice related to low-SES students' literacy could be influenced by ineffective HLEs that were not structured by parents to support literacy instruction. Participants perceived that supplementary literacy instruction for parents could foster literacy development in HLEs for elementary students. The results of the study described the need for teacher-parent collaboration that could provide additional support for parents to create effective HLEs. Recommendations based on the data collected were made and placed in the white paper project. In section 1 I described the gap in practice that provoked this study and the rationale for conducting this basic qualitative study. The framework of the study was grounded in Bourdieu's habitus theory, in which he explains how low academic achievement is reproduced among generations of low SES families. In Section 2 I described the methodology of a basic qualitative study and included details about the qualitative design, approach, and justification for the use of the basic qualitative design. In Section 3, I described the project and the goals that the white paper project is designed to accomplish.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Literacy development is essential to overall academic achievement and instruction must continue to shift to meet the changing needs of our youth. In today's society technology is imperative to learning due to the global pandemic that threatens the health

and safety of children. Therefore, future research should focus on the use of technology for emerging readers who are more likely to engage in online schooling to protect their health. More research must be conducted to develop online literacy curriculums that are conducive to the needs of emerging readers. Children who qualify for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are falling behind due to a lack of in-person instruction and limited web-based literacy programs that are designed to meet their needs. Future research should focus on online and web-based, evidence-based instructional best practices for emerging readers to limit literacy deficiencies among today's 3-5-year-old emerging readers and prepare them for a positive school experience related especially related to their literacy skills as students' experiences with literacy affect their perceptions of their overall school experiences.

### **Conclusion**

The research presented in this study examined participant perceptions of teacher parent-collaborative methods designed to yield home literacy support for elementary students that would enable parents to create effective HLEs and ultimately increase literacy achievement for this population of students. The research presented in this study provided evidence that low academic achievement is a result of reading deficiencies in primary education. Many low-SES students enter kindergarten at a disadvantage, lacking phonological skills and phonemic awareness, because their home literacy practices are not aligned with school practices (Curry et al., 2016). Other factors that influence academic achievement include teacher–parent collaboration, and parental ability to

provide effective academic engagement (Hemmerechts et al., 2017; Woods & Martin, 2016).

The recommendations as a result of the research study identify processes and programs that could be implemented to increase teacher-parent collaboration related to creating an optimal learning environment away from school that reinforces school curriculum in the student's home. The goals of the project were designed to inform educators on the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement in Title I schools related to socioeconomic status and collaboration with parents that create effective HLEs to reinforce the school literacy curriculum. When school personnel and parents in HLEs align literacy strategies and implementation of interventions for elementary students, literacy skills could be strengthened and as a result literacy achievement could improve. Literacy achievement is indicative of overall academic achievement. Therefore, it is imperative that emergent literacy skills are prioritized, and school personnel develop partnerships with parents to align the efforts of all stakeholders in an effort to close the learning gap in literacy for elementary low-SES students. Improving reading skills and increasing achievement for students at the elementary level, could result in increased school success, improved graduation rates, and improved access to higher education settings, thus providing more educational and career options and the potential to increase earning power and have an improved quality of life.

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## Appendix: The Project

### **Executive Summary**

This white paper is designed to address the problem of low reading levels for students in a research site, a Title I elementary school in our district. The purpose of this executive summary is to provide stakeholders on the study findings, and proposed recommendations for consideration. The objective of this white paper is to inform, persuade, and propose possible recommendations for the leadership team at the elementary site. Over 50% of student literacy scores have remained below the state standard from 2016 to 2019 at the elementary research site. Educational leaders at the target site empowered teachers and the librarian to implement various campus-level programs to address the issue of low reading levels. Accelerated Reader, Neuhaus Phonics, Corrective Reading, Reading Readiness, parent university, targeted reading interventions, and after school tutoring were programs implemented to increase reading achievement of students at the research site. Despite the implementation of these various programs, reading scores have remained below state standards. Students from low-income families demonstrate language and cognitive development deficits during early childhood, which negatively affects their overall academic performance throughout their school years (Barreto et al., 2017).

The findings of a basic qualitative study indicate a need for strengthening teacher-parent collaboration to support students' literacy skills and a need to implement a parent literacy support program to develop effective home learning environments. Based on the

educational habitus theory, cultural practices and beliefs deter impoverished communities from providing effective educational strategies for their youth outside of formal educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu explained that socioeconomic groups vary in the educational habitus (lack of reading and home academic support) due to access to intellectual resources and cultural capital vital for providing an effective home learning environment. As a result, the achievement gap widens for this population of students and the gap in reading or other skills is perpetuated due to the influence of how habitus theory affects students from low SES backgrounds. Therefore, educators' must interface with parents and strengthen home academic engagement in order to develop primary reading skills and strengthen parents' knowledge of how to support their students' literacy development. Based on the findings of the study and research on pedagogical shifts and systemic change, I determined that a pilot program that incorporates parent literacy support training and teacher professional development that focuses on collaboration methods with parents is needed to increase literacy achievement at the target Title I campus. The three recommendations are: (a) Develop and implement a collaborative pilot parent literacy support training program, (b) Implement professional development for educators related to effective teacher-parent collaboration methods based on the premise of the Bourdieu's educational habitus theory to create a new literacy-based pedagogy, (c) engage staff in pedagogical shift process to facilitate parent training program, and (d) engage in comprehensive evaluation of parent pilot literacy program and implement needed revisions.

The parent learning modules could include both asynchronous and synchronous training options. A pedagogical shift relies on the collaborative efforts of educational leaders, teachers, vested community organizations, and parents of students who will be affected by the new system. Shared decision-making fosters commitment to the new system and intensifies collaborative efforts that lead to the development of more advanced systems to address the literacy problem that has plagued this Title I school for the past 5 years.

The first section of the white paper will provide the findings of the qualitative study. The second section of the position paper will provide recommendations based on the findings from the qualitative study. The recommendations are based on a both the study findings, literature, Bourdieu's assumptions on habitus theory and a systems change framework to support the pedagogical shift related to how educators collaborate more deeply with parents including the design and delivery of a parent pilot literacy training program at the research site.



### A White Paper with Recommendations

*A white paper with recommendations to the Southern School District leadership and elementary campus executive leadership, regarding collaborative teacher and a parent training program to improve low socioeconomic students' literacy skills. An executive summary of the study findings, rationale, and recommendations are encapsulated in the executive summary.*

This white paper addresses the problem of low reading levels in a Title I elementary school. The recommendations in this white paper are based on the findings of a basic qualitative study I conducted that indicate a need for strengthening teacher-parent collaboration to support students' literacy skills and a need to develop a parent literacy support program to develop effective home learning environments. The purpose of the study was to examine educators' perceptions of teacher-parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies were perceived to improve low socioeconomic students' literacy skills at the target site. In order to address literacy needs of Title I students I propose recommendations based on the findings of the study for educator professional development related to effective teacher-parent collaboration methods and a pilot synchronous and asynchronous parent literacy support training program at the research site. The goals of the project are: (a) Educators will demonstrate an understanding of Bourdieu's habitus theory related to the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement and barriers that hinder literacy development among Title I students and the systemic change process. (b) Campus leaders will design and implement professional learning for campus personnel regarding effective teacher-parent collaboration methods. (c) Educators and parents will collaborate to design and implement a synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training program to equip

parents with literacy strategies that can be implemented in the home learning environment.

### **Background**

Students from low-income families demonstrate language and cognitive development deficits during early childhood, which negatively affects their overall academic performance throughout their school years (Barreto et al., 2017). Inner-city schools that have large populations of disadvantaged students who lack outside support and resources qualify for federal assistance under Title I (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Furthermore, Title I provide extra instructional and social resources to school campuses to ensure low-income students an equitable opportunity (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The standard criteria for Title I used by the U.S. Department of Education (2018) to determine which schools receive funding under Title I is that at least 40% of the student population are economically disadvantaged. In 2019, the percentage of low socioeconomic status students at the research site was 97.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2019).

### **The Problem**

The problem at the research site was that over 50% of student literacy scores have remained below the state standard between 2016 and 2019. The problem has persisted despite the implementation of several reading interventions and a parent university program to enhance parent literacy support in the home. The gap in practice was that despite numerous, targeted reading interventions, students had not made measurable gains, and it was unknown how a parent literacy support program that focused on

increasing home literacy support might strengthen reading skills for this population. Therefore, I conducted research to investigate educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration related to the home learning environment.

At the target elementary site, more than 50% of all students in kindergarten through fifth grade have been reading below grade level and scored below the state standard in Reading between 2016 and 2019 (see Table 1). In 2016, 47% of all students in 3rd through 5th grade scored proficient in reading, below state standardized testing requirements (Texas Education Agency, 2016). The following year, in 2017, test scores for students in reading for 3rd through 5th grade dropped, and only 42% of this student population met the state proficiency standard (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Reading scores for this population increased the following 2 years. In 2018 and 2019, students' proficient literacy scores in 3rd through 5th grade were 52% and 56%, respectively, and the campus obtained a Met Standard state accountability rating for both academic years (Texas Education Agency, n.d.-a, 2018, 2019). Although the campus obtained an acceptable accountability rating in 2018 and 2019, students' reading scores were still below the district average (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Grades 3–5 Percentage of Students Scoring Proficiency in Reading on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness, by Target Site and District*

School year	Target school	District	Gap
2015-2016	47	62	-15
2016-2017	42	62	-20
2017-2018	52	65	-13
2018-2019	56	64	-8

Note. Data source: School Report Cards, by the Texas Education Agency, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport>

The rationale for the study was that there is a gap in literacy skills, indicative of low reading levels as assessed by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) standardized reading exam at the target site. Educational leaders at the target site empowered teachers and the librarian to implement various campus-level programs to address the issue of low reading levels. Accelerated Reader, Neuhaus Phonics, Corrective Reading, Reading Readiness, and after school tutoring were programs implemented to increase reading achievement of students at the target site. Despite the implementation of these various programs, reading scores have remained below state standards since 2016 (Texas Education Agency, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Although school staff implemented various interventions focused on improving reading skills, students continued to demonstrate insufficient progress on state assessments.

Effective home learning environments support children’s literacy development and cognitive competencies throughout early childhood (Bono et al., 2016; Niklas et al., 2016a; Niklas & Schneider, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine educators’ perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy

in the home and how these strategies may improve Title I students' literacy skills. Students from low socioeconomic environments are often characterized by having parents with low education levels and little, or no literacy support in the home (Bellibas, 2016; Hemmereichs et al., 2017). The conceptual framework of the study was rooted in the educational habitus theory, authored by Bourdieu, who explains that low academic achievement among Title I elementary students is a generational, reproductive cycle (Hemmereichs et al., 2017).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of the study was rooted in sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's educational habitus theory. Bourdieu explains that individuals are socialized in their respective communities how to think and respond toward societal institutions, such as the school system (see Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu explained the reproductive cycle of low academic achievement in the educational habitus theory. The constructs of the theory are low parental education level, limited access to reading resources, and cultural preferences and behaviors (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Each component of this theory has the potential to limit the ability of parents to engage in effective home learning activities that develop essential reading skills. Bourdieu theorized that children's socialization is conditioned by family socioeconomic status. Bourdieu stresses that children's experiences prior to entering school influence their school performance once they reach the age to begin public schooling. Consequently, Bourdieu theorized that these experiences influence how they are able to build upon academic skills and school practices (Bourdieu, 1977).

According to the educational habitus theory, Bourdieu uses the concept of cultural capital to explain the reproductive cycle of low academic outcomes. The term cultural capital can be described in three constructs: “ the embodied form, the objectified form, and the institutionalized forms” (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016, p. 272). The embodied form refers to cultural values, behavior, and skills. The objectified form consists of physical goods, such as books and property; the institutionalized form consists of education, qualifications, or academic degrees (Cheng & Kaplowitz, 2016). Based on the educational habitus theory, cultural practices and beliefs deter impoverished communities from providing effective educational strategies for their youth outside of formal educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu explained that socioeconomic groups vary in the educational habitus (lack of reading and home academic support) due to access to intellectual resources and cultural capital vital for providing an effective home learning environment. As a result, the achievement gap widens for this population of students and the gap in reading or other skills is perpetuated due to the influence of how habitus theory affects students from low SES backgrounds. Therefore, educators’ must interface with parents and strengthen home academic engagement in order to develop primary reading skills and strengthen parents’ knowledge of how to support their students’ literacy development. The findings of this study resulted in key recommendations that I present in this white paper.

### **Synopsis of the Study**

This basic qualitative study examined educators’ perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home and how these strategies may improve low-

socioeconomic students' literacy skills at the research site. I conducted 11 face-to-face, video conference, semistructured interviews with educators who were assigned to the research site. Interviews were conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a safety measure. Participants were educators who had experience teaching literacy skills or reading in prekindergarten through fifth grade at the target site or had experience facilitating or supervising the target site's campus literacy program.

The study included one overarching question and two research questions. The central research question of the study was the following:

Central RQ: What evidence of Bourdieu's educational habitus theory emerges from educators' collaborative efforts with parents of Title I students?

Title I students are students who qualify for free and reduced lunch based on the family income. Based on Bourdieu's educational habitus conceptual framework that the cycle of low academic achievement for students is related to parental lack of knowledge of how to effectively administer academic learning activities in the home and having being deficit of the cultural capital knowledge and skills that support individuals in navigating institutions like school systems. The two subquestions were:

1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3–5?
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5? reflects the correlation between the research questions and the interview questions.

**Table 2***Relation of Interview Questions to Research Questions*

Research question	Interview question
1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	1. What are your perceptions about teacher–parent collaboration in regard to student learning? 5. Describe your experiences with educator–parent collaborations related to home literacy support. 6. What is your perception about teacher and parent needs to create and implement a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program? 7. What is your perception about leadership support for a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program to be implemented? 8. What is your perception about needed resources and professional development for a collaborative teacher–parent home literacy-support program to be implemented and maintained? 9. What resources for reading professional development may be needed to support parent attendance and engagement in teacher–parent collaborative programs?
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	2. How do you perceive a parent's role in their student's literacy development? 3. What do you perceive to be a barrier(s) that may hinder a parent's ability to provide home literacy support? 4. How do you perceive parents' advocacy for their student in terms of their reading skills and progress?

**Findings of the Study**

Interview Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were designed to address Research Question 1. Interview Questions 2, 3, and 4 were designed to address Research Question 2. There was a total of four themes that emerged overall. For Research Question 1, the two themes were related to training and leadership. For Research Question 2, the two themes that emerged were related to cultural capital and parent education level affecting



parent ability to provide literacy support in the home environment. Research Questions 1 and 2 were proposed to examine the educators' perceptions of (a) implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy, and (b) the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy for low socioeconomic students in Grades 3–5. The potential strategies of how to construct and implement collaboration between educators and parents to support literacy development were explored in relation to cultural capital. In addition, I sought to understand educators' perception of the barriers and benefits or advantages of collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy. Table 3 lists each research question, the interview questions associated with each research question, and the themes derived for each research question.

**Table 3**

*Research Themes by Research Question and Interview Questions*

Research question	Interview questions	Research Themes
1. What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-socioeconomic status (SES) students in Grades 3–5?	Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	Theme 1: Teacher professional development and parent home literacy-support training are needed. Theme 2: Leadership influence and support are essential.
2. What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low-SES students in Grades 3–5?	Questions 2, 3, and 4	Theme 3: Cultural capital affects home literacy support. Theme 4: Limited parent knowledge of literacy strategies hinders literacy development.

***Results for Research Question 1***

What are educators' perceptions of implementing teacher–parent collaboration strategies for enhancing literacy within the home for low-SES students in Grades 3–5? Two themes emerged from the data analysis of results from Interview Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. First, participants perceived that professional development and parent home literacy-support training are needed. Second, participants also perceived that leadership influence and support are essential to redefine collaboration teacher-parent collaboration and to implement changes to support the development of parent training program. The first theme indicated teachers need professional development on how to effectively collaborate with parents; educators need to be able to provide parent trainings on home literacy support.

I asked interview participants how they perceived parents' role in the literacy development of their children, and 100% of participants viewed parents as a child's first and most influential teacher. Participant 4 stated, "Parents should be just as involved in learning as the teacher." Participant 2 added, "Parents should be hands on and engaged in the curriculum and skills being taught." Participants indicated that all children should enter formal schooling with emerging literacy skills when they receive appropriate home literacy support. Participant 7 added, "Reading begins at home before children ever start formal schooling." However, the way parents view and prioritize education determines whether or not a child enters formal schooling with the appropriate level of literacy skills.

Theme 1: Teacher Professional Development and Parent Home Literacy-Support Training Are Needed. The first theme indicated that educators perceived teacher–parent

collaborative efforts as nonexistent and that the lack of a cohesive approach to support the students' reading development was a major factor in low reading levels among students who qualified as low socioeconomic status at the target site. Participants perceived that professional development was needed for teachers on how to communicate and collaborate with parents and should also be a district-wide expectation across all grade levels.

Theme 2: Leadership Influence and Support Are Essential. Participants agreed that district leadership is essential to the development of progressive collaborative efforts between teachers and parents. Participants' perceptions supported collaboration between teachers, district, and campus-level administrators in developing an effective home literacy-support program. All participants expressed that district leaders should take the lead in marketing the expectation of teacher–parent collaboration and facilitating home literacy-strategy training for parents to increase home literacy support. Educators perceived that low literacy scores among students at the target site were a direct reflection of district leaders' failure to encourage home literacy-support training for parents.

Theme 3: Cultural Capital Affects Home Literacy Support. Participants agreed that home literacy support training for parents is imperative to eradicate the reproduction cycle of low literacy skills in Title I schools. However, the way parents view and prioritize education determines whether or not a child enters formal schooling with the appropriate level of literacy skills. Educator participants supported the idea of sharing literacy strategies with parents to help develop low socioeconomic students' literacy skills at the target site. Participants agreed that low reading scores among students in

Title I schools are due to financial limitations that force parents to focus on basic needs and a parental lack of knowledge of how to provide literacy support in the home. This theme aligned with Bourdieu's educational habitus theory; information from educator interviews affirmed that low academic achievement and low literacy development in the target site were related to parents' lack of access to educational resources and home literacy strategies.

Theme 4: Limited Parent Knowledge of Literacy Strategies Hinders Literacy Development. Educators indicated parents had limited knowledge about literacy strategies and how to provide effective home literacy support. Data indicated that parent home literacy support training is necessary to build a collaborative literacy community among educators and parents, to increase reading levels among Title I students. The examination of educators' perceptions of teacher–parent collaboration to support literacy in the home indicated that the development of a parent literacy-support training program was perceived to increase literacy scores among low socioeconomic students and eradicate the cycle of low academic achievement among students in Title I schools. Based on the findings of the study and research on pedagogical shifts and systemic change, I determined that a pilot program that incorporates parent literacy support training and teacher professional development that focuses on collaboration methods with parents is needed to increase literacy achievement at the target Title I campus.

### **Results for Research Question 2**

What are educators' perceptions about the advantages and barriers to fostering collaboration with parents as a means to promote home-based literacy among low

socioeconomic students in Grades 3–5? Two themes emerged from the data analysis of responses to Interview Questions 2, 3, and 4 for Research Question 2. Theme 3 was that participants perceived cultural capital affects the level of literacy support parents provide to their children. In the next section, I describe Theme 3, followed by a discussion of Theme 4 that participants perceived parents’ lack of knowledge regarding literacy strategies to use with their students effected students’ literacy progress.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations of this white paper are based on the findings of the study and research on pedagogical shifts. Study findings indicated a need for a change in how literacy support services are delivered, and a need for more teacher-parent collaboration to increase the efficacy of home literacy environments.

#### **Recommendation 1: Parent Literacy Support Program**

The first recommendation is to develop and implement a collaborative pilot parent literacy support training program. A pilot program should be considered at the target site to evaluate the process and results at the end of the first year of implementation. In order to begin the pilot implementation, educators should conduct a needs assessment to

“There must be a profound recognition that parents are the first teachers, and that education begins before formal schooling and is deeply rooted in the values, traditions, and norms of family and culture.”

*Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot*

determine specific literacy support needs of the schools’ parent population. The needs assessment will provide parent perceptions of the areas in which parent knowledge is limited related to literacy development and intervention, Consequently, the information obtained from the needs assessment will facilitate the design of specific content for the

parent literacy support training. Therefore, presenting a canvas for educators to develop a training program that meets the home learning environment, literacy support needs of parents to support their students.

The campus planning committee and campus literacy teachers should collaborate to develop asynchronous literacy support learning modules for parent literacy training. Literacy teachers understand the literacy curriculum and content that students must master, therefore they are qualified to develop parent literacy support activities that will align with the curriculum and meet parent home literacy support needs. The parent learning modules should be used for both the asynchronous and synchronous training options. Campus administrators may assign specific literacy teachers to serve as training facilitators for the synchronous training to guide the training and support parents' understanding of the model for literacy interventions. Synchronous trainings should occur twice a year with one synchronous session scheduled at the beginning of the year and another synchronous session scheduled during the middle of the year. The synchronous format will allow parents to participate with other parents. The teacher facilitator, who will facilitate the training through a virtual platform, will also serve to provide a sense of community and build relationships.

The asynchronous training option will use the same learning modules as the synchronous format and will provide videos for parents that contain teachers modeling a variety of literacy interventions. A link to the asynchronous learning modules should be placed on the campus website making it conveniently available at all times to the parent community. Asynchronous training will allow parents the opportunity to take advantage

of the learning modules at times that are most convenient for them. The asynchronous training will be organized to provide an opportunity for parents to email a training facilitator for clarity if they should have questions about literacy strategies presented in the learning modules. This pilot program should be implemented at the beginning of the academic year and sustained throughout the school year to provide adequate time for parents to take advantage of the asynchronous literacy support training and to allow time for the teacher-parent collaborative efforts to thrive.

The planning committee will collaborate with campus literacy teachers to develop the synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents. An ongoing evaluation of the parent training should be embedded into the parent training online that allows sessions parents attend, and time of day attended to be evaluated. Also, training completion data, and student literacy assessments should be conducted to determine the efficacy of the parent literacy support program. An end of year evaluation of these data should be analyzed to determine refinements and alterations that could be made to strengthen the pilot program and to support discussions of whether the pilot program should be continued at the target site or extended to other elementary schools throughout the district. Table 4 provides a tentative timetable for implementation of the parent literacy support training program and teacher professional development.

**Table 4***Timetable for Implementation*

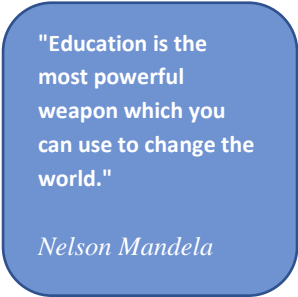
Recommendation	Time Frame
Appoint planning committee members for pilot  include campus literacy teachers, instructional specialists, and the data analyst	2 weeks
Design professional development curriculum for educators	6 weeks
Committee will collaborate with campus literacy teachers to develop the synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents	6 weeks
Campus Planning Committee assigns literacy teachers to serve as training facilitators for synchronous trainings	1 week
Implement synchronous and asynchronous literacy training support modules for parents	On-going once developed
Campus administrators and campus planning committee will deliver and implement professional development Campus professional learning communities for teachers across all content area	12 weeks
Campus Leadership team and Planning Committee evaluate professional development and parent training modules and overall white paper pilot project	6-weeks

***Evidence***

Researchers have established that family support and environment may affect the literacy development of young students more than the school environment since students



spend most of their time in the home (Van Bergen et al., 2016). Parents significantly influence literacy development just as they influence personality development; Mothers have been found to play a vital role in a student's literacy development, sometimes to a greater degree than the teacher (Merga, 2017). Study findings have established that children have more academic success in school if they have a home learning environment where someone reads to them regularly (Van Bergen et al., 2016). The more readers that there are in the home has also been shown to influence literacy development (Knoester & Pilkuhn; 2016). Children who experience a home learning environment where literacy work is a focus develop a more positive attitude towards literacy (Van Bergen et al., 2016). One of the most critical components of building literacy in students is how parents and students interact with literacy beginning at early ages (Tavsanli & Bulunuz, 2017).



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

*Nelson Mandela*

Parents' approach to literacy with their student in the home has been shown to influence the student's attitude and perspective on literacy and school (Inoue, et al., 2018). Resources to support literacy in the home environment also influence the activities and opportunities that parents have to support literacy development in the home. The socio-cultural differences that stem from home learning environments have been found have a significant effect on the development of literacy in students elementary years (Tavsanli et al., 2017). In one study the findings showed that parents' knowledge of literacy, attitude towards literacy, the number of readers in the home, overall experiences in school, parent characteristics and verbal communication with the student were

perceived were critical factors that influenced the home learning environment (Tavsanlı et al., 2017). A family that deliberately supports the literacy development of their student in the home has been shown to significantly affect the student's literacy development.

### **Recommendation 2: Design Teacher Professional Development**

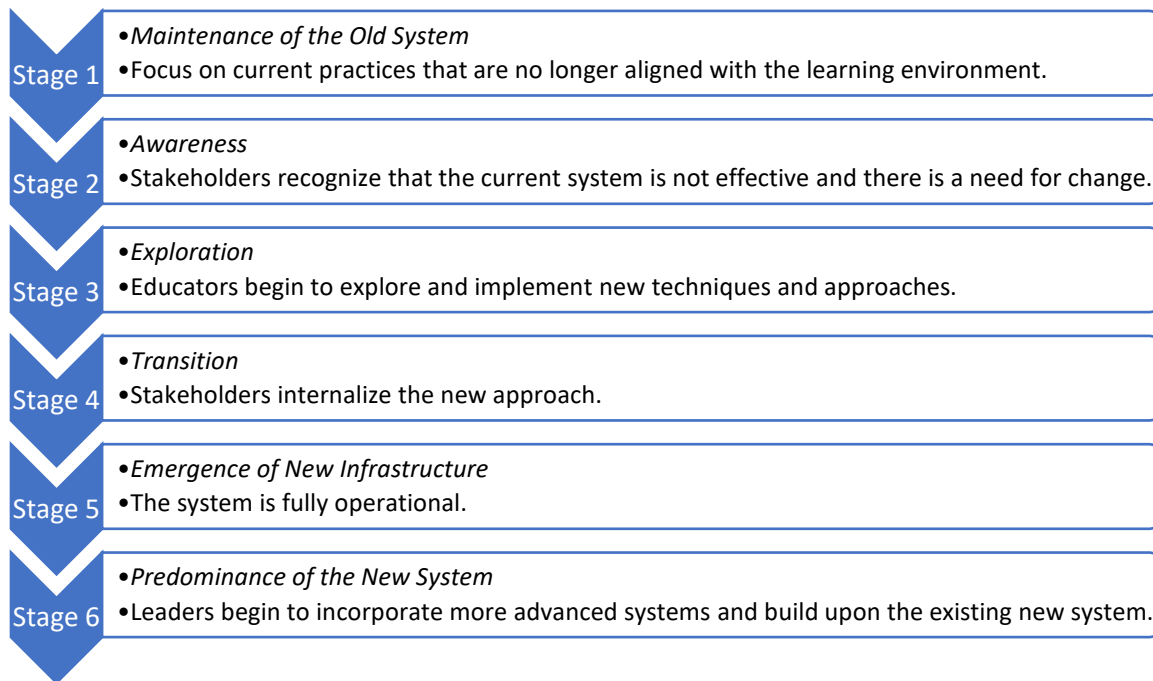
*The elementary site personnel should develop and implement professional development for educators related to effective teacher-parent collaboration methods based on the premise of the Bourdieu's educational habitus theory to create a new literacy-based pedagogy. A campus planning committee will develop the professional development curriculum for teacher-parent collaboration methods training. This professional development will be delivered to educators during campus professional learning communities across all content areas. Presenting teacher-parent best practices, collaborative methods training across all content areas will help construct a united approach to instruction .*

This literacy-based pedagogy will be characterized by collaborative teacher-parent practices to shift the habitus of the Title I school environment and possible perceptions of home learning environments of students in the Title I school. Shifting to a united teacher-parent approach requires a pedagogical shift. Stakeholders rely on personnel to support implementation efforts of new practices. The pilot parent literacy model and recommendations for teacher professional development represent a change in present practices. A pedagogical shift relies on the collaborative efforts of educational leaders, teachers, vested community organizations, and parents of students who will be affected by the new system. Stakeholders who will be affected by the new system must

be involved in the development of the new system. Shared decision-making fosters commitment to the new system and intensifies collaborative efforts that lead to the development of more advanced systems to address the literacy problem that has plagued this Title I school for the past 5 years. Therefore, a pedagogical shift process that is based on the conceptual framework of a continuum of systemic change is recommended to influence a united teacher-parent approach to literacy support.

### ***Engage Staff in Pedagogical Shift Process***

To implement a Parent Training program to develop parents' knowledge and develop their literacy skills to strengthen the home learning environment, a pedagogical shift will need to be facilitated with staff and parents regarding how students gain literacy skills and also how educators may collaborate with parents regarding their student's literacy development. Thus, understanding both Bourdieu's habitus theory and how it affects the cultural capital of parents and how the parents' involvement and support of their students is influenced by this cycle is critical. In addition, educators will need to have an understanding of systemic change. The recommendations in this white paper represent changes to present structures and ways of collaborating with parents and how educators approach literacy development for students. Systemic change consists of reconstructing the current processes and adjustments to all components of a system (Yusuf et al., 2016). The continuum of systemic change consists of six stages that guide pedagogical shifts (Yusuf et al., 2016). Figure 1 is designed to reflect the six stages of change process.

**Figure 1***Six Stages of Change Theory*

Change is difficult for some people. Therefore, it is helpful to have some basis of knowledge of how change may occur and how the change process may affect individuals participating in the initiated change. In this section, I explain the six stages of Yusuf's change theory. Stage one, *Maintenance of the Old System* focuses on current practices that are no longer aligned with the learning environment. In stage two, *Awareness*, stakeholders recognize that the current system is not effective and there is a need for change. In the third stage, *Exploration*, educators begin to explore and implement new techniques and approaches used by other institutions and after success with preliminary tasks, there is a move to the fourth stage, *Transition*. In the transition stage stakeholders internalize the new approach and engage in changes that are in more critical areas of the

continuum of change which leads to stage five, *The Emergence of New Infrastructure*. During this stage, the new system is fully operational and has gained buy-in by all stakeholders. After obtaining stakeholder acceptance and buy in, the final stage of the [pedagogical] shift manifests. *Predominance of the New System*, consists of implementing more paramount elements of the new structure and leaders begin to incorporate more advanced systems and build upon the existing new system (Yusuf et al., 2016).

### ***Evidence***

Professional development is often used to support educators in making changes to improve strategies, interventions or processes to improve student outcomes. Teachers change when they see results in their classroom in terms of student change or parent

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence is the goal of true education.”  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

change (Guskey, 2014). While improving student literacy is a key focus of this white paper, teachers also consider changes in student attitudes towards school, reading learning, behavior and attendance as possible results that would signal to them that the professional development is successful (Guskey, 2014). For change to gather traction, there must be agreement on the vision and rationale for the change (Savage & Pollard, 2016). Stakeholders should create benchmarks for the change and the change process should be planned with the input of the stakeholders (Savage & Pollard, 2016). Teachers are looking for changes of some kind to demonstrate success or effectiveness of a new model or intervention when considered for implementation (Guskey, 2014). Teachers who have been teaching for a

number of years use instructional practices that they think work for them and thus the introduction of new methods or ways of thinking creates a need to consider the new information and assimilate the new pedagogical approach or thinking into their existing belief systems because existing systems will be modified as new endeavors and innovations are integrated into the educational system (Parsi & Darling-Hammond, 2015). The pilot program implementing targeted parent training related to literacy for students from low SES backgrounds will be perceived as a shift in how practices have been typically implemented related to literacy instruction for students. Therefore, providing teachers with the body of knowledge related to Bourdieu's theory and the model for systemic change will influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Guskey, 2014). Teachers attitudes and beliefs have been shown to change only when implementation of the new strategies results in student improvement. Change is gradual and challenging. Close collaboration with teachers and the implementors is one way to facilitate the change process. Evaluating the change during and after the complete change cycle for the pilot program implementation is important to identify revisions in the content, or process used for the pilot implementation process for the second year of implementation at the study site.

Using adult learning models to plan the PD is central to the success and educators' reception to the content and pedagogical shift related to literacy and the need to strengthen the HLE and improve parents' understanding of literacy development for their student. Components of adult learning and the design of PD proposed for educators proposed by Ufnar and Shepherd (2019) were that the following elements should be

included: (a) discipline content knowledge, (b) pedagogical content, (c) inquiry strategies, and (d) collaboration time. The findings of these researchers were that when PD included these elements, teachers reported a sense of renewal and also reported that pedagogical changes were supported (Ufnar & Shepherd, 2019). Evaluation of the pilot program is also central to the change process and to implementing an innovation such as a parent literacy training program accompanied by educator PD related to pedagogical, systems change process, and Bourdieu's habitus theory.

### **Recommendation 3: Comprehensive Evaluation of Parent Pilot Literacy Program**

A fluid evaluation process is recommended to review the efficacy of the pilot parent literacy training program and teacher professional development. In pilot projects or initiation of innovations, it is important to obtain feedback on the process used to implement the change and the content provided through professional development and other avenues (see Akbar et al., 2020). This will provide opportunities to implement new collaborative literacy strategies and to modify professional development. Stakeholders may use formative data to adjust the pilot program, strategies selected will also facilitate the stakeholders' freedom to adjust, accelerate, or intensify the recommendations. The formative evaluation process will support administrators and teachers' implementation of the pilot parent literacy support program and include parents in their children's learning process. Parents who participate in the literacy support training program will complete an online formative evaluation at the end of the synchronous and asynchronous literacy support training to provide immediate feedback about the literacy interventions they received in terms of how the training met the intended objectives specified at the outset

of the training module. All data obtained will be triangulated to evaluate the process, and content of the literacy intervention training. If these data indicate a need for change in delivery, changes can be made immediately by updating the virtual training modules.

The main goals of evaluation are to measure, to learn and to understand (Berriet-Sollicec et al., 2014). Additional data that will be used to evaluate whether this pilot program met the program goals. Formative data will include: (a) student literacy assessment data throughout the academic year, (b) parent participation and feedback of the literacy support training program, (c) parent feedback related home learning environments and teacher-parent collaboration, and (d) teacher feedback related to the professional development to implement the pilot program including the process used to implement the pilot program. The goals-based evaluation and formative assessment evaluation data, along with other data collection points determined by the pilot project committee will be triangulated to assess the goals of the pilot program. These data will be helpful in refining the pilot program on an annual basis. The evaluation data from the formative assessments and from the goals-based evaluation at the end of the first year of implementation can be summarized and shared with the stakeholders through faculty and parent meetings and electronic avenues, such as the campus website. Overall, the combination of formative assessment, goals-based evaluation and the collection of campus data will be used to evaluate the overall pilot project at the target site. The evaluation will be used to support stakeholders' implementation of the second year of the pilot program at the research site.



## *Evidence*

Evaluating the process used to implement the pilot parent literacy training program, including the content of change theory, parent collaboration, and Bourdieu's habitus theory to the teachers in order to develop their knowledge and skills, as well as obtaining parents' feedback on the asynchronous and synchronous parent literacy

"Teachers support evaluations based on multiple measures: student growth, classroom observation and feedback from peers and parents."  
*Arne Duncan*

sessions to enrich the home learning environment is essential to evaluate this pilot program and recommended process (see Akbar et al., 2020). Additionally, with change processes, evaluating the process used and how the stakeholders valued and perceived the usefulness the activities and committee work is also critical for monitoring and adjusting the parent pilot literacy project. In order to measure, learn and understand, the planning committee at the study site will guide the evaluation process transparently to secure further buy-in by stakeholders and to strengthen the overall process used and recommendations made in this white paper to support the collaborative literacy endeavors (Berriet-Sollicet et al., 2014). This white paper contains a goal-based evaluation to examine whether the goals of the pilot were achieved. The process for implementation of innovations is also critical for deeper adoption of the pedagogical changes involving how literacy development is approached at the study campus. Stakeholder feedback from all participants will support the refinement of the literacy process for year two and also facilitate the consistent evolution of the recommendations to support students' overall literacy growth through

Education is a process, not an event.  
*Anonymous*

parent training and teachers' deeper understanding of change and Bourdieu's habitus theory.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this white paper was to present alternative solutions to address the problem of low reading levels at the target Title I school. Literature was presented to support the need for stakeholders to engage in a pedagogical shift to implement the recommendations of the white paper effectively. It is imperative that stakeholders embrace a pedagogical shift that requires developing a perspective that literacy can be developed through a collaborative teacher-parent approach to support students' reading development. The pedagogical shift process recommended for this project is based on the conceptual framework of a continuum of systemic change that requires reconstructing the current processes and making adjustments to all components of the current system (Yusuf et al., 2016).

To increase teacher-parent collaboration, parent involvement in student learning, and develop effective home learning environments, a pedagogical shift must occur. Researchers have found that parent involvement in the learning process creates parental autonomy and student achievement is positively related to establishing effective home learning environments (Demissie et al., 2020; Saracho, 2017). Therefore, teacher-parent collaboration and increasing parent literacy strategy knowledge is critical in the effort to combat low literacy achievement among students in Title I schools. Consequently, educators must limit the barrier of time that plague many Title I school families due to long work hours. Therefore, I recommend synchronous and asynchronous virtual training

options for parents as a way to limit the barrier of time and educate parents with specific literacy strategies to develop effective home learning environments that effectively support student literacy. Additionally, expanding educators' knowledge of Bourdieu's habitus theory and change theory will expand stakeholders' perspectives to perhaps reflect on the challenges students and their families experience in Title I schools. Finally, using Bourdieu's theory and the model of systemic change will inform the stakeholders on the change process itself related to parents' learning of new literacy strategies, using new technology for training via synchronous and asynchronous models, and expanding professional development for educators regarding effective collaboration and communication strategies for educators to use to engage with families in Title I communities.

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