

2022

Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives on Parent Empowerment to Successfully Transition Children to Formal School

TaWanda Randolph
Walden University

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TaWanda S. Randolph

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives on Parent Empowerment to Successfully
Transition Children to Formal School

by

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MA, Bethel University, McKenzie, Tennessee 2011

BS, University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

January 2022

Abstract

Researchers have suggested that empowered parents may be more helpful successfully transitioning children to formal school. The problem investigated in this basic qualitative study was that educators located in a Southern region of the United States were not empowering parents with the knowledge, skills, and sense of self to become engaged in their children's educational transitioning needs. This study also addressed a gap in practice consisting of school stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to build their capacities to successfully transition children to formal school. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's parent empowerment theory framed this study. The research questions investigated the early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school and how the early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants consisting of four parents, four program administrators, and four teachers from six programs. Data analysis consisted of holistic coding to reveal words, phrases, patterns, categories, and themes. Findings of the study suggested that educators empower parents in the following ways: (a) providing parent education that empowers parents, (b) communicating for understanding that encourages engaged stakeholders, (c) offering center and community networks and activities that support informed advocates, and (d) establishing mutually supportive relationships that encourage collaborative partnerships. Findings contribute to positive social change by giving stakeholders greater awareness of their critical roles in empowering parents with the capacities to prepare their children for formal school transition.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all early childhood professionals committed to the "heart" work of ensuring children are cared for and are given the best, positive memories from quality child care settings every day. I dedicate this work to the parents of our youngest children. My heart desires that early childhood stakeholders, educators, and your communities provide you with the tools to be empowered to be all your children are counting on you to be. I dedicate this work, diligent commitment, and many sacrifices to my first GrandLove. Remember to put God first in any and everything you set your hands to do, and if it's His will, you will have your heart's desires. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my beloved grandmother, "Momma Lou", who started this doctoral journey with me but entered eternal sleep before completion. She instilled values in me from a child that molded me into the woman I am today. I always smiled and it made my heart glad whenever she would say, "I sure am proud of you, TaWanda." I hear her even now. To God be the glory!

Acknowledgments

I first thank God for His unfailing grace and mercy, for His faithfulness, and His provisions along this journey. This remarkable accomplishment would not be possible without Him. To my daughters, thank you for always encouraging me and for being supportive and understanding all the times I had to say, "I got work to do." I am grateful to my family (birth, church, and work) for their unwavering belief in me, for their prayers, and for the constant reminders that I could do this. To "That Guy", thank YOU for making me brave. Thank YOU for all the motivational conversations, for reminding me of who and Whose I am, and for all the times you'd remind me that success takes sacrifice. Dr. Mary Trube, you are so much more than a Professor and Doctoral Chair. God placed you in my life at the right time because He knew I needed a chair like you. You are phenomenal, very wise, and knowledgeable. You were honest and intentional and never let me slack. Thank you! Dr. Donald Yaroz and Dr. Ionut-Dorin Stanciu, who were fantastic committee members, thank you for your direction and support throughout this process. Dr. Lashica Cox and Dr. Eileen Manoukian, your input and guidance helped me make my ancestors' wildest dream come true! Thank you both!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Nature of the Study.....	5
Definitions.....	7
Assumptions.....	8
Scope and Delimitations.....	9
Limitations.....	9
Significance.....	10
Summary.....	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	13
Literature Search Strategy.....	13
Conceptual Framework.....	14
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable.....	17
Early Childhood Stakeholders.....	17
Educator Capacity.....	19
Continuum of Parent and Family Activity.....	19
Family Involvement.....	20

Family Engagement	22
Family Advocacy	23
Family Empowerment.....	24
Family Investment	25
Formal School Transitions	26
Model for Transition to Kindergarten.....	27
Parent Capacities.....	29
School Readiness	29
Role of Educators.....	30
Role of Parents	30
Role of Other Stakeholders.....	31
Summary and Conclusions	31
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	33
Research Design and Rationale	33
Role of the Researcher	35
Methodology.....	35
Participant Selection	36
Instrumentation	37
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	39
Data Analysis Plan.....	40
Trustworthiness.....	41
Credibility	41
Transferability.....	42

Dependability	42
Confirmability	43
Ethical Procedures	43
Summary	44
Chapter 4: Reflections and Results	46
Setting	47
Participant Demographics	48
Data Collection	49
Data Analysis	52
Research Question 1: Categories and Themes	54
Research Question 2: Categories and Themes	58
Results	62
Research Question 1: Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives	63
Research Question 2: Stakeholders Promote Empowerment	68
Summary of Results	73
Evidence of Trustworthiness	75
Credibility	75
Transferability	75
Dependability	76
Confirmability	76
Summary	76
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	79
Interpretation of the Findings	81

Providing Parent Education Produces Empowered Parents.....	82
Communicating for Understanding Encourages Engaged Stakeholders.	84
Offering Center and Community Networks and Activities Supports	
Informed Advocates.....	85
Establishing Mutually Supportive Collaborative Relationships Encourages	
Collaborative Partners.....	86
Limitations of the Study.....	88
Recommendations.....	90
Implications.....	91
Conclusion	92
References.....	95
Appendix A: Research and Interview Questions.....	109
Appendix B: Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions by	
Stakeholder Groups.....	113
Appendix C: Interview Matrix.....	116

List of Tables

Table 1 *Demographics of Participants* 49

Table 2 *Research Questions Categories and Themes and Findings Alignment With Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives* 74

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study was focused on the perspectives of early childhood program stakeholders on empowering parents to prepare their children to enter school ready to learn. This study was needed because when families do not know or understand how to develop school-readiness skills in their children, their children do not enter school ready to learn (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019b; Puccioni, 2018). Findings of this study have the potential to contribute to positive social change by bringing awareness to stakeholders about their roles in empowering parents to actively engage in partnership with the school community members (see Puccioni, 2018) and by developing parents' capacities to act on their critically important roles in preparing their children for formal school (see Atchison & Pompelia, 2018; Douglass et al., 2019; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). In this chapter, I discuss this study's background, problem, purpose, and research questions. I also present the conceptual framework and the nature of the study, provide definitions of key terms, and outline my initial assumptions. The scope and delimitations, as well as limitations of the study, are also presented. Lastly, I discuss how findings can lead to positive social change.

Background

Family involvement is critical for children's early learning and development (Banse et al., 2021). Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2019b) identified the critical role parents play in promoting the development of their children. When a child's home environment is supportive, they are more likely to achieve academic success (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Marti et al. (2018) suggested that children should be prepared for

school from their earliest years, because when they enter school unprepared, it increases the academic gap. Castro et al. (2015) found a strong relationship between a family's expectations for their children and their children's educational habits. A parent's attitudes and beliefs about academic achievement are seen in their children; if parent's expectations are low, children's grades are low (Castro et al., 2015). Tao et al. (2019) found that previous studies revealed that parents often want to be a part of their children's transition to formal school but lack the capacities to do so. When parents are empowered, children enter formal school academically ready, socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Douglass et al., 2019). This study was needed because it was based on the premise that parents need to be empowered by early childhood administrators and teachers to develop their capacities of knowledge, skills, understandings, and sense-of-self to successfully prepare their children for formal school (see Kim & Bryan, 2017).

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this basic qualitative study was that parents are not empowered with the capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. The justification for this study included local evidence that mirrored findings from studies throughout the Southern region of the United States, which was the location for this study. Researchers from a local countywide early childhood program where my study took place conducted a longitudinal study between 2017-2021 in the southern region of the United States found that children were not successfully transitioning to formal school due to parents' nonengagement in preparing their children for formal schooling. Puccioni (2018) found connections between what early childhood teachers

believed about their roles in parent empowerment and children's successful transition to formal school. Further, when teachers do not promote parental engagement, children may enter school not ready to learn (Douglass et al., 2019; Puccioni, 2018). Douglass et al. (2019) found empowering parents to engage in schools yields positive results toward their children's ability to transition to formal school successfully and is linked to their academic achievement throughout primary school education. Successful transitioning of children to formal school is dependent on parents being empowered, which is essential for closing the academic achievement gap (Marti et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Puccioni (2018) suggested there is a connection between what early childhood educators believe about school readiness and academic success; however, Puccioni and Griebing and Gilbert (2020) found that parents frequently believe they do not know how to contribute to their children's academic achievement.

As the researcher of this study, I interviewed 12 early childhood stakeholders, which included early childhood-level teachers, program administrators, and parents of children enrolled in the programs. Through the interview process, I explored volunteer participants' perspectives on empowerment of parents to build their capacities to support children's transitions to formal school ready to learn. Castro et al. (2015) proposed that children should not be expected to meet society's educational expectations when parents

are not involved in their children's education. This basic qualitative study with interviews addressed a gap in the literature on practice so that early childhood program stakeholders would have a better understanding of their roles in empowering parents.

Research Questions

Two research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework aligned to guide this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory suggested that the environment in which a child grows and develops affects every facet of the child's life. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory proposed that each child is influenced by environments and relationships within those environments, in a series of systems. Ecological systems that framed this study are as follows: microsystem, exosystem, and mesosystem. The microsystem includes those who are closest to the child. The mesosystem covers the microsystem and includes the school environment and school personnel. The exosystem is a layer that influences the child's microsystem and mesosystem and includes the community. Parents are children's first teachers and the first to develop a bond with their children in the child's microsystem before they enter preschool. They are the first to lay the foundations for current and

future learning. Often parents do not know how to prepare their children for school and rely on individuals in the school (mesosystem) and community (exosystem) to help them prepare their children to transition to school (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Castro, 2015; Griebing & Gilbert, 2020; Puccioni, 2018). Kim and Bryan's parent empowerment framework focuses on parent empowerment on the personal level and the community level, which aligns with ecological systems theory. According to Kim and Bryan, personal empowerment involves parents' capacities and mastery of skills and abilities to reach personal goals, and community empowerment involves a process of parents' collectively taking action to achieve change in their communities by influencing institutions. Both Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's parent empowerment framework support the notion of parent empowerment to prepare their children for successful transitioning to formal school. The conceptual framework is addressed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Nature of the Study

To address the two RQs of this study, I followed a basic qualitative study design with interviews. I developed an interview protocol for stakeholders that was reviewed by a team of experts who work in the field of family studies as advisers to early childhood program leaders located throughout the Southern United States. According to Kalra et al. (2013), qualitative researchers go beyond statistics to seek meaning to understand the "why" (p. 192). The philosophical roots of qualitative research are subjective regarding human experiences and take on the constructivist or interpretivist approach, which is natural and best collected through interviews and observations (Business Research

Methodology, 2011). There is a cross between social and behavioral science in qualitative research (ThoughtCo, 2021). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that qualitative research is socially grounded, cannot be defined by one event, and allows participants to voice and share their experiences. In basic qualitative research with interviews, participants have "an empowering experience" (Kalra et al., 2013, p. 192). Qualitative research creates an in-depth understanding of participants' attitudes, behaviors, and social processes that involve everyday life. Thus, qualitative researchers better understand how everyday life is influenced by society (ThoughtCo, 2021). Insightful interview questions (IQs) can help the interviewer gain participants' perspectives as they tell their stories by beginning with such questions and prompts as "what," "how," or "tell me about" (Saldaña, 2011, p. 35). I chose a narrative methodology, qualitative design, so participants could tell their own stories during the interview process. "Narrative analysis uses the stories people tell, analyzing them in various ways, to understand the meaning of the experiences as revealed in the story" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24). I considered conducting a quantitative study, but it would have lacked story data from participants that would have revealed parents' empowerment and connections to children's successful transitioning to formal school. Quantitative research results in numeric data that involves the "whats" versus qualitative research, which looks at the "whys" (Barnham, 2015). I chose a basic qualitative study with interviews as opposed to choosing a focus group approach because interviews are more intimate and effective in collecting data about participants' perspectives (see Guest et al., 2017); further, collecting data in a focus group during the COVID-19 pandemic would have presented challenges in having all

participants join virtually at the same time. I designed IQs to collect data on participants' perspectives regarding their experiences, or lack thereof, related to parental empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transitioning to formal school. After considering several options, I decided that conducting a basic qualitative study with interviews is the best approach.

Definitions

To better understand research on parent empowerment and its potential influence on student academic achievement, I defined the following terms:

Educator capacity: Floden et al. (1995) defined educator capacity as an educators' perceived knowledge, skills, dispositions, and sense of self that supported their commitments to improve student learning.

Parent capacity: Conley (2004) defined parent capacity as "the ability to parent in a 'good enough' manner long term" (p.16). It is the ability to put children's needs first while providing routine and consistent care, recognizing problems, and engaging offered services (Conley, 2004). For this study, parent capacity will include parents' knowledge, skills, understanding, and sense of self to help their children successfully transition to formal school (see Floden et al., 1995).

Parent empowerment: Parent empowerment is a concept that connects parents' distinct strengths and capabilities, which results in their proactive behaviors with their children (Hsiao et al., 2018).

School readiness: School readiness involves competencies that children should have when they enter formal school (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019a), which begins in kindergarten or first grade depending on the state.

Early childhood stakeholders: Wilder and Lillvist (2018) defined stakeholders as parents, preschool teachers, primary school teachers, principals, and the community. For this study, stakeholders will be early childhood administrators, teachers, and parents.

Transitions: According to Fabian and Dunlop (2002), transition refers to the process of change experienced when children move from one setting to another. Cutler and Slicker (2020) suggested that how a child adjusts when transitioning to formal school is connected to the child's relationship with home and school.

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the early childhood program administrators, teachers, and parents whom I interviewed would answer all my RQs honestly and to the best of their ability and provide answers that genuinely represented their experiences. I also assumed that participants were currently practicing their beliefs with the children and families currently enrolled in their programs. I assumed the early childhood program administrators' and teachers' viewpoints represented the broader population of early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. I assumed the parents' perspectives in the study embodied the beliefs of parents who had at least one child enrolled in an early childhood program. During the interview process, I assumed participants would limit their distractions. If interviewing via the internet and we should lose reception, I assumed participants would

be open to continuing the interview via telephone or by responding through email. Lastly, I assumed participants' responses to the open-ended questions would help me explore how early childhood stakeholders empower parents and families.

Scope and Delimitations

The 12 participants of this basic qualitative study with interviews were early childhood stakeholders who were either program administrators or teachers with at least 3 years of early childhood education experience or a parent with at least one child under the age of 6 years enrolled in the early childhood program where the study took place. Boyle and Wilkinson (2018) suggested it is the collaborative efforts of schools, communities, parents, and early childhood programs that ensure children have the best transition possible into school. This basic qualitative study with interviews addressed early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. Program administrators and teachers with less than 3 years' experience were excluded. Parents with children who were older than 6 years of age and were not enrolled in one of the programs where this study took place were excluded.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study that I acknowledge in this section. Data collected and findings of this study were limited to 12 early childhood stakeholders in six centers within three different early childhood programs located in the Southern region of the United States. Findings from my analysis of data represented a small number of early childhood stakeholders from among program administrators, teachers, and parents. Findings may or may not represent the perspectives of other early childhood

stakeholders across the United States regarding parent empowerment and formal school transitions. My personal bias could have come from my years of experience working in the field of early childhood education. To ensure my personal biases were kept in check and did not influence my collection or analysis of data in the study, I used a reflective journal. Vicary et al. (2017) indicated that “maintaining a journal is shown to enact some potential validity criteria (e.g., in producing an audit trail) whilst also recording and reflectively prompting the process of learning, interpretation, and bracketing, thus evidencing transparency” (p. 550). This study may potentially have a positive impact on social change by creating an awareness in stakeholders about the importance of empowering parents and stakeholders’ roles in empowering parents to successfully transition their children to formal school.

Significance

This study was significant because it explored early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support children's transitions to formal school. I sought to fill a gap in the literature on practice so that early childhood educators could better understand their roles in empowering parents. Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2019a) suggested that if parents believe they impact their children's academic success, they are more likely to engage in activities beneficial to their children's education. Researchers acknowledged that families’ roles in supporting their children’s transition to formal school are essential but that parents might not know how to help their children (Griebeling & Gilbert, 2020). Boyle and Wilkinson (2018) posited that parent empowerment represents a call for action from early childhood stakeholders, as follows:

"Responsibility for ensuring children make the best possible start to school are assigned to the collective of stakeholders, including families, schools, communities, and services" (p. 326). Findings of this study can potentially influence positive social change because parents may develop greater awareness about their roles in preparing their children for formal school. Likewise, administrators and staff in early childhood programs and schools and community members where programs or schools operate will have a greater understanding of their roles in empowering parents so that they have the capacities to help prepare their children for academic success.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework aligned as this study's conceptual framework. Two RQs guided the study to focus on the perspectives of early childhood program administrators, early childhood teachers, and parents of children enrolled in early childhood programs on empowering parents to support successful transitions of their children to formal school. Understanding participants' perspectives on parent empowerment and school transitions will result in more substantial home and program or school collaborations that empower parents with the capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature on family empowerment, school

readiness, and formal school transitions to reveal a gap in the literature on practice and illustrate why the study was needed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed by this basic qualitative study was some parents are not empowered with the capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. The purpose was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. In Chapter 2, I explain my literature search strategies, and provide an in-depth explanation of the conceptual framework guiding this study. I present a review of relevant literature on parent empowerment, early childhood stakeholders, school transitions, and roles of early childhood stakeholders that are vital to children's successful transitioning to formal school. I highlight definitions that were important in my study, reveal the evolution of concepts related to my study, and focus on the importance of early childhood stakeholders and related factors. The following related topics are presented: educator capacity, family involvement, family engagement, family advocacy, family empowerment, formal school transitions, parent capacity, school readiness, the role of parents, and the role of other stakeholders.

Literature Search Strategy

To search for existing literature, I met with the Walden Library staff. I learned how to effectively use the following databases: Google Scholar, Education Source, APA PsychInfo, CrossRef, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), and the Walden Library. To search these databases for relevant literature, I used the following search terms: *bioecological model of human development, developmental and ecological transition to kindergarten model, parent empowerment, family empowerment, formal*

school transitions, and *early childhood stakeholders' perspectives*. The majority of studies that I reviewed were from peer-reviewed journals and were published from 2017 to 2021. I limited the review to the most recent and relevant literature from the past 5 years. I included a few older studies that were seminal and foundational studies that related to the problem and the conceptual framework. My strategy was to search the various critical components related to the topics, as follows: *parent empowerment*, *parent engagement*, *early childhood stakeholders*, *parents*, *school readiness*, *capacity*, and *transitions*.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework. Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified four ecological systems, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem. The ecological systems that framed this study were microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem, which aligned with the parent empowerment framework (see Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Kim & Bryan, 2017). Kim and Bryan (2017) identified six components of parent empowerment that are found within personal and/or community levels. Components introduced by Kim and Bryan were consciousness, competence, sense of meaning, and community participation.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the first layer in his ecological system theory is the microsystem. This layer encompasses a child's immediate environment. It is where the child engages with others. Engagement can be at home, or in the classroom, or somewhere in the community, such as a church or a playground (Onwuegbuzie et al.,

2013). In the microsystem, anyone who is a stakeholder or advocate for the well-being of children is in this layer. The microsystem includes any caregiver a child may have, inside or outside of the home. The microsystem consists of any family member, any early childhood teachers, or early childhood program or school administrators. It is important to note that genetic traits can impact a child's growth regardless of the microsystem (Haynes et al., 2011).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained the second layer as a connection or relationship between two or more of the microsystems in which the child is actively engaged. The theory suggests that a child's development is directly influenced by the relationships between and among those who make up the child's microsystem. The elements of this layer must agree and be on one accord because, if not, the child's optimal development can be hindered (Haynes et al., 2011). This hindrance could be a result of the relationships between peer experiences and family experiences or family experiences and school experiences. An example of the relationships within the microsystem is as follows: A child is intimidated at school (school experiences), and he/she may distance himself/herself from the family members (family experiences) at home (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013).

The third layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological system theory, the exosystem, suggests that systems outside of a child's inner circle can also influence their development and ability to thrive in school (Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1977) used a parent's employment as an example of the exosystem. According to Griebing and Gilbert (2020), children whose parents have lower education levels and have insufficient

socioeconomic resources struggle more with formal school transitions. Suppose a parent loses their job, or their employer reduces their work hours; it affects the parent's ability to provide for themselves and their family and negatively impacts a child.

Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework suggests that empowered parents believe in the importance of education (sense of meaning). Empowered parents recognize their capacity to ensure their academic achievement (competence). They understand that all stakeholders are not equal in power yet are impactful and educated (consciousness). Empowered parents are able to partner with their children's school personnel (community participation) to achieve mutually beneficial and desired outcomes. Kim et al. (2017) found that when parents participated in activities that increased their capacities and raised their awareness of their power in supporting their children, they were able to reflect on their own cultures and histories, internalize deficiencies, and link how multiple factors may have affected their children's transitions to school and their success in academic achievement. The parent empowerment framework defines competence as a parent's beliefs and self-confidence in knowing that they have the necessary tools to help their child (Kim & Bryan, 2017). This framework also focuses on the need for collaboration between early childhood stakeholders and parents for children's educational well-being (Kim & Bryan, 2017). The conceptual framework supported the need for school-home collaboration and parent empowerment.

In acknowledging Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems, Samara (2019) emphasized transitioning into formal school as a significant step in a child's life and referenced Bronfenbrenner's systems as having a noteworthy influence on a child's

development. Samara suggested that parents and schools are a part of the microsystem and the relationships between parents and schools (mesosystem) influences a child's development. Bryan et al. (2020) suggested that partnerships between schools, families, and communities lead to educational resilience of stakeholders. Such partnerships are aligned with Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework theory and provide support for families by increasing their capacities.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

In this section, I present the literature related to key concepts and variables of this study. I review early childhood stakeholders, educator capacity, family involvement, family engagement, family empowerment, formal school transitions, parent capacity, and school readiness.

Early Childhood Stakeholders

Moss and Pence (1994) suggested that anyone affected or impacted by something is a stakeholder. In discussing the importance of early childhood education, Bergen and Hardin (2015) included caregivers, teachers, support personnel, and program administrators as stakeholders. Moss and Pence (1994) included children or students as stakeholders in programs and schools. Wilder and Lillvist (2018) named parents as stakeholders in their children's education. For this study, the term early childhood stakeholders include teachers, parents, and program administrators. Webb et al. (2017) suggested that all stakeholders have the responsibility to empower and support parents in their roles and responsibilities as their children transition to formal school. Empowerment of parents and families can be achieved when stakeholders learn about parent's struggles

or anxieties, identify how they can affect children's transitions, and learn how to support them (Webb et al., 2017). According to Boyle and Wilkinson (2018), stakeholders' collective efforts to ensure children successfully transition to formal school ready to learn. Viskovic and Višnjic-Jevtic (2020) suggested that the quality of a child's well-being is connected to the collaboration between home and school. Bergen and Hardin (2015) proposed that influential stakeholders are involved, have buy-in, and understand the importance of their roles. Boyle and Benner (2020) emphasized a relationship between what a parent believes about school readiness and how their child transitions to kindergarten. Hatcher et al. (2012) found that some early childhood teachers believe school readiness includes a child's social and emotional development and achievement of literacy skills. Barnett et al. (2020) suggested that early childhood educators should promote parent engagement because it is linked to boosting children's school readiness. Wilder and Lillvist (2018) found that parental involvement in transitions was essential and is made possible through collaborations among early childhood program stakeholders. Early childhood education connects these stakeholders, but it is important to note that the values, interests, involvement, needs, beliefs, and power of individual stakeholders may differ (Moss & Pence, 1994). Griebing and Gilbert (2020) suggested that children's effective transitions to formal school are possible when partnerships exist between and among stakeholders, including family members, the school community, and the greater community.

Educator Capacity

Floden et al. (1995) suggested that capacity was the ability to do something. The capacities of educators involve their sense of self, skills, knowledge, and temperaments. Great School Partnership (2013) found that educators defined capacity as the ability, expertise, or skill to implement something specific. According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997), an educator's capacity is heavily influenced by his/her discernment and understanding about any given assignment or situation (Jones & Harcourt, 2013). For an educator's capacity to be adequate, it takes more than professional development; it takes leadership and the vision of their program's administration (Floden et al., 1995).

Continuum of Parent and Family Activity

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (n.d.) staff included many resources on the organization's website to support parent and family practices, which span a continuum of parent and family activities -- involvement, engagement, advocacy, and empowerment. NAEYC (2021) staff highlighted effective parent, family, school, and program practices that include early childhood programs providing learning activities for the home and in the community, inviting families to be advocates for early childhood education in their community, and encouraging families to share their skills and time with their child's early childhood program. Barnett et al. (2020) found that parent or family involvement and parent, parental, or family engagement are used interchangeably in the field; however, some researchers define the terms differently. Marti et al. (2018) proposed that embedded in literature is the call to better understand and improve parent involvement to help children successfully transition

to formal school. Staff writers for the NAEYC (2009) made a distinction between parent/family involvement and parent/family engagement as a result of the seminal study by Halgunseth (2009) published in *Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature*.

In this section I present what I believe is a continuum from involvement to parent empowerment – involvement, engagement, advocacy, and empowerment.

Family Involvement

According to Banse et al. (2021), family involvement is critical for children's learning and development, especially in the early years. Researchers found that families who exhibit strong involvement may witness superior gains in their children's development because of their involvement (Banse et al., 2021; Funge et al., 2016). Family involvement in children's preparation for kindergarten is essential (Slicker et al., 2021) and is a significant predictor of children's adjustment to formal school (Kang et al., 2017). Researchers linked family involvement to attendance, academic achievement, and acceptable behavior in the school environment (Newman et al., 2019), and higher self-esteem (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). Family involvement provides a foundation for successful transitions as children grow (Banse et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2017).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) defined parent involvement as participating in activities that link home and school. These include actions such as reviewing learning concepts taught at school, discussing what children do while they are at school, communicating regularly with their child's teacher, and participating in activities at school such as parent-teacher conferences, parent meetings, and volunteering at school.

Variables such as parents' education level, marital status, income, and ethnicity may influence a parent's involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), parents' experiences, opportunities, their own perspectives, and societal demands decide a parent's level of or choice of involvement in the program or school.

Epstein's Model of Parent Involvement

In 2009, Epstein developed a model of parental involvement that encompassed types of involvement, as follows: collaborating with the community, volunteering, parenting, decision-making, learning at home, and decision-making (Epstein, 2018). Epstein et al. (2018) found that parent's and family members' behaviors related to collaboration, volunteerism, participation, and self-education are related to a student's level of academic achievement.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of the Parent Involvement

In 1995, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler introduced a hypothetical model of the parental involvement process. Their model described how parents are involved in their child's education and how parental involvement impacts student outcomes (Walker et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggested that before parents should be approached about their involvement, efforts should be made to know the parents' beliefs about their roles in their child's education and their capacities to help them. Their model includes five levels; however, only the first two levels discuss parent involvement. Level one highlights the basic impact of a parents' involvement. Researchers included how parents perceive their role, the type and level of invitation from school personnel, and the parent's sense of self-efficacy (Wittkowski et al., 2017). When parents have more than

one child, sometimes they do not have the skills to balance their time to be involved in their children's education (Griebeling & Gilbert, 2020). Parents' other life demands may hinder their involvement and according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), early childhood stakeholders should provide a variety of ways for parents to be involved.

Family Engagement

Baker et al. (2016) defined parent engagement as a collaboration formed through multiple parent involvement opportunities. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2019) firmly supports the idea that children, educators, and families benefit when families actively collaborate with school stakeholders in their children's education. According to NAEYC (2021), family engagement occurs when school personnel aim to establish relationships with families that support positive outcomes for children. Engagement speaks to the parents' and families' relationships with all early childhood stakeholders and how they participate in their child's education (Barnett et al., 2020).

Hall (2020) proposed that using simple methods such as text messaging was a way of parent engagement. She found that when family engagement increased, students progressed successfully. Not all families know how to engage academically with their children but are comfortable helping teachers when their children exhibit behavior issues (Hall, 2020). Empowerment involves "perceived abilities, capacities, skills, and mastery to make their voices heard and influence others to improve their life's situation" (Kim & Bryan, 2017, p. 169). Once a parent takes the first step to get involved, they can move effortlessly into the act of engagement. According to Gennetian et al. (2019), engaging

parents can be challenging and studies show that parent engagement yields improved academic outcomes. The Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) both support and encourage parent engagement because according to, Barnett et al. (2020), parent engagement positively impacts a child's development and is linked to school readiness. Parent engagement is strengthened when early childhood programs and parents partner together, aligning with Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (2006) bioecological model of development concept of microsystems. The quality of parent engagement is a reliable predictor of a child's school readiness (Barnett et al., 2020). Barnett et al. (2020) and Kang et al. (2017) proposed that family engagement directly impacts school readiness.

Family Advocacy

In this section, relevant literature on family advocacy is first presented as a step along a continuum from parent involvement to family empowerment. Next, relevant literature on parents or families as advocates for their children is presented.

According to Riley (1971), family advocacy is ever-changing and develops in action -- the more we learn, the more we learn how to advocate for families. Family advocacy is a service that involves change requiring commitment and capability of school personnel and community members (Riley, 1971). Mehta et al. (2019) suggested that the most vital aspect of family advocacy is establishing relationships with families by establishing trust through effective communication. Rossetti et al. (2020) proposed that family advocacy involves educating the family. Once strengths of family advocates are

developed, these stakeholders must build on their own strengths to increase capacities of parents and families to advocate for their children (Mehta et al., 2019).

Schatz and Lutz (2019) suggested that parents learn to be advocates for their children when they know how the education system works. Parents nurture positive relationships with their child's early childhood program and staff and understand how to speak on behalf of their children. Various factors impact a family's ability to advocate for their children. They include a lack of communication between the school and home, limited time, and differences of opinion (Schatz & Lutz, 2019). Kinsella-Meier (2019) found that success family advocates support their child's education and works to have a positive, working relationship with their child's teacher. She suggested different communities view family advocacy differently and recommended finding ways to understanding those varying views to help early childhood stakeholders work together to ensure children transition successfully to formal school and have academic achievement (Kinsella-Meier, 2019). Parents do not always know the questions to ask or the things to do to help with their child's education. It is the responsibility of early childhood program administrators, teachers, and communities to give families the tools to be successful advocates (Neria et al., 2019).

Family Empowerment

Researchers have suggested there is a relationship between parent empowerment and children's academic performance (Kim & Bryan, 2017; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Barnett et al, 2020). Griebing and Gilbert (2020) found that families need empowerment to help children successfully transition to formal school. "Empowering families start with

a transparent agenda for meaningful collaboration" (Albrecht, 2021, p. 13). When early childhood stakeholders join forces with families, it builds their capacities so that they are better able to support their children's academic achievement (Coleman et al., 2020). The Children's Bureau and the Center for States proposed nurturing leadership in the family and building the family's capacity advances family engagement to family empowerment (Capacity Building Center for States, 2019). Once parents have the tools, knowledge, and capacity they become empowered. According to Bérubé et al. (2018), empowerment nurtures parents, gives them a higher level of parental efficacy, and helps their children adjust better when transitioning into formal school. Barnett et al. (2020) suggested that parents would be receptive to empowerment measures if early childhood staff and personnel encouraged or invited them to be involved. Parents who are empowered by school personnel are better able to use self-determination and develop self-efficacy as a result of the relationships they form with their children's teachers (Hsiao et al., 2018). Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) found that teachers support the idea that family empowerment is one of the most significant approaches for education.

Family Investment

Contreras (2017) suggested that a parent's investment in their child's education is more than just the noble thing to do even if it goes beyond the resources they have. A parent's investment in their child's education takes on different meanings and is personal to the family situation. Contreras found that a family's perceived social standing influences the type of investment parents expend on behalf of their child's education. Sociocultural factors, such as family investment and readily accessible resources to

families “yield multiplicative effects on children’s developmental contexts” (Wang et al., 2019). According to Beers (2021), teachers can support family investment by purposefully including families in each phase of children’s transition.

Formal School Transitions

In this section I addressed children’s transitions to formal schooling by discussing the impact transitions have on children’s academic success. Further, I addressed the need for a collaborative effort among families, teachers, and parents to ensure children are transitioning successfully. The importance of transitioning to formal school was documented in literature. Wilder and Lillvist (2018) suggested that addressing school transitions is a real need that involves collaborative effort among stakeholders. These stakeholders included parents, preschool teachers, primary school teachers, and program administrators. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) suggested children’s, teachers’, and families’ understanding of formal school transition is a qualitative shift. Not all families have the knowledge or resources to support children entering an environment they have never experienced before (Cutler & Slicker, 2020). Yamauchi (2020) found that transitioning can create doubt, insecurity, and anxiety for children and their families. Researchers suggested the need to better align children's home environment, skills and abilities, and teachers' expectations in formal school settings, before children are involved in transitioning to formal school. According to Hugo et al. (2018) and Walsh et al. (2018) children’s successful school transitioning depends on children's preschool environment, and relationships among families, school staff, and members of the community. Griebing and Gilbert (2020), noted the family's role in supporting their children's transitioning to

formal school is essential; however, parents may not know how to help their children. Kim and Bryan (2017) found that when parents are empowered, they positively impact their families and effectively assist with change in their child's school and the community.

Sometimes, educators lack the resources to help children transition to formal school successfully (Yamauchi, 2020). According to Hatcher et al. (2012), preschool educators' perceptions of successfully transitioning to formal school included children's developing social and problem-solving skills. Researchers found that kindergarten teachers had different responsibilities regarding transitions, which contributed to children's disjointed transition to formal school (Hatcher et al., 2012). In recent years, there has been an increase in opportunities for teachers at the preschool and formal school levels to interact with each other to discuss the transition process (Purtell et al., 2020). Purtell et al. (2020) suggested there is a need for better efforts among stakeholders to support children and families during formal school transitions.

Model for Transition to Kindergarten

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) Developmental and Ecological Transition to Kindergarten (DETK) model informed educators about the process of students' transitions to formal schooling. Researchers found the period of children's successful transition to formal schooling represents a delicate period in children's lives that leads to their later academic success when appropriately supported by stakeholders. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) focused on four theoretical perspectives they described as

models: child effects model, direct effects model, indirect effects model, and dynamic effects model.

Model 1: Child Effects Model

The first model is the Child Effects Model. It addresses the child's readiness for formal school and recognizes the child's individualities for understanding the school transition process. This perspective highlighted the child's characteristics as the primary factor for understanding school transition. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) included factors related to how a child transitions to school that identified the child's gender, and social, cognitive, and language development.

Model 2: Direct Effects Model

The second model is the Direct Effects Model. This model recognized the role of the environment in school transitions. This perspective reflected on the child's individualities and recognized the direct impacts of school, family, and community school transition (Kaufman & Pianta, 2000)

Model 3: Indirect Effects Model

The third model is the Indirect Effects Model. This model looks at interactions in predicting school transition. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) suggested that when the family and teacher communicate regularly, when learning is consistent at home and at school, and when parents have high expectations for their children's success in school, that children tend to have positive levels of academic achievement (Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Model 4: Dynamic Effects Model

The fourth model is the Dynamic Effects Model. This model recognized the direct and indirect impact that influences have on children's transition to formal school. This perspective suggested that successful school transitions happen when an environment embraces the connection between community, family, the child, school, and the classroom (Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Parent Capacities

The term parent capacity is defined in different ways (Houston & Swords, 2020; Platt & Riches, 2016). Houston and Swords (2020) defined parent capacity as a parent's ability to give good-enough or optimal care to their child. According to Platt and Riches (2016), a parent's overall capacity includes providing basic care, emotional support, safety, and stimulation for their child. Parent capacity is a partnership where those who have the professional knowledge work in agreement with the families' strong points to increase family and children's outcomes (Bray & Kenney, 2014; Kraft, 2017). "When parents foster positive agreements at home and are engaged in their students' schooling, kids have much better academic outcomes" (Kraft, 2017, p. 59). Bray and Kenney (2014) found when parents form partnerships with their children's school personnel, and when school personnel nurture parents' capacities by building trust and providing open communication, parents develop capacities to improve outcomes for their children's.

School Readiness

Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2019a) defined school readiness as the competencies children should have when entering formal schooling. It is necessary to learn early

childhood stakeholders' perspectives of school readiness (Hugo et al., 2018). According to Ferretti et al. (2016), there is a need to better support children's school readiness as they transition to formal school. The United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) specified specific roles of early childhood stakeholders when it comes to children's school readiness (see Pekdogan & Akgül, 2017). They proposed program administrators and teachers have the responsibility to be efficient and ready to receive the children when they arrive. They highlighted families and those closest to the child's environment (community) and suggested they have the role of providing support for early childhood development (Pekdogan & Akgül, 2017).

Role of Educators

School readiness has been linked to practices early childhood educators use to engage parents with their children (Barnett et al., 2020). It includes family engagement tactics, literacy, and social-emotional programs, sending books home, and involving the family in activities that will prepare children for formal school (Cook et al., 2019). School readiness occurs inside and outside of the classroom (Marti et al., 2018).

Role of Parents

Puccioni (2018), found parents' beliefs about school readiness vary by race/ethnicity, local school perspectives, and education level. A parent's attitude and belief about academic achievement are seen in their children (Castro et al., 2015). "Parents' beliefs inform school readiness practices that, in turn, impact child outcomes in the transition" (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, (2019a), p. 19). Parents' interactions with their

children promote school readiness skill development through such home activities as reading (Puccioni, 2015).

Role of Other Stakeholders

Hugo et al. (2018) found that school readiness may look different for each stakeholder. For example, Hugo et al. found that children think being ready for school is more about rules and relationships, and parents and caregivers think about relationships and routines. School officials emphasized social-emotional abilities and academic preparedness (Hugo et al., 2018). Slicker (2021) suggested that the number of parents who understand kindergarten readiness increases; however, those expectations vary depending on family background factors. Prendergast et al. (2018) found that children obtained school readiness skills through a hierarchical process where basic skills were challenged and when they had opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills. Atchison et al. (2018) suggested that an effective collaboration between preschool and kindergarten helps to lay the groundwork for a child's school experience and academic success.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I identified the literature search strategy for the review of terms and relevant literature and the conceptual framework that provides the foundation for discovering the early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on empowering parents to successfully transition their children to formal school. I included current literature and seminal literature related to roles of parents and families in their child's transition to formal schooling, how a parents' capacities help enable children's school readiness skills,

and the continuum of parent involvement to parent empowerment. In Chapter 3, I present the methodology, research design, questions, and provide the link to the conceptual framework. I present the processes for recruiting and selecting volunteers, and processes involved in data collection.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition their children to formal school. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale. I also describe the role of the researcher and the methodology used in the study. I describe the participant selection process, instrumentation, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures for the study. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

For this basic qualitative study, I conducted interviews to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build the parents' capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. The rationale was to better understand the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders. The two RQs I sought to answer were as follows:

RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Guided by an alignment of ecological system's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the framework for parent empowerment (Kim & Bryan, 2017) that formed the conceptual framework for this study, the two RQs supported me in addressing the problem and purpose of the study. The two RQs were used to gain perspectives from stakeholders,

who were four program administrators, four teachers, and four parents, from six early childhood programs located in the southern region of the United States.

The central phenomenon of this study involved early childhood stakeholders' perspectives and parent empowerment, and their relationship to children successfully transitioning to formal school. Early childhood program administrators, early childhood teachers, and parents of early childhood children enrolled in one of three programs located in the Southern United States participated in this study. I decided to conduct a qualitative study with interviews because a basic qualitative study with interviews was the best design to answer the RQs. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that in-depth qualitative interviews are natural methods for getting details about a person's experiences and opinions. Data for this study came from semistructured interviews with stakeholders from six centers within three different early childhood programs and included four early childhood program administrators, four early childhood teachers, and four parents from six centers within three different early childhood programs located in the Southern United States. Because of the present COVID-19 pandemic and at the suggestion of programs and schools, I conducted interviews by phone and followed up with emails. I attended office hours offered by Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) representatives for doctoral candidates. IRB representatives recommended that I send flyers to solicit early childhood program administrators. Once two program administrators accepted my invitation and furnished their email addresses, I emailed a separate flyer to recruit eight of their teachers and six of their parents for participation in the study. Qualitative methodology allowed me to explore and learn these stakeholders'

perspectives about parent empowerment and children's successful transitioning to formal school. As the researcher, I documented, coded, and evaluated all responses to the IQs.

Role of the Researcher

In my research role, I was responsible for interviewing, recording, transcribing, and analyzing data that I received from four early childhood program administrators and four early childhood teachers with at least 3 years of experience as an early childhood teacher, and four parents who have a child enrolled in one of six centers within three different early childhood programs located throughout the Southern United States.

I have 30 years of early childhood experience as a teacher, program administrator, and state licensing counselor. These experiences enhanced my ability to establish rapport with participants. I took steps to ensure my researcher biases were kept in check. I kept a reflective journal to guard against mismanagement of power relationships and to avoid ethical issues. I ensured mutual engagement by all participants and followed a script of specific questions and probes. During the interview process, I remained objective, did not evaluate or be judgmental of the participants, and practiced subjectivity (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I purposely did not interview participants I immediately supervised or parents whose children were enrolled in a center where I was the program administrator. Program administrators from my former employer were also excluded from the study.

Methodology

The participant population for this study were early childhood stakeholders. A basic qualitative study with interviews was the adopted methodological approach to learn the early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully

transition children to formal school. A qualitative study begins with a problem or an interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), studies that we have read, our personal or professional experiences, and even how we comprehend things help us to form questions for research. I chose this type of methodology because the goal of a qualitative study is to learn what a specific group of people do and why they have certain behaviors (Amis, 2011). Cleland (2017) suggested that the qualitative approach to research is socially grounded and happens because of others' perspectives. A quantitative researcher sees the nature of "evidence" differently from a qualitative researcher (Cleland, 2017). The qualitative researcher includes verbs such as describe, identify, and explain in their study. These verbs allow the researcher to understand the participants' reality and how they comprehend life's experiences (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). In this basic qualitative study with interviews, I focused on participants' perspectives and actively listened to their experiences. Weiss (1994) found main reasons for choosing qualitative interviews included that they allow the researcher to gain detailed information, they help the researcher to understand individual perspectives, and they reveal how the participant interprets their experiences.

Participant Selection

Using purposeful sampling, I focused this study on early childhood stakeholders in the southern region of the United States. The participants were chosen from licensed early childcare programs providing care for children ages 6 weeks to at least 6 years of age found on the state's childcare licensing website. I emailed an invitational flyer to the childcare centers asking program administrators to be voluntary participants in the study.

Once the potential program administrators accepted my invitation, I verified their mailing addresses to send two flyers, one for their teachers and one for parents asking for voluntary participation in the study after gaining IRB approval. The flyer outlined the purpose of the study, listed the criterion, (3 years of early childhood experience for the program administrators and teachers and at least one child under the age of six for the parents), and referenced a gift card for volunteering their time and sharing their perspectives.

I planned to recruit 16 early childhood stakeholders from a pool to participate in the study. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that interviewing two or three participants from each applicable position is suitable to attain data saturation in an interview-based study. According to Patton (2015), the sample size is determined by the purpose of the study, what is hoped to be learned, what is credible, beneficial, and can be done timely; however, Hennink et al. (2019) advised choosing a suitable sample size for qualitative research can be challenging. When all participants were selected, I confirmed that each individual fit the criterion. Each participant completed a questionnaire form. I provided each early childhood stakeholder who volunteered to participate via telephone a description of the study's timeline. I anticipated that at least 16 early childhood stakeholders would volunteer to participate and be accepted into the study. I could not predict saturation, but when it occurred, the sampling ended.

Instrumentation

For data collection, because of the COVID-19 pandemic I conducted interviews virtually via telephone at the participants' convenience. I recorded the telephone

interviews with participants' prior approval. I asked the same questions in the same order for each participant. I took handwritten notes that led to further questioning and dialogue. In addition, after receiving IRB approval to use email to receive feedback from parents, I sent and later received volunteer participants' informed consent via email. With their consent to participate, I emailed IQs to the additional study participants. The interview protocol included using a set of IQs that were guided by the conceptual framework and research in the field. To ensure the sufficiency of this researcher-produced data collection instrument designed to answer the RQs, I asked an expert in early childhood education and family studies to review the instrument. The expert reviewed the interview protocol and determined that the content of the IQs for administrators, teachers, and parents were valid and reliable for collecting data to answer the RQs related to the study's problem and purpose. The interview protocol included eight semistructured, open-ended IQs and eight prompts that were designed to explore participants' perspectives. IQs were framed by the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological microsystem (family members), exosystem, and macrosystem (early childhood teachers or early childhood program administrators) and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework, and how parent empowerment impacts children's successful transition to formal school. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that "the researcher is looking for rich and detailed information" (p. 40). Therefore, for this basic qualitative study with interviews, I explored early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. Two RQs guided IQs, which were

individualized for each type of early childhood stakeholder. An alignment of RQs with IQs for each stakeholder group can be found in Appendix A.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving approval of my proposal from IRB, I mailed an invitational flyer to early childhood program administrators of licensed childcare centers with an enrollment capacity of at least 100 children to recruit participants for my study. As I recruited program administrators, I verified their location addresses to send a flyer to their teachers and parents soliciting their participation in the study. As each participant accepted to participate, I contacted them via telephone to obtain their email address, and to schedule dates and times for the interviews. Accompanying the invitation letter was an informed consent form revealing the purpose of the study, their role, benefits, and risks, the option to opt-out at any time without any repercussions, and confidentiality. I asked each participant to reply to my email with the words "I do consent," signifying they understood and agreed to participate in the study. To protect the participant's identity, each participant was assigned an alpha-numeric code, such as A1...A2 for program administrators, T1...T2 for teachers, and P1...P2 for parents, to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of their personal information.

Before commencing each interview, I extended my gratitude to each volunteer and confirmed that they were an early childhood program administrator or teacher with at least three years of early childhood experience or a parent who currently had at least one child between the ages of six weeks and six years enrolled in the program. I explained the processes and expectations of the study and asked each participant to verbally state they

understood the expectations and were willing to continue with the interview. I also informed each volunteer that they had the right to end their participation any time during the study if he/she wished to do so. I anticipated each interview would last between 30 - 45 minutes. As soon as possible after each interview, I transcribed each interview and summarized it. I emailed each participant a summary of his or her interview responses and asked each participant to review the summary, verify it for accuracy, add any clarifying remarks they wished to make, and return their responses via follow-up e-mail. In the email, I extended my gratitude to the participant for their contribution to the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Data was collected from early childhood stakeholders about their perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews was evaluated to answer the studies' RQs. According to Saldaña (2016), codes in qualitative inquiry are usually short phrases or single words. Using Microsoft Word documents and Google Sheets, I examined the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews to code and identify patterns. "A pattern is repetitive, regular, or consistent occurrences of action/data that appear more than twice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 5). The coding process classified themes and possible new themes that developed and were aligned with the frameworks and the RQs. Once I analyzed and aggregate the data, I had a clear, precise understanding of the early childhood stakeholders' perspectives.

Trustworthiness

Patton (2015) suggested, "ultimately, for better or worse, the trustworthiness of the data is tied directly to the trustworthiness of those who collect and analyze the data — and their demonstrated competence" (p. 706). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), a substantial strength of qualitative interviewing is that it yields highly reliable results. In qualitative research, trustworthiness means that the data has been collected, scrutinized, and then interpreted ethically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There are several methods of validating qualitative data for trustworthiness to include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Denzin, 1978). I used member checking by giving the participants a summary of their interview transcriptions and requested their acknowledgement of the accuracy of the summary or feedback with clarification and suggestions to confirm truthful information.

Credibility

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that because some readers may be unfamiliar with the research study and the researcher, qualitative researchers must address potential concerns participants may have. Patton (2015) suggested the credibility of qualitative research is the researcher's intellectual rigor, training, and skill. According to Byrne (2001), the researcher has to be credible. Saldaña (2016) suggested a three-step protocol to guarantee credibility: (1) code while transcribing the interview data; (2) keep a journal with numerous memos; and (3) check for understanding with the participants. Saldaña (2016) found that using multiple data sources validates the coding and improves the quality of trustworthiness in the findings. Individual in-depth interviews allow for

responsiveness to the participants and flexibility (Breitmayer, 1991). Breitmayer (1991) also suggested to achieve credibility, a qualitative researcher should use method triangulation by using field notes, interviews, and observation. While conducting the interviews, to avoid bias and to ensure credibility, I asked early childhood stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents) the same questions, in the same order.

Transferability

According to Babbie (2017), when a study's results can be understood beyond the sample study to a different population, external validity is established. External validity is established by gaining significant details from the participants. The details from this study showed transferability to a broader setting while maintaining context-specific richness. The rich details and thick descriptions allowed readers of the study to generalize the findings to their population or situation. By establishing the studies' design, journaling, all-inclusive interview notes, coding, transcripts, member checks, and the data analysis, transferability was expected.

Dependability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined dependability as the degree that other researchers can reproduce the study. There is evidence that the findings are consistent in data collection and analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, dependability was supported through the triangulation of the data and member checking. To replicate this study, another researcher can do the study in any other region of the United States instead of only the southern region where I conducted this study. A researcher could have more or fewer voluntary participants, and the study's findings could be consistent with the

findings of this study. Because of this, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested the findings may not be precisely the same, but they should yield similar results.

Confirmability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the neutrality in reporting findings is confirmability. The conclusions of this study signified the participant's replies in the interview process. The finding may or may not represent any points of view or bias of the researcher. However, confirmability was supported in this study through member checks and reflexivity tactics. After the early childhood stakeholders accepted contributing to the study, I invited all to review the research that led to the proposed research. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined reflexivity as the researchers' mindfulness that his/her background, beliefs and values, and previous experiences can bias the research study. Using a journal and notetaking while interviewing can prevent bias to the study. Therefore, I kept a journal, took notes during the interview process, and kept a journal log of my coding and the interview transcripts. Once I transcribed the interviews, I started the initial coding process by assigning codes to the data to describe the content. During this process, I looked for patterns and themes that were echoed throughout the different interviews. After identifying and outlining the themes, I produced a report of the findings and email each participant a summary of the report. At that time, I also asked if the information was easily understood and captured their perspectives on the topic discussed in the interviews.

Ethical Procedures

There are vital ethical measures that must be observed and addressed when conducting qualitative research. Once Walden's IRB approved to conduct this research

study, I upheld the expectancy to ensure ethical protection of the participants. Each participant was emailed a request for informed consent that explained their rights to retain confidentiality, ask questions, participate voluntarily, and withdraw from the study. The participant informed consent document defined the study and its expectations, the potential benefits, and risks, how they would receive the results, and my role as the researcher. I assured all participants that their information would remain confidential in a locked file cabinet and would be in a password-protected file on my computer. I provided participants with their perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition their children to formal school. I also assured each participant that I would not share any information shared with me for this study with anyone. Each participant participated in member checking and was invited to verify his/her transcription for accuracy. The digital files from interviews are stored in password-protected digital storage. They will remain for at least five years and then be deleted per Walden University requirements. The hard copy files from interviews, such as antidotal notes and journals, are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office for at least five years and will be shredded per Walden University requirements.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Data resulting from semi-structured interviews with early childhood program administrators', teachers', and parents' was collected via email and analyzed to answer this study's two RQs. The

intent was to bring awareness to the impact of parent empowerment on children's transition to formal school. Findings from this study have the potential to bring social change by helping early childhood education stakeholders recognize the importance of empowering parents of their children enrolled in their programs. In Chapter 3, I presented the methodology chosen to explore early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to transition children to formal school successfully. In Chapter 4, I categorize and describe the findings of this study. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and potential implications for positive social change in toddler education.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build the parents' capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework aligned to frame this study. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), early childhood program administrators, teachers, and families are all a part of a child's microsystem, exosystem, and mesosystem. The parent empowerment framework focuses on the need for collaboration between and among early childhood stakeholders and parents for children's educational wellbeing and successful transition into formal school. I used purposeful sampling and conducted semistructured interviews to explore stakeholders' perspectives in early childhood centers located in the southern region of the United States. Two RQs guided this study:

RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

RQs of this study addressed a problem in the local area as well as a gap in practice for early childhood stakeholders. In Chapter 4, I describe the setting where data were collected, the process of data collection and data analysis, demographics of the participants, and report findings of the study related to RQs 1 and 2. Chapter 4 provides a summary of findings and Chapter 5 is introduced.

Setting

Prior to obtaining IRB approval for my study, I contacted early childhood program directors located in the Southern region of the United States, to ask for their cooperation in providing me contact information for their early childhood program administrators, teachers, and parents to conduct interviews after school hours. It is the culture of early childhood professionals to gain support of program directors for any research conducted in settings where they have responsibility and accountability. An IRB process was not required by early childhood programs that cooperated with my study. I gained the contact information for program directors from the state's website for licensed childcare centers. Each center was licensed for at least 100 children. Per IRB approval, I conducted three semistructured interviews from my home office via digital voice recorded telephone calls and nine semistructured interviews through my Walden student email address. A change in the data collection process was approved by the Walden University IRB, which allowed me to collect data through email. Using purposeful sampling, participants who met the study's criteria were recruited from six early childhood programs located in the southern region of the United States. Participants for this study were parents of at least one child under the age of six and program administrators and teachers who had at least 3 years of experience in their roles. Teachers and program administrators in this study had experience ranging from 7 years to 35 years in their respective roles (see Table 1). There were no unplanned situations that affected the analysis of the results of this study. I did not use transcription software and

transcribed all interviews using the dictation feature in Microsoft 365 and then began the data coding and analysis processes.

Participant Demographics

Subgroups of early childhood stakeholders were needed for this study. Purposeful sampling was used for this basic qualitative study with interviews to gain rich, thick data that yielded insightful information from participants and gave me an in-depth understanding of early childhood stakeholders' perspectives (see Staller, 2021). A total of 12 volunteers (four parents, four program administrators, and four teachers) from six centers within three different early childhood programs participated in this study to share their perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. Participants included four parents who had at least one child under the age of six enrolled in one of the six early childhood centers, and four early childhood teachers and four early childhood program administrators who each had at least 3 years of experience in their roles. All parents had at least one child under the age of six and all teachers and program administrators had professional experience ranging from 7 to 35 years. I assigned each participant an alphanumeric code to ensure confidentiality, as follows: administrators one through four were coded A1...A4; teachers one through four were coded T1...T4; and parents one through four were coded P1...P4. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' alphanumeric codes, teachers' and program administrators' highest degree obtained and years of experience, the ages of the children whose parents participated, and the participants' genders.

Table 1*Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Highest degree	Years of experience/age of child (years)	Gender
A1	Bachelor's	20	F
A2	Master's	35	F
A3	Master's	10	F
A4	Master's	17	F
P1	Master's	2	F
P2	Associate's	3	F
P3	Bachelor's	4	M
P4	Bachelor's	1	F
T1	Bachelor's	12	F
T2	Associate's	7	F
T3	Associate's	32	F
T4	Bachelor's	10	M

Data Collection

The recruitment of all volunteers for this study started shortly after I received approval from Walden University's IRB (09-16-21-0461477). Having the cooperation of early childhood program directors, I contacted six early childhood program administrators to ask for their cooperation in recruitment of study participants for interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents to learn their perspectives on parent empowerment as it related to children's successful transition from their early childhood programs to formal school. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many centers were dealing with confirmed or suspected cases of the virus and their operating hours and staffing of programs varied daily. Some early childhood programs had to either close for 10 days at a time or they were short-staffed, which resulted in two program administrators who had initially agreed to cooperate not having the resources to provide the names of teachers

and parents needed to conduct my study in their settings. However, four administrators from the six that I contacted were able to help me with recruitment of volunteers by distributing recruitment flyers on my behalf via the U.S. Postal Service. Flyers were an invitation for early childhood administrators, teachers, and parents to participate in a recorded 45-60-minute semistructured interview via telephone that would be scheduled at a time most convenient for them outside of their working hours. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected data collection as cases from COVID-19 increased within families who had children enrolled in early childhood programs in the study locations. This fact complicated my ability to provide study information for potential study volunteers, and it became necessary to seek approval from IRB to request changes in the way volunteers could participate. I accommodated administrators, teachers, and parents who needed alternate avenues to participate other than the 45-60 minute telephone interviews. I attended IRB office hours and asked permission to email the IQs to administrators, teachers, and parents after they emailed me consenting to participate in my study. I was successful in receiving permission from IRB in October, 2021.

Data were collected during two phases. The first set of data were collected between September 17, 2021, and October 8, 2021; and the second set of data were collected between October 26, 2021 and November 8, 2021. Regarding the first phase of data collection, three stakeholders emailed me saying they were either a parent or a teacher and were interested in participating in the study. In response to their interest in volunteering for my study, I emailed each volunteer the appropriate consent form and requested a day and time that was best to conduct their interviews. I completed the

interviews by telephone, and shortly thereafter, I emailed a summary of the interview transcripts for transcript checking. In the process of collecting data, after receiving responses from each individual, I inputted data on an interview matrix that I created to organize data as an ongoing process. The second phase of recruitment and data collection began after completing an IRB review in which I asked for approval for volunteers to submit their responses to me via email. After seeing the updated IRB approved flyer, nine stakeholders emailed me expressing their interest in volunteering for my study. These volunteers provided informed consent via email and requested that I email IQs directly to them. After receiving responses from participants of the second phase, I emailed a summary of each interview transcript for transcript checking and added the data to my interview matrix. After I completed the data analysis, I summarized data and sent summaries for member checking by four administrators, four teachers, and four parents who participated in the study to complete the member checking process. After receiving information that participants received my findings and did not find discrepancies, I mailed participants Walmart gift cards via the U. S. Postal System.

The only deviation from the planned data collection process shared in Chapter 3 was during the second phase of data collection. Based on IRB approval for me to email IQs to volunteers who consented to participate in my study, I emailed the questions. Participants were able to email their responses to the IQs back to me. All data collected during the interview processes are secure in a locked file cabinet in my home office, where they will remain for 5 years and then will be disposed of by following the Walden University protocol. All electronic data has been password protected on my personal

computer, and I am the only one who has access to the file cabinet and password. After 5 years, I will permanently delete and destroy all recordings and hard copies of data according to Walden University's requirements.

Data Analysis

After data were collected from the twelve participants, I thoroughly and carefully read and reread and reviewed interview transcripts which I had entered on a matrix (see Appendix). As researcher, I coded data as I completed interviews, and was able to recognize patterns and categories in the interview data. According to Saldaña (2016), coding provides the connection between the data collection process and the data analysis process. There is no exact science to coding and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers (Saldaña, 2016).

I followed an interview protocol for every volunteer who participated in telephone interviews or those volunteers who responded to IQs via email. As I conducted telephone interviews, I recorded thoughts in a journal. Following the telephone interviews, and listening to each participant's responses to IQs, I transcribed each digitally recorded phone interview and compared the transcription with my journal notes of the audio interview to ensure accuracy and control for any bias I had. All volunteers who participated in interviews via email, were sent their respective IQs listed in the same order. Those volunteers who participated via email returned their responses to me within a few days after receiving IQs. As responses were received by me, I entered them into the matrix I developed, which was organized by IQ as well as by group (administrators, teachers, parents). Data from three participants were collected via digital recording

device via telephone and data were transcribed by me. Data from the remaining nine participants were collected via email and their data, along with data that was digitally recorded, were coded manually by me.

I began the analysis process of data collected by reading each transcribed interview line by line several times. I did not use any software for data analysis. I organized my data by using an interview matrix that placed transcripts, open codes and axial codes for each participant in columns. According to Saldaña (2016), codes in qualitative inquiry are usually short phrases or single words. I highlighted repeated words and phrases, which allowed me to identify common phrases used by participants. By reading through the transcripts and responses repeatedly, I was able to identify codes and patterns that occurred from the data. According to Williams and Monser (2019), coding allows the researcher the opportunity to identify, organize, and see patterns and categories in qualitative research. Using an interview matrix, I created columns for the codes and themes (see Appendix). By means of open coding, I compared 96 responses in a line by line fashion and identified 266 open codes. After identifying those codes, I was able to summarize 18 axial codes to develop 7 categories of patterns from analysis of data (see Williams & Monser, 2019). Patterns and categories were evident from participants' repetition of similar words, phrases, terms, and concepts. From the codes, patterns and categories, I was able to identify themes from data that revealed the participants' perspectives. Emergent themes developed from the stakeholders' perspectives on family members' role in a child's transition to formal school and how early childhood

stakeholders empower families to support their children's successful transition to formal school emerged.

Research Question 1: Categories and Themes

Study participants addressed RQ1 (What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?) when they responded to IQ1, IQ2, and IQ3 by group. The following section lists IQs by teachers, administrators, and parents, as follows:

- Teachers: IQ1. Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your classroom. IQ2. How do your parents advocate for their children? IQ3. What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?
- Administrators: IQ1. Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your program. IQ2. How do your parents advocate for their children? IQ3. What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?
- Parents: IQ1. Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your child's program. IQ2. How do you advocate for your child? IQ3. What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?)

Responses to IQ1, IQ2, and IQ3 addressed RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Data were collected in response to three IQs aimed at revealing early childhood

stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school.

Synthesis of data resulted that family members, and primarily parents, have multidimensional roles in helping children transition to formal school. Participants expressed their perspectives related to several factors, as follows: (1) the transitioning process can be overwhelming for all stakeholders, (2) parents do not know what they do not know making parent empowerment essential, (3) early childhood program personnel (administrators and teachers) have responsibilities for empowering parents by providing education to family members and opportunities for collaboration with teachers.

Administrators, who participated in this study, emphasized that successful transitions are carefully planned, knowledge is shared with all stakeholders, and collaborative partnerships are mutually beneficial. In the following section, I elaborate on family members' multidimensional roles in helping children transition to formal school. Roles, which emerged as themes from data for RQ1 are the following: (1) empowered parents, (2) engaged stakeholders, (3) informed advocates, and (4) collaborative partners.

Empowered Parents

Data findings revealed that program administrators and teachers shared various opportunities for parents to be actively engaged in their child's early childhood program. Realizing that today's family structure looks different than it did a decade ago, it is important to offer various ways parents' knowledge base is strengthened so they can be empowered. Data collected from teachers suggested they empowered parents by encouraging them to become actively engaged in their child's learning by asking

questions and learning new skills and using new tools, and advocating for their children by voicing their opinions, and knowing their rights and responsibilities. Parents believed their empowerment is important to becoming actively engaged as partners with teachers and advocates for their children because they are knowledgeable about what is going on in their child's classroom and in the early childhood program, and understand how to collaborate with teachers. All stakeholders in this study expressed their belief about doing activities at home that positively contributed to their child's successful transition to formal school and helping them build a collaborative home-school connection. Program administrators stated they also worked to empower parents to become active participants in their program and network within their school communities.

Engaged Stakeholders

Data revealed that parents believed their roles in helping their children transition to formal school is an important one requiring them to be engaged stakeholders. Interviews with teachers revealed that when family members are engaged as stakeholders, they offer a support system for children, which is essential if children are to transition to formal school successfully. Data collected from program administrators confirmed the family's role as engaged stakeholders who are eager to become knowledgeable about the process and to collaborate with teachers. Data from teachers suggested that engagement of parents as stakeholders in the transitioning process results in children being positively engaged in learning and having fewer behavioral issues. Parents indicated that engagement of parents as stakeholders in the transition process provides motivation to learn for children who are transitioning to formal school.

Informed Advocates

Data collected demonstrated that parents stated if they know what the expectations are regarding transitioning into formal school that they can better prepare their children. Some teachers shared that they empowered parents by talking about the transitioning process with parents when the child was as young as two-years old. Teachers stated they wanted parents to know how important they are in the transition process and that it is important for them to pay attention to details and ensure they know about community resources to learn specifically about formal school expectations for children and families. Data from program administrators revealed parents do not know what they do not know, and the education system can be very confusing even for those who have lived in it for several years. They believed parents needed to be empowered by knowing all the services available in their district and school so they can be better advocates for their children.

Collaborative Partners

Teachers' data revealed the various ways they communicate with their parents and families and that they do so to create and maintain awareness by stakeholders. Opportunities are created through Zoom, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and parent meetings. The communication extends from one-way to two-way communication, between home and school, between the teacher and parent. Program administrators shared ways their staff members stress communication between parent and child. Data from both teachers and program administrators' suggested the importance of establishing relationships with parents to makes communication easier. Stakeholders expressed that

they felt comfortable asking questions for clarity and sharing knowledge and tools with each other because everyone – all stakeholders -- had the child's best interest at heart.

Research Question 2: Categories and Themes

The study participants submitted responses to RQ2 (How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?) when they responded to IQ4 through IQ8 by group. The following section lists IQs by teachers, administrators, and parents, as follows:

- Teachers: IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? IQ5: How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?
- Administrators: IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? IQ5: How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? IQ6: Please tell me what

you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

- Teachers: IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? IQ5: How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?
- Parents: IQ4: What does your child's program do to ensure parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? IQ5: How does your child's program empower you to be conscious of your roles in your child's successful transitioning to formal school? IQ6: Please tell me

what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? IQ7: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about parent empowerment with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

Responses to IQ4 through IQ8 addressed RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Responses to RQ2 indicated early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school in the following ways, which are emerging themes from data related to RQ2: (a) providing parent education, (b) communicating for understanding, (c) center and community networks and activities, and (d) establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships.

Providing Parent Education

Data collected from administrators found they encourage parents by educating them. Findings from parent responses revealed they were educated on their child's developmental milestones and on the expectations of transitioning processes. Teachers' data revealed that they educate parents on the transition process and the formal education choices available, which included parent education on the use of technological tools. Teachers and administrators stated they educate parents about their children's

developmental milestones and focus on social emotional learning skills and development and the importance of creating bonds with their children to build trusting relationships.

Communicating for Understanding

Data collected revealed that teachers had an interest in empowering parents by communicating for understanding. Teachers shared that they use 1-way (newsletters and flyers) and 2-way (parent-teacher conferences and parent meetings) communication with their parents and families. Teachers stated their parents advocate for their children by communicating directly with teachers; and if the parent does not feel comfortable with the teacher, they will communicate with the administrator. Parents stated they felt an obligation to keep open communication with their child's teacher and so they would know and understand what was going on with their student. Administrators shared that they were the ones who ensured they are kept abreast of program news, individual classroom activities, and school or local community events. Communication that is clear for all families was important to administrators as they encouraged entries to the program's monthly newsletter, calendar, and reminders through email, flyers, and text messages.

Offering Center and Community Networks and Activities

Data from stakeholders revealed that administrators and teachers offer center and community activities monthly for parents and families to promote engagement and advocacy, by empowering parents through learning opportunities, and creating awareness of community resources, and encouraging parents and families to participate in activities

with their children. Parents said they participated in and volunteered for center activities so that they may be involved in their child's developmental wellbeing.

Establishing Mutually Beneficial Collaborative Relationships

Findings revealed program administrators support parent-child relationships as being central to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being. A teacher shared that she makes parents feel comfortable leaving their children with her so that they will feel comfortable talking with her and sharing any concerns they may have. Parents noted they were appreciative of the opportunities to establish relationships with their child's early childhood program and other families and that such relationships make a child feel motivated and comfortable with transitioning. Data collected from IQs depicted program administrators engage and collaborate within their program by doing "with" and not doing "for" their families. Teachers shared that they communicate with their parents constantly so that they are aware of the progress their child is making towards meeting developmental goals, especially those needed for transitioning. Parent revealed that they collaborated in partnership with their child's teacher by supporting her child's school readiness goals.

Results

In this section, I present the findings that align with the conceptual framework of this study. The twelve participants in this study shared their perspectives as early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. Findings of this study resulted from the twelve participants' responses to eight open-ended IQs. For confidential and anonymity, each participant is identified

using alphanumeric coding in both the interview matrix and the research study. This summary shares the results of the data collected from the participants' responses to eight IQs each as they align with the RQs and conceptual framework.

Research Question 1: Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives

The following section elaborates on findings on RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Four themes that emerged from data collected from participants' responses to RQ1 are as follows: These align with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory (micro-, exo-, meso- systems) and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework of consciousness, competence, sense of meaning, and community participation.

Theme 1: Empowered Parents

Data revealed that all stakeholders believed family members' roles were important in a child's transition to formal school. Participant A3 shared:

Family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school is extremely important. In my opinion a family's role is vital to their child's academic success. As educators we must ensure that proper procedures are in place to ensure a smooth transition to formal school. Families are integral in their child's transition to formal school by gathering information about the receiving school and having the opportunity to share their thoughts, families can begin to feel more prepared for the transition.

This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1977) definition of the microsystem which includes those closest to the child. The microsystem consists of any family member, any early childhood teachers, or early childhood program administrators.

Three teachers (T2, T3, and T4) shared they believe the family's role is vital to a child's successful transition to formal school. T2 shared the family's roles is important in helping a child feel comfortable when transitioning to school and believed those children who have more support from their family members sometimes have fewer behavioral issues when transitioning. Teacher 3 shared, "Active engagement as family members to ensure a positive transition to formal school, I do believe the saying, "It takes a Village to raise a child." T4 shared, "Family is everything. I tell my parents all the time how family is important to a child and how consistency and routines make a difference."

Parents believed it is important for them to know what is going on in their child's classroom so they can continue the home-school connection and also so they will know how to help their child. This aligns with one of the components introduced by Kim and Bryan (2017), consciousness.

Theme 2: Engaged Stakeholders

Findings revealed all early childhood stakeholders believed a parent's active involvement was an important piece of a child's transition. Parents shared they were active in various ways as their schedules allowed because it was important for them to do; that it was the right thing for them to do as parents. Their involvement was both at home, through reading books with their children and bringing what their child learned at school home to continue the child's learning experiences, and also at school by

volunteering wherever needed and by attending parent meetings. A2 shared, “These individuals, referring to parents, help to establish the foundation by which that child will build upon for the rest of their life.” A4 shared, “Our school community encourages them, meaning parents, to be active, engaged, and involved parents in whatever capacity they can.” T3 shared, “I encourage parents to be actively involved in their child’s learning by asking questions, voicing opinions, knowing their rights, and always having an open line of communication.”

The data shared that relates to this theme is aligned with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) mesosystem which covers the microsystem and includes the school environment and school personnel. Kim and Bryan’s Parent Framework (2017) components consciousness and sense of meaning.

Theme 3: Informed Advocates

Data revealed that participants were aware of the magnitude of transitioning to formal school. Early Childhood program teachers shared they had conversations with their parents and parents often referred to the opportunities they were exposed to at their child’s early childhood program such as structure and routines. P1 shared: “I know not too much TV, but the by the time that he's able to go to formal school we can watch little clips about what that looks like.”

A1 shared their program had a formal school transitioning checklist that they created with parents and made sure the list was accessible to transitioning families. A2 shared how she ensures parents and families are knowledgeable of transitioning

expectations: I try to empower them by researching and finding all the information that will be needed to assist them in the process of transitioning to formal school. T4 shared,

From day one we talk about the year being all about the road to kindergarten. I have friends who work in the school system and I get information from them all the time to help me help my students and their parents.

Theme 4: Collaborative Partners

Findings demonstrate that early childhood stakeholders value and understand the need to communicate and to offer various methods of communicating, especially since the onset of COVID-19. Practices shared by early childhood program administrators and teachers included: newsletters, Class Dojo and Zoom meetings since the pandemic, parent-teacher conferences, flyers, and text messages. Teachers agreed that communication has to be open, consistent, and personal. Teachers share information not only about what the program has to offer, but also resources that are available in the community. A2 shared: “All parents receive frequent communication and are informed about any events, activities and news concerning the children and the staff. They are encouraged to build upon the information received and implement it into their daily routines and activities.”

P1’s son has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and she believed it was her responsibility to communicate with her son’s teacher so she would know his progress or any concerns that may occur when he was away from school. T3 also shared, “I am constantly communicating with parents about meeting all the academics and others needs and ensuring them that their child is being offered a high quality education.”

Data collected revealed communication with parents and families was not just about transitioning, or building on the home-school connection, but also how important it is for them as parents to communicate with their child. A3 shared, “Parents don’t know what they don’t know. They might want to advocate for something and don’t know how.”

A2 talked about a communication program that is offered at their school for all parents called LENA Start. A2 shared:

We encourage them, referring to parents, to become active participants in the LENA Start program. This program helps them to learn to communicate and increase their language and conversation ability during the formative years of their child’s life. It is an evidence-based program that has been quite successful in our program. As the parents engage in this 10-week program with their children they learn to self-reflect and how to positively connect with their children and their communities. This also helps the parent to have the confidence and ability to be a strong advocate for their children; supplying them with the ability to implement techniques that allows them to alleviate stress while increasing their parenting abilities. Most importantly the program in conjunction with our program helps them to gain a different perspective and brighter outlook on their child’s future.

T4 shared his responsibility as an educator is to not just the child, but also the entire family. T2 reflected on communicating with her parents so they know their role matters and is important to their child’s academic future. Data shows early childhood stakeholders were aware of and valued partnering together for the future of children. T1

shared when parents advocate for their children, they share any concerns they may have with their child's teacher or the program administrator and they want to know how can they work together to do what is best for the child and their educational development. P2 shared how she partners with her son's early childhood program: "I'm always involved in my child's developmental well-being. I'm present for meetings and academic activities that involves parental involvement. I participate in extracurricular activities, as well. My child's school values all parents' input and incorporate their feedback accordingly."

A2 expounded even more and shared:

All parents must enter into an education partnership agreement with classroom teacher for their child. This requires that the parent must set an educational goal for their child and the teacher enters into that partnership and agrees to assist the parent in helping that child to master the goal that has been set. To me this allows the parent, family member and teacher to work together in support of the child and provide a smooth transition as they accomplish their developmental milestones and move into formal school.

Research Question 2: Stakeholders Promote Empowerment

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Four themes emerged from the data connecting with RQ2 (parent education, open communication, center and community activities, relationships, and collaboration). All four themes represent the early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on "how" empowerment is supported. These emerging themes align with the Bronfenbrenner's

(1977) ecological systems conceptual framework (micro-, macro-, exo- systems) and Kim and Bryan's parent empowerment framework (2017). Following now are the details, examples, and participants' direct quotes that answer RQ2.

Theme 1: Providing Parent Education

The intentional efforts to educate parents was evident throughout data collected from participants. T1 shared that she "always let them know that their child's first teacher." She stated that she lets parents' know that children can learn from so many different things, even as infants they pick up cues from their parents' and family members' voices. A4 shared that her program encourages parents to become effective, gifted advocates for their children and in doing so they help educate them. She went on to say, "Our program offers families the skills they need to enhance their children's development during the first three years of life, crucial developmental years." A1 and P1 shared their programs educate parents by reminding them how important it is to do activities at home with their children and how every moment can be a teachable moment. P2 stated, "My child's school believe that in order to truly help the child, the parent must be educated, as well." P1 and A2 shared their program not only educates parents on transitioning, but also how to communicate with their child to enhance language development and informs them of training opportunities to promote engagement and parent empowerment. A2 stated, "We encourage them to become active participants in the LENA Start program. This program helps them to learn to communicate and increase their language and conversation ability during the formative years of their child's life."

P1 shared she was enrolled in the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) course that her son's program provided information for as an opportunity to educate its parents.

Theme 2: Communicating for Understanding, Open Communication

The data collected shows that communication is consistent, intentional, varies, and is open. T1 and A1 shared that how they communicate with families had changed in light of COVID-19. They had to become innovative and at times transition to virtual learning and communicate and teach using Class Dojo and Zoom. P2 and P3 stated they received electronic communication from their programs that it allowed them to know of upcoming events. P1 shared that she attends parent meetings every third Wednesday of each month and that this is just one way that her son's program communicates with parents. She also stated, "we receive communication about things going on in the communities such as free health screenings A2 said, "In order to ensure that they are kept abreast of the upcoming activities they receive a monthly newsletter, calendar and reminders through email, flyers and text messages through Remind.com." T2 said, "Parents in our center advocate by communicating directly with teachers about their child. If the parent does not feel comfortable with the teacher, they will communicate with the director."

Theme 3: Center and Community Activities and Networks

The participants shared how their or their child's early childhood program creates and executes center and community activities and events. A2 said, "Our center plans and offers monthly activities that are pre-planned with a particular focus. They involve community and educational events that may be beneficial to the families we serve." A4

said, “Involvement at school may also include parents volunteering in the classroom, attending workshops, attending school events, and approving classroom lesson plans.” P1 said, her program sends home flyers about upcoming events. “So I think last week it was a fire prevention and so they had information out in the lobby that we could walk by and gather materials.” A1 said, “This year we had a picnic, a family picnic. The parents came out to mix and mingle with the teachers and other parents and we had fun games and activities for the children to do. Past families also participated.” P4 said, “The childcare center allows parents to create events and ceremonies that are beneficial to all. They give us an input on major decisions that are made for the school.

Theme 4: Establishing Mutually Supportive Collaborative Relationships

Data collected shows having and maintaining a relationship with parents was a step towards empowerment. T1 shared that she gets to know her parents closely by talking with them at drop off and pick up times. She further stated,

So I always offer them encouraging words even just greeting them with a smile or good morning. Ask them how their day is before I ask how the child day is. So I normally try to improve my methods of making them feel comfortable with me. So even if it's just taking the time out and just calling them and say hey happy birthday because if I know it's their birthday or if they achieve something really big or even just attempted to go back to school or even just getting their driving license. So it's basically giving them those positive words so they understand that, OK, I'm your child teacher, but I also can empower you as well.

A2 said, “As a Family Service Worker, I get to know the parents that are on my caseload by talking with them on an individual basis as well as in a group setting.” A3 stated, “To ensure that my parents are empowered to be involved by ensuring that they feel welcomed in the program.” T2 expressed how passionate she is about making sure she has a good relationship with her parents and families. She said, “If an issue occurs, I apologize and directly find a way to solve the problem. I make sure to respect my parents and always remind them I am here to support them.” T3’s expressions were similar as she said, “I always make them feel proud of themselves and encourage them to keep going. If concerns are present, I mention those and possible solutions. The conversation always ends with a positive. I also make sure that a safe environment is established so that feel comfortable, having those critical conversations when need be.” P1 said,

Well, it's a little different. Now, since the parent meetings are virtual. But there is still like there are still moments even during pick up and drop off where you can interact with the parents. And even though it's not formal, you still create bonds but with other parents and other teachers that you come into contact with on regular basis and that helps build community.

Data collected revealed that participants support collaboration and teamwork to empower parents. A2 said,

All parents must enter into an education partnership agreement with classroom teacher for their child. This requires that the parent must set an educational goal for their child and the teacher enters into that partnership and agrees to assist the parent in helping that child to master the goal that has been set. To me this allows

the parent, family member and teacher to work together (collaborate) in support of the child and provide a smooth transition as they accomplish their developmental milestones and move into formal school.

T4 shared that parent consciousness to be aware of their role in their child's transition includes letting his parents know "it's bigger than just them and me; that what we do is preparing their child for the future. They'll be a part of the overall community and how they'll grow up to be reflects what we've done together to prepare them." T3 encourages her parents to collaborate and join with their program by encouraging them to become a member of the policy counsel, become a member of the PTO so that they can keep up with the news about the center.

Summary of Results

A representation summarizing data from RQ1 and RQ2 is shown in Table 2. This table shows a list of themes that resulted from analyzing the data from the twelve early childhood stakeholders, four parents, four program administrators, and four teachers. A synthesis of the data collected from interview and submitted responses to the IQs that were guided by RQs 1 and 2, discovered these predominant themes: family members' roles are important in helping a child transition to school, parents being actively involved is imperative, families should know the expectations for their child's successful transition to formal school, ongoing and various means of communication between early childhood programs and families is essential; parents and early childhood programs must partner together to ensure children successfully transition to formal school.

Table 2

Research Questions Categories and Themes and Findings Alignment With Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives

RQ1 What are early childhood stakeholders' stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?	RQ2: How do early childhood empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?
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Overarching Theme 1: Providing parent education produces empowered parents.

<u>Empowered parents</u> (1) Family members' roles are important and vital	<u>Providing parent education</u> (1) Parent education through learning opportunities
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Overarching theme 2: Communicating for understanding encourages engaged stakeholders.

<u>Engaged Stakeholders</u> (2) Active parents through involvement engagement, advocacy, and empowerment	<u>Communicating for understanding</u> (2) Open communication for leads to understanding
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Overarching Theme 3: Offering center and community networks and activities supports informed advocates.

<u>Informed advocates</u> (3) Transition expectations shared and opportunities extended early	<u>Center & community networks</u> (3) Center and community activities prepare and inform
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Overarching Theme 4: Establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships encourages collaborative partners.

<u>Collaborative Partners</u> (4) Communication on both parts the program and the parent	<u>Establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships</u> (4) Relationship established day one and strengthened over time
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Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research ensures the study is accurately measuring what the research states it will measure. To assure credibility I used multiple data collection strategies, including interview recordings, transcriptions, a reflective journal, and transcript and member checking. After the semistructured interviews were completed, either via phone or email, I transcribed the data and sent participants received a summary of study findings. Participants responded stating the summary accurately captured their responses. Upon completion of my data analysis, I sent findings to participants. No participants reported discrepancy in the findings. I documented notes in a reflective journal during each phone interview and jotted notes while reviewing submitted emailed responses to capture my thoughts and feelings.

Transferability

According to Babbie (2017), when a study's results can be understood beyond the sample study to a different population, external validity is established. External validity is established by gaining significant details from the participants. The details from this study showed transferability to a broader setting while maintaining context-specific richness. The sample size of this study was limited to 12 early childhood stakeholders. The collected data and analyzes represent the 12 early childhood stakeholders within the southern region of the United States. Those who read this study may decide if the findings are applicable to their own programs or schools.

Dependability

Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined dependability as the degree that other researchers can reproduce the study. To achieve dependability in the event someone wants to replicate my study, I summarized the processes involved in the conduct of this study, reported interview protocol followed, and described the data collection process in detail. Each participant received a summary of their responses via email for member checking. All questions were asked or given in the same order.

Confirmability

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the neutrality in reporting findings is confirmability. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the neutrality in reporting findings is confirmability. I was able to be objective and not reveal my personal beliefs about parent empowerment and successfully transitioning of children to formal school. All research data that were shared through the participants' perspectives, did not include identifying information such as participant or program names or locations. Utilizing alphanumeric records, keeping all collected data, and member checking supported the objectivity and conformability in this study.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. In Chapter 4, I addressed the research setting, interview protocol and process, data collection and recording, data management and analysis, and the findings and results. A total of 4 early childhood

parents, 4 early childhood teachers, and 4 early childhood program administrators from six licensed child care centers located in the southern United States shared their perspectives for this basic qualitative study by responding to IQs asked during semistructured interviews via telephone or email. During the data analysis process, I followed Saldaña's (2016) approach to analyze the findings. The interview process, data collection, coding process, theme identification, and data analysis gave me greater insight of early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. In this chapter, I described the process of this study that included interviews from four early childhood parents, four early childhood teachers, and four program administrators. Three stakeholders were interviewed individually over the phone and nine stakeholders submitted their interview responses via my student email address. The telephone interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and were reviewed several times. Transcripts and submitted responses were used to summarize the perspectives. I sent all participants a summary of their interviews or submitted responses via email and asked them to confirm the accuracy by responding to my email. I began the coding process after receiving confirmation from the participants. Several codes, patterns, categories, and themes were recognized.

In Chapter 5, I discuss findings of the study, its limitations, researcher's recommendations, implications for positive social change, and conclusion of this study will be discussed. The four overarching themes that emerged from a synthesis of RQ1 and RQ2 were: (1) providing parent education produces empowered parents, (2) communicating for understanding encourages engaged stakeholders, (3) offering center

and community networks and activities supports informed advocates, (4) establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships encourages collaborative partners (see Table 2). In Chapter 5, I discuss my interpretations of the findings of this study, present limitations of this study, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. The aim of this qualitative study was to examine both a local and national problem demonstrated by a gap in practice in the literature so that early childhood educators can better understand their roles in empowering parents. I answered two RQs in the study:

RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Based on IRB approval, data were collected from twelve early childhood stakeholders comprising four parents, four program administrators, and four teachers during two phases: (a) through digitally recorded telephone interviews, and (b) through typed responses that were received via email. Each participant submitted their responses about their perspectives to eight IQs about their roles in empowering parents so that children can successfully transition to formal school and how they empowered parents. The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Walden University IRB allowed me to offer three options for volunteers to participate in my study. Participants could request a recorded telephone interview, submit their voice recorded responses via email, or email their responses to the eight IQs. The chosen study design, a basic qualitative study with interviews, allowed me to gain the perspectives of early

childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. My concentration was on the viewpoints of the participants about how they promote parent empowerment and how parents believed their child's early childhood program empowered them.

The data analysis process that resulted from this study was based on the perspectives of 12 early childhood stakeholders who lived in the Southern region of the United States. Chapter 2 included the conceptual framework that provided the foundation of this study. I researched peer-reviewed journal articles for relevant research-based findings regarding concepts of parent empowerment to transition children to formal school successfully. My goal in the comprehensive review of the literature was to understand educator capacity, family involvement, family engagement, family advocacy, family empowerment, formal school transitions, parent capacity, school readiness, the role of parents, and the role of other stakeholders. In Chapter 3, I presented the methodology, research design, and RQs and provided the link to the conceptual framework. I presented the processes for recruiting and selecting volunteers and processes involved in data collection. In Chapter 4, I expounded on the setting where the data was collected, the process of data collection and data analysis, and the demographics of the participants, and I reported the findings of the study related to RQs 1 and 2. Evidence of trustworthiness was depicted by describing steps used to ensure credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the study. Chapter 5 includes the findings with a connection to the current literature and conceptual framework. I also present key findings

of the study, limitations, recommendations, implications for social change, and conclusive remarks to the study.

I learned from this study that early childhood stakeholders, parents, program administrators, and teachers, value the consistent and deliberate efforts of their programs to educate parents, to encourage networking in the community, be advocates for their children, and collaborate with teachers in hopes of supporting children as they successfully transition into formal school. All participants described the numerous ways they partner and communicate with and among families to promote parent empowerment and to share center and community resources.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I reveal and discuss the key findings of this study in relation to the literature from Chapter 2 and the conceptual frameworks that guided my study. The data collected and the findings from this study provide knowledge of common and innovative ways to encourage parents to become involved and then engaged, which leads to empowering them to help increase the chances of their children successfully transitioning to formal school. My findings aligned with those of Douglass et al. (2019) and Marti et al. (2018). Douglass et al. found that empowering parents to promote their engagement in schools yields positive results toward their children's ability to transition to formal school successfully and is linked to their academic achievement throughout primary school education. Marti et al. confirmed that successful transitioning of children to formal school is dependent on parents being empowered, which is essential for closing the academic achievement gap.

In the following section I concentrate on findings from this study grounded on early childhood stakeholders' perspectives. Data analysis revealed themes from open coding to answer RQs 1 and 2. I identified the following four overarching themes (see Table 2) after carefully and repeatedly examining data from the perspectives of early childhood education stakeholders on parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school:

1. Providing parent education produces empowered parents.
2. Communicating for understanding encourages engaged stakeholders.
3. Offering center and community networks and activities supports informed advocates.
4. Establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships encourages collaborative partners.

Collection of these predominant themes helped me answer the two RQs and aided me in filling a gap in practice in the literature regarding early childhood educators' roles in promoting parent empowerment in their programs. Based on the findings of my study and existing literature, I present recommendations for further study later in this chapter.

Providing Parent Education Produces Empowered Parents

Bronfenbrenner (1986) explained the significance of family in a child's life in his ecological theory and stressed the importance of family in the child's education, especially during the early years. Program managers shared the various ways they are intentional in informing parents of how important their roles are in a child's transition to formal education. "Families play an important role in the transition process, and engaging

families in this transition is a responsibility shared by families, schools, and communities” (Walsh et al., 2018, p. 655).

Participants shared how they use resources such as the parent, family, and community engagement framework to learn and teach parents how family engagement promotes positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities (see Kurt, 2016; Kim & Bryan, 2017). According to Kurt (2016), teaching, supporting, and engaging parents in early childhood education is a task that is the responsibility of the early childhood education profession. Researchers suggested that families need support and empowerment to develop relationships that will help children transition to formal school (Griebeling and Gilbert, 2020). T4 shared that he lets parents know how important it is for them to pay attention to detail and that if they are too busy, to let him know how he can better help them to be the parent their child needs. T2 stated children who typically have more support from other family members will sometimes have fewer behavioral issues when transitioning. A2 said she makes sure her families know that they help to establish the foundation upon which their child will build for the rest of their life. These views by parents in my study aligned with findings by Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2019b), that “Parents’ sense of self-efficacy, or their belief that they impact their children’s school success, informs whether they engage in activities to facilitate their children’s educational development” (p. 541). Further, other researchers proposed that when a child’s home environment is supportive, they are more likely to achieve academic success (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

Communicating for Understanding Encourages Engaged Stakeholders.

A parent's perceptions and perspectives shape their beliefs. Some parents have limited skill sets and knowledge base and do not feel equipped to contribute to their child's learning. This leads to the lack of parent involvement and engagement. A2 stated her program has different activities planned at the center each month and parents are encouraged to participate in them with their children. Researchers suggested parental involvement includes engaging in learning activities in the home and establishing an encouraging relationship with their child (Marti et al., 2018). T1 and P1 said their programs send activities home that the parent and child can participate in together. Often it is a continuation of learning from the child's classroom. Researchers suggested that involvement from parents is their individual right and their responsibility, that parent involvement is a social need (Castro et al., 2015). T2 said her parents are involved and engaged by signing their children up for activities that are provided by the center. The parents can also participate and be engaged by actively bringing items from home to school. "Parents are more likely to participate as change agents when they are provided with a menu of participation options from which they can select based on their work schedules, interests, and comfort level:" (Hsiao et al., 2018, p. 49). In Chapter 2 I presented what I believed is a continuum to parent empowerment: involvement, engagement, advocacy, and empowerment. Researchers found that children show higher school readiness skills transitioning into school when their parents are engaged in home-learning activities with them (Tao et al., 2019). The first step is getting parents involved; once they are involved, they become engaged and learn how to advocate for their

children. This is when they are empowered. “The goal of parental empowerment is the realization that parents should not be passive recipients of decisions made by others (e.g., teachers, administrators) but be active advocates focused on self-control, self-efficacy, and self-determination” (Hsiao et al., 2018, p. 45). Researchers suggested that students’ academic achievement is connected to parents’ early educational involvement (Boyle & Benner, 2020).

Offering Center and Community Networks and Activities Supports Informed Advocates

Albrecht (2021) found in the early days of colonial North America, parents were the only persons responsible for their child’s education. A4 and T4 stated “parents don’t know what they don’t know” and most of their parents are young and just do not know how to best help their child. “Parents’ own conception of what school readiness entails, as well as their own expectations of school, shape what they do with their children to prepare them for kindergarten; therefore, any kindergarten transitioning program must include a strong family component” (Griebing & Gilbert, 2020, p. 195). Researchers found that a parent’s attitude and beliefs about academic achievement are seen in their children. If the parent’s expectations were low, the children’s grades were low (Castro et al., 2015). “Given that children are more often entering formal schooling at an early age, parents and teachers should have consistent and realistic expectations for what readiness for this early classroom environment should look like” (Miller & Kehl, 2019, p. 451). Researchers found that parents’ academic expectations for their children are related to a child’s reading and math achievement in kindergarten (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012).

Puccioni (2015) found that children's academic success entering kindergarten was linked to their parents' transition practices and according to Kurt (2016), teaching, supporting and engaging parents in early childhood education is a task that is the responsibility of the early childhood education profession. T4 stated he believes as a teacher it was his responsibility to help not just the children, but also their families. He also shared that he tells his parents all the time how important family is to a child and how consistency and routines make a difference. A4 said successful transitions are planned. A1 shared how her program partners with a local elementary school and a teacher comes to talk to parents and transitioning teachers about transitioning to formal school. She gives a letter listing school-readiness skills and talks about what to expect in their child's new environment. "Parents' own conception of what school readiness entails, as well as their own expectations of school, shape what they do with their children to prepare them for kindergarten; therefore, any kindergarten transitioning program must include a strong family component" (Griebing & Gilbert, 2020, p. 195). A2 said as her parents' advocate, she provides them with an overview of what is expected and in the past has engaged them in mock sessions with different scenarios they may encounter. She found that this type of role play helps to encourage them to feel empowered and confident.

Establishing Mutually Supportive Collaborative Relationships Encourages

Collaborative Partners

P2 shared that her child's school communicates in various way that helps them to be aware of every milestone their child has mastered and what their next step should be. The program shares information when it comes to transitioning and provides free

resources, community networking, and sometimes trainings to educate parents. The COVID-19 pandemic caused providers to become innovative in how they communicated with families. T1 said her program used Class Dojo, Zoom, and text messages through RemindMe.com to keep an open line of communication with families because there are mutual benefits when communication between home and school is understood. T2 stated that she communicates with her parents to share information concerning their child and if there is ever a problem, she apologizes, finds an acceptable solution, and seeks a deeper level of understanding. She said she respects her parents and makes it a point to let them know she is there for them. “The degree of alignment among teachers and parents influence how successfully children make the transition to kindergarten” (Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez, 2019a, p. 16). A1 shared that parents have an opportunity to share their concerns in parent meetings and also through an annual survey. She added that parents were welcomed to give their input on the program and also make recommendations for changes. Researchers suggested that parents will be involved more when early childhood programs encourage or invite them to do so (Barnett et al., 2020). T4 said he wants his parents to be aware and knowledgeable of what is going on with their child and invites them to share things that may go on with the child outside of the classroom. “Parents who have better relationships with teachers may become more invested in their child’s education and schools” (Jeon et al., 2020, p. 10). A3 stated parents in her program provide input on what is taught in their child’s classroom and that ongoing, open communication honors and supports the parent-child relationships that are central to a child’s healthy development, school readiness. “Research shows efforts that foster

communication between home and school contexts are best suited to support children's transition to kindergarten" (Cutler & Slicker, 2020, p. 793).

A4 said their program starts building relationships with families during the enrollment process. A3 shared that she ensures parents are provided a sense of empowerment by ensuring that her program collaborates with community programs. This allows parents to become aware of community resources and how those resources can support their families. She continued to say collaboration in their program means doing "with" and not doing "for" our families. "Effective school transitions rely on collaboration and are dependent on relationships between schools and preschool settings, families and schools, and among service providers within the local community" (Hugo et al., 2018, p. 244). Researchers suggested that children should be prepared early for school. When they enter school unprepared, it increases the academic gap (Marti et al., 2018). P1 said when children are enrolled in early childhood programs that partner with parents and families, children get a head start of what is to come when they enter formal school. Not all families have the knowledge or resources to support their child's successful transition to kindergarten (Cutler & Slicker, 2020). Researchers found that the parent's perspectives of teachers' invitation to be a part of school transitions is important piece of the process (Puccioni et al., 2020).

Limitations of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic, sample size, researcher bias, and participants' willingness to participate are possible limitations for this study. This study was limited to twelve early childhood stakeholders, four parents who had at least one child under the

age of six, and four program administrators and four teachers who had at least three years of experience in their roles, from six early childhood programs across two states in the Southern United States. I conducted the first three interviews via telephone.

While conducting this study in the midst of COVID-19, Walden's IRB allowed me to expanded opportunities for volunteers to participate to include submission of voice recorded responses and emailed responses to my Walden email address. Prior to requesting for the expansion, recruiting participants was extremely challenging. Participants shared due to busy schedules or lack of comfort they could not participate in a 45 minute, digitally recorded phone interview. Once the updated recruitment flyers were sent to the program administrators, qualifying participants emailed me right away sharing their interest in my study. The last nine participants emailed their responses to eight semistructured IQs. A possible limitation of the study is that ten of the twelve participants were female and all of the program administrators were female. Females are dominating in early childhood education so the population of participants was typical. As a former early childhood educator and administrator for many years, I had my personal opinions and beliefs regarding parent empowerment and early childhood stakeholders' role and responsibilities regarding children transitioning to formal school. However, I cautiously conducted my interviews and provided summaries of submitted responses not sharing my opinions or perspectives so that I would not influence what participants freely shared. Also to assist me with addressing my potential biases, I kept a journal of thoughts, and to ensure accuracy, after I transcribed all the interviews and read and reread

the emailed responses, I emailed each participant a summary for member checking as part of the credibility of the study data.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Results of the study reflect the perspectives of twelve early childhood stakeholders, four parents, four program administrators, and four teachers. The participants, who had diverse backgrounds represented six early childhood programs across the Southern United States. Participants revealed parent involvement is key and essential to a child's development and academic achievement. The level in which a parent is involved with the child varies, is evident in the early childhood setting, but begins at home as participants expressed how the parent is a child's first teacher. Once programs get parents and families involved, it leads to engagement. The continuum goes on to include advocacy and that leads to empowerment.

Based on the finding of this study, I have the following recommendations. First, I recommend further research on how early childhood programs implement a continuum of parental involvement (involvement, engagement, advocacy, empowerment) since the literature supports that it. The first step to parental empowerment is parent involvement, which leads to more successful formal school transitions for children. When teachers do not empower parents to promote their engagement and child advocacy, children enter school not ready to learn (Douglass et al., 2019; Puccioni). Douglass et al. (2019) found empowering parents to promote their engagement in schools yields positive results

toward their children's ability to transition to formal school successfully, and is linked to their academic achievement throughout primary school education. Secondly, I recommend a study of children's kindergarten entry scores who were enrolled in early childhood programs that offered parent empowerment initiatives. Researchers found that children who are enrolled in early childhood intervention programs show academic achievement and gains in cognitive development (Leung et al., 2009). Boyle and Wilkinson (2018) suggested it is the collaborative efforts of schools, communities, parents, and early childhood programs that ensure children have the best transition possible into school. Thirdly, I recommend research on the collaboration with local school districts and early childhood programs and tracking the partnership to see if more children are entering school ready to learn because of it. Based on the Kim and Bryan parent empowerment framework, empowered parents recognize their capacities to ensure their academic achievement (competence). They understand that all stakeholders are not equal in power yet are influential based on their awareness and knowledge from parent education (consciousness). Empowered parents partner in a collaborative manner and network in their communities and their children's schools (community participation) to achieve desired outcomes. Lastly, because this study was limited to the Southern region of the United States, I recommend this study be replicated to include a larger region of participants to include more diverse population.

Implications

This study addressed a gap in the literature on practice so that early childhood program stakeholders would have a better understanding of their roles in empowering

parents. Findings from this study have the potential impact for positive social change for early childhood program staff, parents of young children, and children entering formal school, and local school districts. Participants shared that parents do not know what they do not know. Positive change can be achieved by early childhood programs educating parents and families of the importance of their roles regarding children's transitioning to formal school and the affect that their involvement, engagement, advocacy, and empowerment have on their child's academic achievement and overall wellbeing as they transition to formal. Positive change can be achieved as more parents partner and collaborate with school personnel to become a more effective "first teachers" and also benefit from the invaluable of communicating with their children and about their children. Lastly, positive change can happen when community members are educated on their roles in ensuring children are ready to learn when they enter formal school and all stakeholders, parents, programs, school districts, and communities, partner together to make this possible.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of early childhood stakeholders on parent empowerment to build their capacities to support their children's successful transition to formal school. Findings of my study are potentially making a contribution to the gap in literature on practice. In Chapter 5, I presented findings, implications, and recommendations based on the purpose of this study which was to explore early childhood stakeholders' perspectives of parent empowerment to successfully transition children to formal school. This basic qualitative study with

interviews was conducted to examine a local problem of parents and families not being empowered with the knowledge, with the consciousness to ensure their children are ready to learn when they enter formal school. The conceptual framework based on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory (micro-, macro-, and exo- systems) and Kim and Bryan's (2017) parent empowerment framework (consciousness, competence, sense of meaning, and community participation) guided this study. Early childhood stakeholders, who participated in this study, recognized the important role that those closest to a child play as advocates for active engagement at home and at school. Finding of this study revealed four overarching themes that emerged from themes found during analysis of data collected from interviews. Eight IQs were asked during semistructured interviews that stemmed from two RQs exploring early childhood stakeholders' perspectives. Recommendations from findings for social change may potentially lead to children successfully transitioning into formal school in the southern region of United States. Theme 1 speaks to how providing parent education produces empowered parents; Theme 2 addresses how communicating for understanding encourages engaged stakeholders; Theme 3 speaks to how offering center and community networks and activities supports informed advocates; and Theme 4 addresses how establishing mutually supportive collaborative relationships encourages collaborative partners. Findings revealed that stakeholders understand that they have responsibilities and roles to empower parents so that they have the capacities to help prepare their children for the transition into formal school. Further studies are needed to identify how

early childhood programs can more effectively educate and inform themselves, parents, and families of their roles and help children transition to formal school.

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Appendix A: Research and Interview Questions

For the purpose of this study, early childhood stakeholders are program administrators and teachers, with at least three years of job-related experiences in early childhood education, or parents of at least one child, under the age of six years old, who is enrolled in the program.

RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?

Program Administrators

IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your program.

Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ2: How do your parents advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.

IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ5: How do you empower parents in your program to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

Teachers

IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your classroom. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ2: How do your parents advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.

IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ5: How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?

IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

Parents

IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your child's program. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ2: How do you advocate for your child? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.

IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ4: What does your child's program do to ensure parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ5: How does your child's program empower you to be conscious of your roles in your child's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ6: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?

IQ7: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...

IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about parent empowerment with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

Appendix B: Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions by Stakeholder

Groups

Program Administrator Research Questions	Program Administrator Interview Questions
<p>RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?</p> <p>RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?</p>	<p>IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your program. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ2: How do parents in your program advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.</p> <p>IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ5: How do you empower parents in your program to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?</p>
Teacher Research Questions	Teacher Interview Questions

<p>RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?</p> <p>RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?</p>	<p>IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your classroom. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ2: How do parents in your program advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.</p> <p>IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ5: How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?</p> <p>IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?</p>
<p>Parent Research Questions</p>	<p>Parent Interview Questions</p>
<p>RQ1: What are early childhood stakeholders' perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?</p>	<p>IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your child's program. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ2: How do you advocate for your child? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.</p> <p>IQ3: What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p>

<p>RQ2: How do early childhood stakeholders empower parents to support their children's successful transition to formal school?</p>	<p>IQ4: What does your child's program do to ensure parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.</p> <p>IQ5: How does your child's program empower you to be conscious of your roles in your child's successful transitioning to formal school? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ6: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?</p> <p>IQ7: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community? Prompt: I heard you say...Please talk to me more about...</p> <p>IQ8: Are there any further points you would like to make about parent empowering to successfully transition their children to formal school?</p>
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Appendix C: Interview Matrix

Early Childhood Stakeholders' Perspectives on Parent Empowerment to Successfully Transition Children to Formal School Interview Questions & Responses

P1...1 = 1st School Parent #
 A1...1 = 1st School Administrator #
 T1...1 = 1st School Teacher #
 P2...6 = 2nd-6th School Parent #
 A2...2 = 2nd School Administrator #
 T2...6 = 2nd-6th School Teacher #

IQ: 1 OK, so first please tell me about parent involvement and parent engagement in your classroom. What does it look like? How does it look now or before COVID?

IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your program. Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ1: Please tell me about parent involvement and engagement in your child's program.

Part. Info.	Response	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Research Alignment
T1	<p>OK, so basically for parent involvement. We include the class Dojo where we. Can send out information. To the parents of about anything as pertaining to upcoming meetings. Uh, we also have virtual meetings. through to zoom And then we also send home Flyers to show upcoming events. Our daily sheets are sent home. You know, if we have any questions or concerns, we write it on the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Dojo • Zoom • Flyers • Daily Sheets • Homework • Phone call • Face to face at delivery/pickup • Schedule meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-way, 2-way communication • Usage of technology for communication • Direct face to face communication • Correspondence communication 	<p>“Research shows efforts that foster communication between home and school contexts are best suited to support children’s transition to kindergarten” (Cutler and Slicker, 2020, p. 793).</p>

	<p>daily sheets that sent home daily. We talk with parents when they pick up. we send home homework Like the family tree. They could send that back as well. And, uh, we just try to make sure that we, uh, we, you know, give them a phone call and and then they can schedule a meeting and we could even do it by zoom or telephone.</p>			
T2	<p>Parent involvement and engagement consist of electronic communication that allows the parent to actively engage in classroom events. Parents can be involved and engaged by signing their children up for activities that are provided by the center. The parents can also participate and be engaged by actively bringing items from home to school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic communication • Child activities • Home to school items 		
T3	<p>Parent involvement and engagement in my classroom is expressed in the form of newsletters, mail to parents' interactive activities that include parent invitation. They are engaged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Zoom Meetings • Parent-teacher conferences • Home visits • Weekly contacts 		

	through communication amongst teachers by the following ways: zoom meetings, parent conferences, home visits and weekly contacts.			
T4	Things look different since COVID, but I still talk with my parents about their child, how they're doing, how they're developing, meeting goals and things like that. I be sure they get their child's daily sheets and our newsletter and calendars too. I let parents know how important it is for them to pay attention to detail and that if they're too busy, to let me know how I can better help them.			
P1	<p>A lot of stuff we still have, like the parent meetings and opportunities to to participate even though it looks a lot different. So a lot of the things that we get to do virtually or it's like outside so you can...It's an open space so that we can still keep each other and are waiting state.</p> <p>So I think last week it was a fire prevention. And so</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Meetings • Fire Prevention • Handouts • Open Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Awareness • 1-way, 2-way communication • In person meetings • Parents active involvement 	

	<p>they had information out in the lobby that we could walk by and gather materials and things like that, and then find something that we participated in that exercise.</p> <p>There is the parent meeting every third Wednesday from 11:45-12:45. I just transferred my little guy. And I'm excited about my first time being able to participate in one of these parent meetings, but I'm looking forward to it and I try to keep open communication with his teacher and let them know what's going on with him.</p>			
P2	<p>Parent Engagement is one of the top priorities in my child's school. They have a Parent Board, and electives are chosen in order to moderate the group. This Board is in charge of creating ideas and resources that will keep parents engage and involved in their child's education. My child's school values all parents input and incorporate their feedback accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Board w/ elected officers • Values input • Gives feedback 		

P3	My child attends (Redacted). In order to get parents involved, parent meetings are created. (Redacted) have designated days that parents are asked to volunteer inside the classroom too.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Meetings • Volunteer 		
P4	My children attend (Redacted). My children's childcare center gives parents roles or duties to fulfill in order to get involved. They would ask the parents to volunteer; then, reward them accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider initiated roles • P. Volunteer • P. Rewards 		
A1	Monthly activities where we send home for the families to complete together; invite parents to come in to read stories; some parents hold parties or special snacks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly activities • Volunteer opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' active involvement 	To achieve this home-school connection, early childhood teachers have to be open and receptive to building positive relationships with families (Jeon et al., 2020). "Parents who have better relationships with teachers may become more invested in their child's education and schools" (Jeon et al., 2020, p. 10).
A2	As a Family Service Worker in Early Head Start I work closely with the parents of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work 1:1 • Center activities • Newsletters • Calendars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person communication 	

	<p>children enrolled in the program to assist them with enhancing and/or improving their parenting skills. There are different activities planned at the center each month and parents are encouraged to participate in them with their children. In order to ensure that they are kept abreast of the upcoming activities they receive a monthly newsletter, calendar and reminders through email, flyers and text messages through Remind.com.</p> <p>These activities that are preplanned focus on monthly events that are celebrated worldwide as well as community and educational events that may be beneficial to the families we serve. As a Family Service Worker parents are provided with resource materials such as literature, speakers, and information on subjects of interest and subjects that can benefit them personally and/or their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails • Flyers • Remind.com • Encourage participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage of technology for communication • Correspondence communication 	
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A3	<p>Parent Engagement is extremely important in the program that I manage. In Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Parent engagement is at the center of what our work with the children and families that we serve. The Parent Family Community Engagement Framework drives our family engagement support with our families. Family engagement within our program means doing “with” and not doing “for” our families. The Office of Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework is a guide to learning how family engagement promotes positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities. Our parents are asked to serve as active participants in our program; their ideals are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment - “doing “with” and not doing “for” • Asked to volunteer • Asked to share ideas/suggestions 		
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	appreciated and welcomed.			
A4	Parental involvement in our program includes parents being a part of our Policy Council, Parent Committee, school readiness, and Health Advisory Meetings. Involvement at school may also include parents volunteering in the classroom, attending workshops, attending school events, and approving classroom lesson plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Council • Decision Makers • Leadership • Parent Committee • School readiness, and Health Advisory Meetings • Volunteering in the classroom • Attending workshops • Attending school events • Approving classroom lesson plans. 		

IQ# 2 How do your parents advocate for their children. Probes.

IQ2: How do your parents advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please elaborate on ways they advocate for their children.

IQ2: How do you advocate for your child?

Part. Info.	Response	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Grid Alignment
T1	OK, normally when they normally advocate for their, uh, their children, they'll either let us know what their concerns are. Uh, it is. They let me know if it's regarding education or just them just transitioning into the classroom. Stay informal, so they feel comfortable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P voice concerns • T address concerns • Ages & Stages Questionnaire • Parent Education re child dev. stages/domains 	Parent Education Parents' partnership	

	<p>voicing their concerns. Doing open house orientation. UM, we also sent home. Ages and stages and they ask about if they have any concerns. And then once we review over those concerns, we work to help them. With their, uh, their concerns as well.</p> <p>Probe...I heard you say... Ages and Stages is a questionnaire and it goes by their development on the ask them specific questions pertaining to their chronological age. It basically breaks down the development of the each domains and and it asks those specific questions about the developmental skills of their child age at that time. And then we. Also have a social and emotional that's part of the ages and stages, so we can kind of better get a better understanding. Uh, their social emotional if there's a uh, issue with that, or if there's some kind of lacking in that area as well, but it's all based on the developmental, and it's also based on</p>			
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	their chronological age at the time that the questionnaire is rendered, OK.			
T2	The parents in our center advocate by communicating directly with teachers about their child. If the parent does not feel comfortable with the teacher, they will communicate with the director.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication either with teacher or admin 	Open communication	
T3	Parents for their children by being their first teacher. They stay involved, always voice questions and concerns and raise their child to be the best citizen that they can possibly be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's first teacher • Encourage involvement • Ask questions • Prepare child for their futures 	Parents' partnership	
T4	I would say by bringing them to school because they know it's good for them. My parents know about resources we offer at the center and sometimes they tell me about things they hear about that's going on in the community. If there's a problem with something they bring it to my attention. I consider that being a way to advocate for their children.			
P1	Uh, just basically, uh communications, so if if there's a change from his ISP or if something happens and he goes to the doctor and things like that, I let them know what's going on.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-way, 2-way communication 	Researchers suggested that students' academic achievement is connected to parents' early educational

	<p>And I tell them what it is that we're doing at home. If they need anything, just being able to communicate with them and make sure that they have the documentation. If there's something that needs to be changed and things like that. Also, they say he doesn't talk at school and that this out of his character and so we make videos and I show them so it won't slow down communication.</p>			involvement (Boyle & Benner, 2020).
P2	<p>I'm always involved in my child's developmental well-being. I present for meetings and academic activities that involves parental involvement. I participate in extracurricular activities, as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings • Participate in academic activities with children • Help supervise/encourage children's full participation • Participate in extracurricular activities 	Partnership	
P3	<p>Being a single working dad is hard. I try my best to advocate for my child by attending as many meetings as possible. I come to the school at least twice out of a month on my lunch break in order to read to the students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend meetings • Volunteer (reading) 		
P4	<p>I volunteer by doing cross guard duty in order to keep the kids safe. I volunteer inside of the classrooms, also. Well before covid, I would help sanitize the rooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer (crossing guard, sanitize classrooms) 		
A1	<p>Attending the parent meetings; attending</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Parent meetings 	Parent involvement	

	parent-teacher conferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent-teacher conferences 		
A2	<p>Our parents are encouraged to be the first teacher, mentor and advocate for their child. Therefore, we host monthly parent meetings that are conducted by the parents. As with any organization there has to be a spokesperson for the group. Our parents choose among themselves by voting for individuals to hold office of president, vice president, secretary, health advisory representative, school readiness representative and policy council representative. These individuals are chosen to be the voice for the entire group. They communicate with management and the board of directors to address their concerns and needs for them and their families. The policy council representative is the voice that advocates for the overall functions of the staff and also ensures that the best practices, policies and procedures are in place and implemented at all times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's first teacher • Encouraged to Advocate and mentor their child • Can campaign and hold office • Communicate with other stakeholders • Receive frequent communication • LENA Start and LENA Grow participants • Implement resources into daily activities and routines 	Parents' partnership	

	<p>All parents receive frequent communication and are encouraged about any events, activities and news concerning the children and the staff. They are encouraged to build upon the information received and implement it into their daily routines and activities.</p> <p>We encourage them to become active participants in the LENA Start and LENA Grow program. This program helps them to learn to communicate and increase their language and conversation ability during the formative years of their child's life. It is an evidence based program that has been quite successful in our program. As the parents engage in this 10-week program with their children they learn to self-reflect and how to positively connect with their children and their communities. This also helps the parent to have the confidence and ability to be a strong advocate for their children; supplying them with the ability to implement techniques that</p>			
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	allows them to alleviate stress while increasing their parenting abilities. Most importantly the program in conjunction with our program helps them to gain a different perspective and brighter outlook on their child's future.			
A3	Our parents advocate for their children by providing input on their children's academic success. Parents provide input on what is taught in their child's classroom, activities that are hosted within the program and by providing educational goals for their children as well. It also honors and supports the parent-child relationships that are central to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being. The Office of Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework is a guide to learning how family engagement promotes positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input on academic success • Provide input on classroom activities • Support parent-child relationships • 	Parents' active involvement	
A4	Our parents advocate for their children by being a part of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A part of decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' active involvement 	

	<p>planning and decision-making of the program. Having a voice on committees in which they are voted into these positions by other families helps them to not advocate for their children but what's best for all children. Our program offers families the skills they need to enhance their children's development during the first three years of life, crucial developmental years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize skills taught to enhance their child's development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' active partnership 	
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IQ#3 What are your perspectives on family members' roles in their child's transition to formal school?

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Part. Info.	Response	Open Coding	Axial Coding Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>OK, the family members. The family role of like the parent. OK, uh, with the family role for like transitioning them into a school setting. It's basically for me just to make sure that they pick the correct school. And looking up their motto and how and what they say about how they work with the children. Is it a best fit for the child? Uh, as well as you know, doing the research of that school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School options School contributions Community Offerings 	Parent Awareness	<p>It was recommended that additional research is conducted on how to successfully support a partnership between teachers and families as well as bring awareness to various cultures and their backgrounds (Hoffman et al., 2020).</p>

	<p>And then also, if the child has. A disability also has to look in so far as is this the best fit? Are there going to be able to meet? You know the child goals on the IEP. All the service is still going to be brought. Sit down up. And basically having a strong foundation with just not only like just the teachers, but like it's a community A whole staff, the principal. the social worker, you know? What do they bring to the? Table or is. Getting ready to transition that child into the school.</p>			
T2	<p>Family members' roles are important in helping the child feel comfortable in transitioning to school. Children who typically have more support from other family members will sometimes have fewer behavioral issues when transitioning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for comfort and successful transition • Reduces behavioral issues when transitioning 		
T3	<p>Active engagement as family members to ensure a positive transition to formal school, I do believe the saying, "It takes a Village to raise a child"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active to ensure a positive transition • "It takes a Village to raise a child" 		
T4	<p>Oh, wow. Family is everything. I tell my parents all the time how family is important to a child</p>			

	<p>and how consistency and routines make a difference. The family looks different now that how it did when I was growing up. Sometimes my parents will say this is my sister or my brother and it's really a childhood friend or coworker or cousin. It's somebody they have in their child's life because they are a part of their support. As far as with transitioning to school families play a vital role.</p>			
P1	<p>So of course, just staying involved, knowing what's going on in the classroom. Uh, making sure that you're working with them at home that you communicate. You discuss things with them. You read books with them and knowing what the expectations are going into that new school so that you can better prepare them so. It's not like a culture shock or just a shock in general when they make that transition just to keep on talking about it.</p> <p>I know not too much TV, but the by the time that he's able to go to formal school we can watch little clips about what that looks like. Up and coming in early childhood education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to be actively involved • Home –school connection • Communicate • Know the expectations • Prepare and be prepared 	Parents' active involvement	<p>“Effective school transitions rely on collaboration and are dependent on relationships between schools and preschool settings, families and schools, and among service providers within the local community” (Hugo et al., 2018, p. 244).</p>

	gives him a head start anyway because. You know there there is a little bit more structure the older that he gets that would help him transition into that formal education.			
P2	I think that family involvement is very important when it comes to any transition. “The Big School”, as they would call it, is a very big change for them. It’s a whole new environment. They have new routines; most of all, new curriculum and material. So, encouragement and motivation is needed from siblings and other members of the family in order to make the child feel motivated and willing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important • New environment • New routines • Encouragement and motivation needed 	Family as a support system	
P3	Especially during these trying times, family is highly needed for motivation and as a support system too. In order for they child to be motivated, members of the family must be motivated and dedicated, also. The children are looking to us for assurance that everything will be ok and that they are able to succeed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family is needed • Family motivates and has to be motivated • Family is a support system • Children look for assurance 	Family’s active involvement	
P4	Everyone needs their family for support. They set examples for one another to succeed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone needs family 		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone needs their family's support • Family sets examples for each other 		
A1	<p>Sometimes I feel like they don't. I mean some of them just want to push their kids. And regarding transitioning I think they put it on the teachers or the school itself instead of taking responsibility as the the parent and being the child's first teacher.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel they do not exist • Pass the responsibility on to the school or teachers • Don't take responsibility as their child's first teacher 	Lack of family involvement	<p>According to Kurt (2016), teaching, supporting and engaging parents in early childhood education is a task that is the responsibility of the early childhood education profession.</p> <p>Researchers identified a strong relationship between a family's expectations for their children and a child's educational habits (Castro et al., 2015).</p>
A2	<p>I believe that parents and/or any family member that is actively involved in the life of the child has a very important role in that child's life. These individuals help to establish the foundation by which that child will build upon for the rest of their life. In the program where I work, even though it is Early Head Start,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being actively involved is very important • Establish foundation • Education Partnership Agreement 	Active involvement	

	<p>we encourage full participation as if the children are in a “formal school” setting. Periodically, all children enrolled have homework assignments that should be completed and returned to school. All parents must enter into an education partnership agreement with classroom teacher for their child. This requires that the parent must set an educational goal for their child and the teacher enters into that partnership and agrees to assist the parent in helping that child to master the goal that has been set. To me this allows the parent, family member and teacher to work together in support of the child and provide a smooth transition as they accomplish their developmental milestones and move into formal school.</p>			
A3	<p>Family members’ roles in their child’s transition to formal school is extremely important. In my opinion a family’s role is vital to their child’s academic success. As educators we must ensure that proper procedures are in place to ensure a smooth transition to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely important • Vital to child’s academic success • “As educators we must ensure that proper procedures are in place to ensure a smooth transition to formal school.” 		

	<p>formal school. first Families are integral in their child's transition to formal school by gathering information about the receiving school and having the opportunity to share their thoughts, families can begin to feel more prepared for the transition. Their excitement builds, and they realize the schools are ready for their children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of transition school • Transitioning school can be ready for their child 		
A4	<p>Successful transitions for our families are planned. This process starts when the child enters our program, parents receive a School Readiness Checklist at the beginning of their child's last school year in our program. This checklist was developed with our parents to ensure that the transitioning child has the necessary skills to succeed in formal school. Each child has an individual transition plan. This plan documents the conversations between the parents and staff in regards to their transition. Transition plan conversations are recorded on our home visit and parent-teacher conference forms. Family Service hosts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions are planned • School Readiness Checklist • Parents involved with development • Individual Transition Plans • Transition conversations • Visit transitioning school 		

	transition meetings for our parents. Our transitioning students can visit and spend a day in one of our partner community public school classrooms before the school year ends.			
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IQ#4 What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children?

IQ4: What do you do to ensure your parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children? Prompts: I heard you say...Please give me an example.

IQ4: What does your child's program do to ensure parents are empowered to be involved, engaged, and advocate for their children?

Part. Info.	Response	Codes	Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>Uh, basically, as with my parents, as I always let them know that their child's first teacher.</p> <p>And and I also let them know. The things that they teach the children, they also they can learn from just different things, just even as being an infant, you know them, saying they're picking up on their voice.</p> <p>They're picking up words, so I always encourage them to to sing to them.</p> <p>Talk to them like a like. A grown conversation.</p> <p>Basically getting it on social and emotional bond just by holding them up, even even when they sleep.</p> <p>Social emotional bonds just by holding them up, even even when they sleep, still hold them.</p> <p>But uh, but even those social bonds, that social that so, so. The bond is very important.</p> <p>So I would let them know that you know sometimes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform ○ Affirm ○ Teach <p>DAP</p>	Parent Education	According to Kurt (2016), parental involvement and parent education create positive change in parenting practices during the early years.

	<p>It's giving a hug Basically have that affection. Back and forth so they can feel it. Also encourage parents them to read to them, even if they don't have books. Read newspaper, read magazines just even when in grocery shopping. Having them to just point out different stuff that they that the kid is like they normally like to eat. You know these are XYZ. You know this. Is this something that you like or? So pretty much. Just basically I just want to make sure that they know that they. Are their child's first teacher.</p>			
T2	<p>I actively engage by communicating with my parents. Actively having the parent share information with me concerning their child. If an issue occurs, I apologize and directly find a way to solve the problem. I make sure to respect my parents and always remind them I am here to support them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively engage • Invite parents to share • Apologize when necessary • Show respect • Remind them of support 	Mutual respect	
T3	<p>I always use a hamburger approach when conversing with parents. I always make them feel proud of themselves and encourage them to keep going. If concerns are present, I mention those and possible solutions. The conversation always ends with a positive. I also make sure that a safe environment is established so that feel comfortable, having those critical conversations when need be.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamburger approach (method) • Encourage them • Make them feel proud • Offer solutions • Be positive • Safe environment • Make them comfortable 		
T4	<p>I talk to my parents daily when they drop off and pick up. If we are under COVID mandates and I don't get to see them because they can't bring their child to class I will send</p>			

	<p>an email or call them to keep in touch. I want them to still be aware of what's going on with their child no matter the situation. I tell them to do things with their children at home and even if they have older children, let the child in my class be a part of things with them too, make it a family thing. Sometimes I may have shy parent that don't talk much or may feel some type of way because I am a man teaching four and five year olds, so I am conscious of that. I tell them anytime they are uncomfortable to let me know, but I assure them that their child's best interest is where my heart is.</p>			
P1	<p>They let us know what is going on which I appreciate they send home newsletters; they tell you or sometimes you get Remind Me so they still make sure that you know what is happening.</p> <p>Uh, my family service Uhm, worker likes objectives, and we meet every month. A car was one of my goals last year. Transportation was important to get to work and a reliable car was sensible and just really safe in general. So we have like those opportunities and they use those in the parent meetings as. Well, like things that that the families' resources that families can use they they provide.</p> <p>And I love that there's an open door policy between me and his teacher. So if I ever have any concerns, then I can bring those up and she I I always ask if there's anything that's going on; if he's doing anything new; if he's struggling with anything so I can try to work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Remind.me • Help me set goals • Open-door policy • Comfortable sharing concerns 	Open communication	<p>Researchers suggested that families need support and empowerment to develop relationships that will help transitioning to formal school (Griebling and Gilbert, 2020).</p>

	on it at home too so he's getting the same thing at home as he's getting at school, so we're So that action partner with them.			
P2	As I stated previously, they have a Parent Board, and electives are chosen in order to moderate the group. This Board is in charge of creating ideas and resources that will keep parents engage and involved in their child's education. My child's school provides parents with free resources that assists with education, job training, housing, and Infant care as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Board • Elected officers • Free resources on job training, housing, etc. 		
P3	(Redacted) requires parents to attend parent meetings. They give away prizes also as a reward for parent participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent meetings • Reward participation 		
P4	(Redacted) have monthly meetings. In these meetings, parents are encouraged to be involved. They give giveaways, also.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings • Reward participation 		
A1	This year we had a picnic, a family picnic. So that the parents can just come out to mix and mingle with the teachers and had fun games and activities for the children to do in the past, participated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family picnic • Mix and Mingle events for family 	Family/ community activities	
A2	As a Family Service Worker, I get to know the parents that are on my caseload by talking with them on an individual basis as well as in a group setting. They are asked to complete a Family Outcome Assessment that allows me to help them to identify their strengths and/or weaknesses. Once those have been established they are encouraged to establish a goal and work towards accomplishing the goal. I become their biggest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Outcome Assessment • Set goals • Nurturing parenting classes 		

	<p>cheerleader by providing them resources that will help them to accomplish their goal(s). The parents are also offered Nurturing Parenting classes that allow them to identify and work on any shortcoming in areas that they feel they there is a void. As I advocate for them, I like to reassure them that I am there to help them to help themselves. Therefore, I try to stay abreast of any and all resources that may be helpful to my clientele.</p>			
A3	<p>To ensure that my parents are empowered to be involved by ensuring that they feel welcomed in the program. I work to ensure that this is achieved by asking for parents input on various aspects of their program, providing surveys to families, scheduling parent meetings and we also ensure this through program governance in our program with elected individuals who hold various roles such as Parent President, Vice President and Secretary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make them feel welcomed • Input on various aspects of the program • Elected officers 	School- home collaboration	
A4	<p>To encourage parents to become effective gifted advocates, we help to educate them. Parents don't know what they don't know, and the education system can be very confusing even for those who have lived in it for several years. Parents need to know all of the services available in their district and school. They might want to advocate for something and don't know how, so our Family Service Workers start building relationships during the enrollment process. Our school community encourages them to be active,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate them • Family Services Worker • Parent Meetings 		

	engaged, and involved parents in whatever capacity they can. Throughout the school year, we invite parents to a meeting to make them aware of our services and the many ways they can support their children's growth and development.			
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IQ#5 Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?

IQ5: How do you empower parents in your program to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school?

IQ5: How does your child's program empower you to be conscious of your roles in your child's successful transitioning to formal school?

Part. Info.	Response	Codes	Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>Let's see this is a good question, UM? Basically I tried to make sure that they're comfortable.</p> <p>Uh, leaving their children with me.</p> <p>Uh, matter the age because sometimes you have to speak to parents in different ways.</p> <p>Of have you come across because some of the younger kids you have to.</p> <p>Kind of have to make them understand what's important about education.</p> <p>Of them being involved</p> <p>How to balance between them going to school and bringing their child to school?</p> <p>So I always offer them.</p> <p>Encouraging words even just greeting them with a smile or good morning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of comfort • Time Management • Life Balance • Encourage • Inquire • Communicate • Affirmation 	<p>Relationship</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Family Advocacy</p>	

	<p>Ask them how their day is before I ask how the child day is. So I want to. I normally try to improve my methods of making them feel comfortable with me. So even if it's just taking the time out and just calling them and say hey happy birthday 'cause if I know it's their birthday or if they achieve something really big or even just attempted to go back to school or even just getting their driving license. So it's basically giving them those positive words. So they understand that, OK, I'm your child teacher, but I also can empower you as well.</p>			
T2	<p>If their child has a hard time transitioning, I try to plan with them better ways of transitioning. I remind the parent that their role matters and impacts their child. When the child feels the parent supports them by going to school and brings excitement. The child will begin to respond based on the emotions of their parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan with parents • Affirm the parent's role and impactful and important 		
T3	<p>I always use a hamburger approach when conversing with parents. I always make them feel proud of themselves and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamburger approach (method) • Encourage them 		

	<p>encourage them to keep going. If concerns are present, I mention those and possible solutions. The conversation always ends with a positive. I also make sure that a safe environment is established so that feel comfortable, having those critical conversations when need be.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make them feel proud • Offer solutions • Be positive • Safe environment • Make them comfortable 		
T4	<p>From day one we talk about the year being all about the road to kindergarten. I have friends who work in the school system and I get information from them all the time to help me help my students and their parents. Sometimes my children haven't been anywhere else before coming to our school and that's challenging, but I've been at my center now for 5 years and the parents and children know me. They can't wait to get to Mr. (Redacted)'s class. So I would say I empower them by making sure they know what they need to know so when their child leaves me and goes to kindergarten both them and their child is ready.</p>			
P1	<p>They're always talking about attendance. They they also have assessments and things like that,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about attendance • Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School- home communication • Open communication 	<p>Cutler and Slicker (2020) suggested that how a child adjusts to</p>

	<p>but biweekly goals that they discussed with us, so we know what it is like the milestones that they're working towards. They also have some readiness goals and they have school readiness meetings which happens to be a part of again this year but we're not sure yet so we can see like later with the goals are with the agencies are with the agency is doing and so that we can know what's working, what's not, or with me; a little bit of extra care, so I just like knowing what's going on, and I'm saying because when they reach their goals then they're even closer to achieving that goal to be ready when they transition to formal school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-weekly goals • School-readiness goals • Milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent training • Goal setting 	<p>transitioning to formal school is connected to the child's relationship with home and school.</p>
P2	<p>My child's school provides parents with information that helps them to be aware of every milestone that has been completed; then, what their next step should be. My child's school keeps parents well-informed when it comes to transitioning. Resources are free; then, sometimes trainings are provide in order to educate as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on milestones • Provide resources • Trainings 		
P3	<p>My child's school provides parents with at least one project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family projects 		

	that must be completed as a family. This projects gives parents an opportunity to bond with their kids and to see what they are doing in class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create family bonds 		
P4	They have us to practice routines that would be beneficial to them transitioning. So, resources are provided that informs us on how to do it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice routines • Provide resources 		
A1	Educate them on the importance. Doing activities with their kids at home. For example, while doing cooking activities. Just talk to them about, you know what they're doing. Use every moment as a teachable moment and most of. Put in the newsletter from me. Just to encourage. Them to always be involved with their kids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate them • Communicate • “Every moment is a teachable moment” • Newsletters • Encourage involvement 		Researchers suggested parental involvement includes engaging in learning activities in the home and establishing an encouraging relationship with their child (Martí et al., 2018).
A2	I try to empower them by researching and finding all the information that will be needed to assist them in the process of transitioning to formal school. I make myself available to assist them in obtaining whatever documents and documentation that will be needed to present to the school of their choice. As their advocate, I also like to provide them with an overview of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching information to give to parents • Be available and accessible • Provide mock scenarios of what could happen • Encourage confidence 		“We need to learn more about how to engage parents who may be uninvolved in learning activities both at home and at school, and how ECE providers can increase parent engagement across settings” (Barnett et al., 2020, p. 272).

	what is expected and to engage them in mock sessions with different scenarios in which they may encounter. I have found that this type of role play helps to encourage them to feel empowered and confident in their ability to having a smooth transition process.			
A3	As stated before I ensure that parents have a sense of empowerment through our program with efforts to support families by doing “with” and not “for” our families. We engage in monthly School Readiness Meetings with families to discuss the importance of the transition to Kindergarten and also to discuss the programs goals for transition and how those goals can be supported at home and at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support families by doing “with” and not “for” our families • Monthly School-readiness meetings • Educate on importance of the transition to Kindergarten 		
A4	Being involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved 		

IQ#6 Please tell me what you do in your classroom to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community?

IQ6: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?

IQ6: Please tell me what your child’s program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through their consciousness, competence, and sense of meaning?

Part Info	Response	Codes	Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>OK, so like. With the community as a whole OK. So normally with that we also have Communication about the communities where we have those free health screenings that the children get outside of that, we also have like community events. Uh, we have LENA Grow and LENA home. We have like. Different communities that reach out like about vision and dental care. Parenting classes, so we offer those. We'll give them Flyers if there's an event that's coming up, and so they know, hey, OK, this was offered out in the community up there. Also, we offer them resources. They you know, will get information by word of mouth. I know a lot of things in the community you know, is pretty much through the University of Memphis. Uh, they offer a lot of community resources as well, but I know far as pertaining to this over general stuff. You know they do have those free. Uh, service is for all Health fairs. Uh, to make sure that their children get their physicals and stuff done.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform • Free resources • Health Screenings • LENA Grow • LENA Home • Vision • Dental • Parenting Classes • Flyers • Resources • University of Memphis • Physicals 	<p>1-way, 2-way communication Parent Education DAP Family Advocacy Health and Well-being</p>	
T2	<p>I make sure to listen to what the parent is saying. I ask questions to get a better understanding. I share feedback to communicate what we have discussed. I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listen to understand • Share feedback/communicate 		

	always make sure to place myself in my parents' shoes. I continue to remind the parents that I am here to support them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify with parents • Remind them of my support 		
T3	I encourage parents to be actively involved in their Child's learning ask questions, voice opinions, know your rights always have an open line of communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage active participation • Encourage to ask questions, voice opinions • Open communication 		
T4	I make sure they know they matter, that they are important, that they make not a difference, but THE difference. I always give encouraging words and praise even the little things I see that they do because being a parent is not easy and sometimes they don't get that support from where you'd think they'd get it so I try to make the difference for them.			
P1	A sense of meaning...They tell us we are their first teacher and they encourage me by saying, oh, he's doing this, we've noticed this so they they acknowledge that effort and things that they see happen at home because. Well, whether you do or whether you don't. Interact with your baby when they're at home is noticeable when you go to school, so they're very good at encouraging. All right, so and I'm saying, OK, so now this is our next step. Uh, yeah, so there. They're encouraging about what he's doing and the progress that he's making and just. Keep going. Yeah, he's doing that well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a sense of meaning • Child's first teacher • Inform of developmental growth • Encourage interactions when at home 		
P2	As I stated, my child's school values parental involvement. Parent engage is one of their top priorities. My child's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values parental involvement • A top priority 		

	<p>school believe that in order to truly help the child, the parent must be educated, as well. The school believes firmly that learning starts at home first. So, the school provides resources such as Boards, mandatory meetings, trainings in order to educate the parent on any misconception, or success that they need information on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate parents • Learning starts at home first • Provide resources • Parent boards • Meetings • Training 		
P3	<p>A recognition day is created for parents. Just as kids are honored with certificates in school for excellence, parents are rewarded with certificates to acknowledge all great things and hard work that parents have put in when it comes to involvement inside the school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent recognition day for involvement 		
P4	<p>The childcare center allows parents to create events and ceremonies that are beneficial to all. They give them an input on major decisions that are made for the school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents can create events • Parents give input on major decisions 		
A1	<p>Sometimes we send home information where they. They're giving out stuff or whatever is going on in the community, like free food And things like that. So we just basically. Send it home to the parents to let them. Know that if they're in need or something there, you know they can reach out or attend those functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send information home • Community resources • Be there as needed 		
A2	<p>Many of the parents that I work with on a daily basis have come from a poverty stricken area. Most of them have not had or presently do not have a good support system. They lack self-esteem and often have trust issues. Therefore, first and foremost, I feel that I have to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to gain trust • Build rapport • Individual methods "there is no cookie cutter example that can be developed" • Code of Ethics for Social Workers 		

	<p>gain their trust. I have to assure them that I can be trusted and their information and situation is safe with me. Once I have been able to establish this type of rapport with them and they realize that they can trust me it opens the door for us to create a bond. I feel that each situation is different and each individual is unique. Therefore, there is no cookie cutter example that can be developed. Each case is going to be different and what works for one may not work for the other. The Code of Ethics for Social Workers is a good place to start however. Knowing what should be done, how one should conduct themselves when dealing with the client and being able to separate one's personal preferences and feelings is a good game changer in helping empower the client.</p>			
A3	<p>As stated before I ensure that parents have a sense of empowerment through our program with efforts to support families by doing "with" and not "for" our families. We engage in monthly School Readiness Meetings with families to discuss the importance of the transition to Kindergarten and also to discuss the programs goals for transition and how those goals can be supported at home and at school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support families by doing "with" and not "for" our families • Monthly School-readiness meetings • Educate on importance of the transition to Kindergarten 		
A4	<p>To encourage parents to become effective gifted advocates, we help to educate them. Parents don't know what they don't know, and the education system can be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate them • Family Services Worker • Parent Meetings 		

	<p>very confusing even for those who have lived in it for several years. Parents need to know all of the services available in their district and school. They might want to advocate for something and don't know how, so our Family Service Workers start building relationships during the enrollment process. Our school community encourages them to be active, engaged, and involved parents in whatever capacity they can. Throughout the school year, we invite parents to meetings to make them aware of our services and the many ways they can support their children's growth and development.</p>			
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IQ# 7 How do you empower parents in your classroom to be conscious of their roles in their children's successful transitioning to formal school?

IQ7: Please tell me what you do in your program to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community?

IQ7: Please tell me what your child's program does to give parents a sense of empowerment through a sense of community with the school and greater community?

Part. Info.	Response	Codes	Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>OK, so normally what happens is that the parents also set up goals that they want to achieve, either for them or for their child. But we also have a transition plan. That we go over with. The parents so they can kind of get. A better idea of how would it look when they get ready to transition. Oh, thank get to pick So many</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting • Plan • Choices • Educate • Provide • Regular, Charter, Private 	<p>Parent Education Goal Setting</p>	

	<p>So many schools that they they want their child to go to.</p> <p>And then once we discuss the transition process of going into the school system, we, you know remind them you know, this is their choice is where they want them to go. But we also provide them, you know, lists of school.</p> <p>That they may be interested there or something they can look at.</p> <p>So not only just regular school with charter schools, private schools.</p> <p>Uh, it's surrounding where they live, because I know sometimes it's based on, you know where you live.</p> <p>Is where your household, but you know, we also let them know there's others.</p> <p>You know charter schools.</p> <p>That doesn't do the ZIP code based things up, so we once we. Do the transition.</p> <p>Uh, plan, then we'll just follow up with them and as it gets closer at the time of seeing, you know, have they made a choice?</p> <p>But then also their goals that they do, they also follow up with that as well, just to make sure you know they're staying on task.</p>			
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	And if they need some additional resources.			
T2	I make sure to provide outside resources from the community that would support the family. Especially if there is something in the community that the whole family may enjoy, I suggest it to the family. I also share with parents' activities they can sign their kids up for through our center. I allow the parents to make the choice of what they want their kids to participate in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide community resources • Share center activities • Allow parent choice 		
T3	I encourage parents to become a member of the policy counsel. Become a member of the PTO. Keep up with the news about your school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage parents • Parent council • PTO • Be informed 		
T4	I guess by letting them know it's bigger than just them and me, that what we do is preparing their child for the future. They'll be a part of the overall community and how they'll grow up to be reflects what we've done together to prepare them.			
P1	Well, it's a little different. Now, since the parent meetings are virtual. But there is still like there are still moments even during pick up and drop off where you can interact with with the parents. And even though it's not formal, you still create bonds but with other parents and other teachers. That you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual parent meetings • Create bonds • Meet and greet • Community events/activities 		

	<p>come into contact with regular basis so that helps build community. Look forward to dropping some off and seeing. Uh, we try to greet him and say, like I said, they had fire prevention week, so the fire station and the Dalmatian dog came. So that's incorporating the community and I've seen them. Bring the trucks and ladders, things like that so that we can recognize community helpers. Other programs like AmeriCorps, who's gonna be working with my baby starting this week I believe. The work also part of, you know, the community and getting those added resources and building community.</p>			
P2	<p>The Parent Board would be an excellent example for this one. They would create events that would provide free infant necessities to families. The Parent Board would always create events or give out consistent information that facilitated the need of the child and their parent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Board • Provide free resources 		
P3	<p>When it comes to community involvement, (Redacted) give parents the autonomy to create ideas in order to plan events that will motivate parents to get</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent autonomy • Motivate parents 		

	involved in their child's education.			
P4	Again, the school allows parents to create events, such as fundraisers, luncheons, etc. in order to keep parents engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create events • Fundraisers • Parent luncheons 		
A1	We talk about the family. We give them information and we Conduct a survey. And, uh, just asking them, you know, to be in their input anything that they would like to see change. Uh, with this program. We do invite them to. So do we have a Facebook page we do at them to? To follow us or like us on. Second, the parent Advisory Board. Which is kind of like just made up of. Parents saying it started off wanting being excited about it, but then you know, when it's time to meet, everybody can't meet, but they're basically. It's kind of the same to establish. We're gonna do some fundraisers. Uh, questions and try to get them to. Just kind of get the parents involved in coming to parent meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about family • Parent surveys • Parent input • Follow Facebook page • Social media • Parent Advisory board • Fundraisers • Parent meetings 		
A2	Parents are frequently encouraged to become active participants in their community. They are allowed to have community meetings on site. Community leaders and business owners are invited to attend parent meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged to participate • Invite community leaders to programs • Job fairs • Community events 		

	and keep parents informed of any changes or updates that might be beneficial to them. We also host job fairs and other community events that are family friendly to encourage and motivate our parent clientele.			
A3	We ensure that parents are provided a sense of empowerment by ensuring that we collaborate with community programs. This in turn assists with parents being made aware of community resources and how those resources can support their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with community programs • Provide community resources 		
A4	We create a holistic experience to get families connected within the community by bringing in community sponsors and encouraging our families to join community boards to get them to lend their voices. When you know the family behind the student that you see every day, I think there is a more profound sense of commitment that comes from that which empowers the parents and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic experience • Connection with community • 		

IQ#8 Are there any further points you would like to make about your role in empowering parents with the capacity to successfully transition their children to formal school?

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Part. Info.	Response	Codes	Patterns/Categories	Grid Alignment
T1	<p>Uh, just. Making sure that the parents feel comfortable enough. To you know, reach out to the school and just having them to just take a tour of the school that they think about transitioning their child to, because it's very important for them to understand that you know they don't want just just told their children in their in or not, they're unhappy. But I always encourage them to take advantage. You know, ask around about their motto, staff if it's a strong school especially you know if you know you have, five or six people say This is a really good school and then you may have like one or two friends. They all they're not gonna like it. So that's when it. Comes to where you may not need to go by word of mouth Ask questions yourself Especially take a tour. It's very important because I am at that point with my daughter. Now because she's going to get ready. To turn 3 and. Looks like, she will most likely qualify for IEP. OK, so so even just looking up on the Internet, just giving those tools of them to make sure that they are their child's first teacher. I make sure they know. My parents, if they need support. Let me know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship • Comfortable • Affirm • Encourage • Tour • Understand • Internet • Tools • Right fit • Network 	Relationship Parent Advocacy Parent Education	Researcher found that establishing a relationship between families and teachers is important for a child's successful transition to formal school (Purtell et al., 2020).

	So then we can kind of go walk through those steps of of trying to help them find the school. That's that's the right fit for their child.			
T2	I always approach my parents with compassion and understanding. Parenting can be very tough whether you are married, single, or dating. I always encourage the parents to know they are doing a great job. I feel as I motivate the parents, it can help the child feel supported in coming to school. When the parent and child have strong attachments, it can be hard for them to transition to school. I make sure to affirm with the child; they can receive love at school. I do this by providing social-emotional support by giving them hugs or whatever is needed for them to feel safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach with compassion and understanding • Motivate parents • Affirm their child is loved • Provide social-emotional support 		
T3	I am constantly communicating with parents about meeting all the academics and others needs and ensuring them that their child is being offered a high quality education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly communicate • Parent Meetings • Educate parents • Assurance 		
T4	I believe as a teacher it's my responsibility to help not just the children, but their families. Most of my parents are young and they don't know what they don't know. I think our program does a good job by having ways for them to be a part and to just do whatever they can to participate in their child's early education.			
P1	Oh I, I just forget to bring up. There is a new program that is. Oh I was searching for it, but it's training institute I believe. Uh, and so that was something that was offered when I went through the school Flyers, but it's community wide and it's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLTI Parent Leadership Training Institute 		The community is also a stakeholder. (Kang, et al., 2017) found that if children are going to successfully transition to formal school, there must

	<p>about pairing, engagement and parent empowerment. I signed up for it. It's a 20-week program and it teaches you about second level community level college. Uh, it focuses on concerns that you have in the community and it's a community projects and it is also another way that parents can get together and collaborate and try and do things to give our babies like a greater chance as they transition into formal school.</p> <p>PLTI Parent Leadership Training Institute</p>			<p>be interactions and relationship with child, family, school, and community.</p>
P2	<p>I think family is very important when it comes to the social and academic growth of any child and adult, alike. Family engagement should always be a top priority. My child's school values that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important for social and academic growth • Family engagement 		
P3	<p>Family is the key to everything. Without the support from the ones that you love or the ones who are designated to love you, there would be no hope for continuance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Family is the key to everything" • "no hope for continuance" without family 		
P4	<p>Family is very important. They are the support system that you must have.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family is important • A must for support 		
A1	<p>I have a friend of mine that. Teaches kindergarten and I ask her to come and meet with the teachers. Every year to tell them A little bit of what they expect for their Children to know and be able to do when they do come to. Kindergarten and She reads the book Kindergarten here we come. And you know, she talks about Transitions and gives them a letter about skills and the new environment. And she asks the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with elementary teacher • Meets with staff and parents • Transition conversations 		<p>"Recommendations for practice include prioritizing communication about kindergarten readiness among teachers and parents, such as sharing information and concerns about assessments and local kindergarten expectations"</p>

	parents if they have any questions or anything and also the teachers			(Hatcher et al., 2012, p. 1).
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