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Administrators' Perceptions of their Role in Increasing Parental Involvement

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Jessica Grant

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Administrators' Perceptions of their Role in Increasing Parental Involvement

by

Jessica Grant

MA, Trinity University, 2015

BS, Bowie State, 2011

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

Parental involvement is a critical component of student academic achievement. However, parental involvement in a Mid-Atlantic school district was dwindling, specifically in elementary schools. The current study examined school administrators' roles in involving parents in academic activities at elementary schools in the district. A conceptual framework based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's process model of parental involvement guides the study. The research questions examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, possible challenges they face when addressing low parental involvement and underlying factors to low parental involvement. In addition, the study gathered data on administrators' beliefs about the underlying issue of low parental involvement. A basic qualitative design allowed eight administrators to share their roles and the challenges involving parents. Each interview was transcribed, and statements were analyzed. Findings from the study indicate that only three of the eight administrators understood and implemented the district's approach to parental involvement. The data from the study were therefore used in a policy paper with recommendations on how to align administrators' roles in improving parental involvement with the district's parental involvement guideline. Hoover-Dempsey and Sadler's parental involvement model provided communication strategies to support school-home communication for parental involvement invitations. The potential for positive social change may include increased understanding of administrators' influence on parents resulting in opportunities to improve parental involvement and ultimately increased academic outcomes for students, which may lead to better lives as they become working adults.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the phenomenal leaders who understand the importance of collaboration to enhance school partnerships to impact the academic progress of all students. In addition, I dedicate this work to my loving family and friends, who have inspired me to grow and learn professionally, and to those who continually encouraged me throughout the process.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem investigated in the current study is low parental involvement in elementary schools in a Mid-Atlantic school district. The lack of parental involvement often results in parents not understanding grade-level expectations and the support students need for at-home assignment completion. The lack of parental involvement may have contributed to the low student success rates in the district. According to Li and Fischer (2017), a significant amount of sociological and other academic research has focused on parental involvement and student achievement, with solid and consistent findings supporting parents' critical role in children's education. In this present study, I examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement in elementary schools in a Mid-Atlantic school district.

The district has a total of 208 schools and a school climate survey was conducted for each school to assess how parents, students, and teachers perceived the function of schools in the district when it came to learning. The data collected indicated the district's average parental involvement percentage of 79.6%. The district has 123 elementary schools and 10 of those elementary schools had 0%–56% (see Table 1) parental involvement percentages, with an average rate of 43%. Although one of the 10 elementary schools selected had a parental involvement percentage of 56%, which is comparable to the district's average of 56.8%, the schools selected overall represent the lowest parental involvement percentages for all elementary schools. Because of the

COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the district does not have 2019–2020 climate survey data, but it anticipates collecting additional data during the 2021–2022 school year.

Table 1

Elementary Schools' Parental Involvement Results

| Elementary schools | Parental involvement % |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 50 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 48.50 |
| 4 | 38.50 |
| 5 | 51.50 |
| 6 | 35 |
| 7 | 54.30 |
| 8 | 42.30 |
| 9 | 48.50 |
| 10 | 56 |

Note. Adapted from the study district's 2017 school climate survey.

In the current study, I examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement in elementary schools in a Mid-Atlantic school district. Increased parental involvement may positively affect student achievement, and a lack of participation may negatively affect student achievement. According to Kalaycı and Öz (2018), a growing body of literature has recognized parental involvement's critical role in students' educational development. However, how best to connect parents with their children's schools to support student achievement is poorly understood. According to Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017), there is a concern regarding parental involvement and what constitutes effective parental involvement in students' education; the authors stated that educators, parents, and community members might differ regarding effective involvement practices and how each can contribute to the educational

process. According to the district's 2017 school climate survey data, the 10 schools with the lowest parental involvement percentages represent lower percentages than the district's overall average. The district does not have a plan to address the gap in parental involvement. This current study may assist the district in developing the needed action plan.

School administrators are charged with improving parental involvement, so it is necessary to address that gap of low parental involvement at local school sites and determine the administrator's role in engaging parents to improve parental involvement. Parental involvement is not a one-size-fits-all model, and numerous factors impact the level of parental involvement (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). As reported by the Department of Education for the state where the study site is located, the school district for this present study is rated 22 out of 25 based on School Quality and Student Success indicator measures, reflecting parental involvement percentages. Hanson and Pugliese (2020) shared reporting from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) indicating a parental involvement rate of 53.5% for kindergarten through 5th grade in the district. Additionally, parental involvement percentages were reduced to 27% when households with income at or above the federal poverty level were considered.

In the current study, I identified administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement for a Mid-Atlantic school district. Conducting an examination of possible underlying issues at the local school sites may help administrators identify obstacles that impact parental involvement efforts. According to

Li and Fischer (2017), many parents face barriers to involvement in their children's education, such as a lack of familiarity with the school system or challenges in communicating with school staff.

Rationale

Low parental involvement may negatively impact the school's overall achievement. According to Alghazo (2016), parental involvement can be viewed as a tool for helping to close achievement gaps. Haskins and Jacobsen (2017) also identified parental involvement as support and active participation. Schools need the support of parents to impact student learning at all levels of education. More importantly, educators are striving to close learning gaps due to the pandemic, so school administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement are vital to increase parental involvement. According to Curry and Holter (2019), educational leaders and teachers may misunderstand the efforts of parents, and their efforts to encourage the involvement of parents may prove ineffective. To develop long-lasting parental involvement opportunities, decisions to involve parents should be intentional to foster trust and respect between the school community and parents.

I reviewed the district's elementary school climate survey results in the current study. The average overall parental involvement percentage for the 123 elementary schools in the district was 56.8%; however, the average parental involvement percentage for the district's 208 schools was 79.6%; this percentage represents 123 elementary schools, 24 middle schools, 29 high schools, and 28 specialty schools. The district

defined parental involvement as the following: (a) parents regularly checking grades through the online portal, (b) parents speaking with teachers regularly, (c) parents assisting with homework each day, (d) parents holding conversations about the school day with their students, (e) parents ensuring that students arrive at school on time each day, and (f) parents regularly participating in school-wide activities. A study by Boonk et al. (2018) advanced the idea that parental involvement is associated with higher achievement for children from higher social class backgrounds. The study further revealed that achievement gaps between children of more and less educated mothers became nonexistent if parental involvement levels were high.

Currently, the school district has below-state-average test scores for math and reading. I examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement in the elementary schools within the district. Research has evidenced that parent involvement significantly affects children's educational results. There is evidence that schools with strong and positive relationships with parents have been significantly successful. Despite this validating evidence, school administrators have struggled to find innovative methods to connect and reach the parents.

Research has revealed that a quality relationship between school and parents is more instrumental to children's education than educational frameworks' direct instructional support (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Children can learn quickly from within the social environment in their early stages of growth; therefore, instructional frameworks only play a role in adding to what the children have learned from their social

environment. Therefore, intentional parent involvement in children's education can significantly impact a child's educational outcomes. Research has acknowledged that principals play a crucial role in setting up an environment for the growth of parent involvement in school and education for children. According to Wirawan et al. (2019), Effective principal–teacher relationships positively impacted teacher's instructional practices and this leads to many students and school achievements. Additionally, teachers have depicted that the school setting and the administrators' support are critical elements for parent involvement.

Administrators' understanding of their role in increasing parents' school involvement may impact students' academic success. Therefore, children's educational success happens when there are positive partnerships between school administration and parents. The changing demographics and growth of diversity in the school setting significantly impact children's academic success. Increasing parental involvement in schools increases the chances of children's academic success. However, barriers that hinder the development and growth of parent involvement in schools are the lack of teacher training related to parental involvement and insufficient skills for administrators to administer the outlined frameworks for parental involvement. Administrators hold a critical role in ensuring increased parental involvement in schools; thus, they should consider adopting the frameworks to promote children's academic success through parental collaboration efforts.

Definition of Terms

To better understand research on administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, the following terms are defined:

Academic success: Student learning that leads to improved knowledge of instructional frameworks (Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020).

Administrator: The person(s) who builds a strong foundation for long-term transactional development (Kalkan et al., 2020).

Parental involvement: Parental support and active participation (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017).

Partnerships: Schools understanding of parent perspectives to potentially help educators and policy makers in their quest to develop effective partnerships with parents (Curry & Holter, 2019).

Perceptions: The way individuals perceive themselves as having the most significant influence; however, teachers and parents hold the power of influence in varying areas (Ni et al., 2018).

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because administrators' identified their role in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when attempting to involve parents and underlying factors that may impact low parental involvement within the school district. There is a need to understand how to increase parental involvement in K–12 school systems that can ultimately benefit the children in their pursuit to achieve high academic standards. The issue of parental involvement has become a national focus and

is a vital component of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; Young et al., 2017). Because student achievement often increases with parental involvement, parents must recognize and engage in their roles as partners in the educational process (Park et al., 2017).

Today, the role of school administration has changed from a managerial role to one that is focused on student achievement with parental and community engagement. Due to this change, principals have to employ an entrepreneurial perspective to improve their schools' quality. The need for schools to share accountability, responsibility, and shared academic success among teachers, parents, and administrators (Mac Iver et al., 2018). There is a growing concern over the importance of parent involvement in the journey for academic success in schools, administrators perceive that they hold a vital role in beginning parent involvement programs. Without their effort in such programs, the initiatives may not make significant steps towards achieving academic success. For initiatives of parent involvement in schools to begin, the schools must start the initiatives themselves. Mac Iver et al. (2018) stated that school administrators should be active in initiating parent involvement programs within the school system.

Many educators and other school officials strive to engage parents and keep them involved in local schools; however, schools may need assistance organizing and sustaining parental involvement activities. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) stated that parents must become active participants and co-educators. Potential for positive social change may come from school administrators' reports of their perceptions of involving parents in school activities and challenges they face which may lead to the creation of a

district parental involvement plan. By providing an understanding of administrators' roles, challenges faced, and underlying factors, the study may guide school leaders to adjust current methods to increase parental involvement. Adjusting school leadership practices regarding parental involvement opportunities may positively influence academic achievement and provide better opportunities for parental involvement. In this project study, I examined perceptions among administrators regarding their role in increasing parental involvement to help shape a policy paper to increase involvement opportunities. Studying this problem was helpful because it highlighted administrators' perceptions and challenges they faced when involving parents. The information gained from the study was aligned with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental involvement model to determine appropriate motivation factors for parents.

Research Questions

Parental involvement in a child's education remains one of the most significant indicators for academic progress (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The following guiding questions for this qualitative project study provided the context for the investigation of administrators' roles in parental involvement:

- *RQ1*: What are elementary administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement at elementary schools within the district?
- *RQ2*: What specific challenges do elementary administrators say they face when attempting to involve parents in activities at elementary schools within the district?

- *RQ3*: What do the administrators believe are the underlying factors contributing to low parental participation at elementary schools within the district?

Review of the Literature

The literature review aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the literature relevant to the problem. Parental involvement, administrators' perceptions of school leadership, and the role of school leadership are examined in this literature review. In addition, the review correlates with the project's conceptual framework, Hoover-Dempsey and Sadler's parental involvement model.

Conceptual Framework

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) conceptual framework is used for the current study to provide extensive research on parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's research explored the benefits of parental involvement by identifying a process model that includes five levels of parental involvement. The levels of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model include opportunities for schools to offer parental involvement based on the student families' desire to become involved. The first level of the model focuses on three influences: (a) personal motivators, (b) perceptions of invitations to be involved, and (c) life context variables. Level 2 is the learning mechanisms used by parents during involvement activities, which include encouragement and reinforcement. Level 3 focuses on students' perceptions of learning mechanisms used by parents. Level 4 recognizes student attributes conducive to achievement, and the final level identifies student achievement as the ultimate goal.

The conceptual framework of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler related to the present study because the identified factors listed above may influence parental involvement. By aligning the identifying factors of Levels 1 and 2, such as personal motivators, perceptions of invitations, and life variables, to the data collected from the research questions, the framework model will support the creation of a policy recommendation that encourages parental involvement.

Review of the Broader Problem

Peer-reviewed research studies were collected using Walden University's online professional journal search portal for this literature review. I found more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles published within the past 5 years by searching terms such as *parental involvement, parental barriers in education, involvement in education, school leadership, administrator perceptions for parental involvement, parents at schools, leadership styles, administrator styles, principal roles, principal responsibilities, elementary school leaders, school leadership roles, perceptions of administrators, perceptions of parents, family involvement, student achievement, causes of low parental involvement, principals and parental involvement, and academic achievement*. I sorted the articles by overarching themes about parental involvement, administrator perceptions, and the role of school administrators. Ultimately, I reviewed over 50 articles to establish an adequate literature review for the study. Information came from the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Google Scholar, *Journal of Education Policy, School Leadership and Management International, Journal of Educational Leadership and Management, Research in Educational Administration and Leadership,*

Educational Administration Quarterly, School Effectiveness, and School Improvement, Journal of College Teaching and Learning, Journal of Urban Education, International Online Journal of Education and Teaching, Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, Theory Into Practice, and Sociology of Education. I used the articles' abstracts to help determine the most appropriate articles for the study.

Parental Involvement

According to Kalkan et al. (2020), the school administrator should build a strong foundation for long-term transactional development. This foundation affects the school's image. As school leaders consider the options for involving parents, educational policies such as the Improving American Schools Act, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and ESSA promote parental involvement through educational policies (Young et al., 2017). A study by Hamlin and Flessa (2018) emphasized the role of parents corresponding to decades of scholarship linking parental involvement to student performance and child development by studying jurisdictions that received grant funding to remove barriers to parental involvement. As a result, several concerns were raised by parents regarding increasing parental support, such as support for the overall well-being of parents to increase their literacy skillset to help children with learning at home. Barriers to parental involvement may be poverty, inflexible work hours, language barriers, cultural norms, and low parental education (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

A parallel analysis by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) indicated that schools should involve parents by building partnerships and decisions to support all parents, regardless of individual home challenges and personal capabilities. The involvement process must

be continual and seek to engage all parental stakeholders in the educational process. According to Fenton et al. (2017), as school leaders decide how to transform schools by inviting parents to participate in school activities, consideration should be given to the degree of involvement, such as the frequency of school visits each month and parents' time would devote with each visit. A comparative study by Grant et al. (2017) found that professional development plans for teachers and administrators focusing on the critical components of fostering parent–teacher partnerships provided an increased understanding to school staff about the importance of fostering parental relationships with families.

Although numerous studies have indicated that parental involvement benefits student achievement, there is still a lack of parental involvement. According to Curry and Holter (2019), attempts had been made in the urban districts they studied to involve parents in the school setting, but the parent and school relationship was still limited. Because parents perceive their role in their children's education in many ways, strengthening the parent–school connection is vital to increasing low parental involvement. A detailed examination of the relationship between parental involvement networks and school involvement by Li and Fischer (2017) showed that parent networks might include parent–teacher associations. Additionally, Li and Fischer stated that parent–teacher associations are directly related to school involvement activities. The positive effects of parental networks on parental involvement are more vital for families whose children attend schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Administrator Perceptions of School Leadership

According to Reid (2021), principals are vital to schools' overall success. To achieve this success, school administrators may adapt to meet the needs of their school communities by offering opportunities for involvement in multiple ways such as in-person and virtually. Reid's research on principals' perceptions was conducted through fundamental questions about sense-making, which involves using prior experiences and knowledge to manage situations. The study determined that the work of school principals is not static and often uses past experiences as a guide for future decisions. More specifically, the study found that the role of the principal may become more external when there is a higher level of family engagement within the school community. Finally, Reid found that many parents desire input regarding school-related decisions. Aas et al. (2020) indicated that many school leaders face pressure to build a school community that positively impacts student outcomes. The authors also provided insights into how school leaders may develop role clarity. In addition, how administrators perceive their roles and influence on stakeholders within the school community often guide how decisions are made for the school. According to Ni et al. (2018), the characteristics of the school, school contextual factors, and stakeholders influence principals' perceptions of the decisions made for the school community. The study by Ni et al. identified school administrators as having the most significant influence; however, teachers and parents hold the power of influence in varying areas.

Campos-García and Zúñiga-Vicente (2020) explicitly focused on decision-making. Their study investigated administrators' strategic decision-making. The study

prioritized the potential factors that may facilitate or hinder a principal's adoption of the different ways of involving other school stakeholders in strategic decision-making. Campos-García and Zúñiga-Vicente suggested that a leader's cognitive frames or intelligence can ultimately play an essential role in shaping decision-making processes that impact the school community, which include staff, students, and parents. Other researchers have considered how systems thinking in schools impacts principals' perceptions. For example, Shaked and Schechter (2019) indicated that principals should consider the following: (a) expanding choices, (b) possible consequences, and (c) reviewing relevant information when making decisions that may impact the school community (pp. 574–575). According to Schildkamp et al. (2017), administrators who use data-based decision-making have the opportunity to lead and improve student achievement.

The Role of School Administrators

A school administrator is a primary factor of a successful school and the school leader often implements systems and structures school-wide to positively influence the school community (Rehman et al., 2019). The relationship-oriented school administrator positively influences those they lead while developing cohesion in the school community. Furthermore, school administrators can influence stakeholders by building a school vision focused on improving instructional outcomes. According to Gurr et al. (2020), there is a complex view of school leadership. Many responsibilities of the position are not as predictable as one would expect due to the multitude of individual needs. Gurr et al. (2020) concluded that schools that developed student agencies or student supports

strengthened their relationships with student families. The self-efficacy and leadership of school administrators often determine the school's outcome, including parental involvement. Cobanoglu and Yurek (2018) stated that school administrators with high self-efficacy might be more effective and qualified in improving the school because they feel responsible for students' success. Other studies have considered school administrators' leadership presence and influence over their school community. According to Wirawan et al. (2019), leaders focused on the task and relationship orientation may affect the school community's attitude, motivation, and behaviors because they consider individuals and the task. Wirawan et al. explained that the task-oriented leader is transactional and focuses on rewards and consequences based on task completion while improving efficacy. According to Cruickshank (2017), school administrators should effectively communicate the school's vision to relevant stakeholders to give a sense of the overall purpose and a strong sense of community.

Although schools have many variables, such as student population, economic status, and academic levels, administrators expect students to learn with intentional instructional time and positive parental relationships. According to Cobanoglu and Yurek (2018), effective administrators guide their schools to use instructional time effectively, monitor the students' development, have a school administrator who is an instructional leader, and have a positive relationship between schools and the parents. A study by Alhosani et al. (2017) advanced the notion that school administrators create an environment inviting students and parents. Furthermore, parents may become more involved in the daily school process if parents are happy with the school environment. A

positive school environment involves the parents' contributions, including communicating with the school and supporting student and teacher activities (Alhosani et al., 2017). According to Sun and Henderson (2017), transformational leaders may make meaningful contributions to an organization's performance because there is a purposeful intention for stakeholder engagement.

School Administrator Styles

Several studies identified successful leadership practices. Leithwood et al. (2019) considered various leadership styles and found that distributed leadership was more impactful in school-wide decisions. Ideally, school leaders should move away from what they do and focus on how things are done. According to Biswas et al. (2020), leaders should assess their situations to take action with a meaningful intention for the larger organization in which they operate. Additionally, according to Fierro et al. (2018), a leader should patiently allow the path forward to reveal itself instead of attempting to force a course of action. It is also suggested that school leaders create probes to make the patterns or allow potential patterns to be more visible before taking action.

The administrator's traits and abilities may be crucial in achieving the transformation of their school. Administrators should have the vision of a leader. According to Yi et al. (2019), such a vision encompasses innovation, reform, and change, significantly affecting a leader's proactive behaviors and influencing intrinsic motivation. Yi et al. further indicated that a transformational leader engages other stakeholders in their work. Therefore, any transformational administrator should possess the personality traits that allow them to involve parents in their children's education and the running of

the school (Vélez et al., 2017; Yi et al., 2019). Transformational leadership is more evident in innovative and motivating school administrators, and such administrators are visionaries. They often exhibit change-based leadership that understands the value of constant contact with their followers (Mi et al., 2019). Mi et al. (2019) further noted that a leader's transformational characteristics or leadership behaviors play a critical role in perceiving other people's involvement in their leadership. Therefore, an administrator's perception of parental involvement is largely influenced by leadership behaviors such as motivation and innovativeness. An innovative administrator will find ways of reaching out and connecting with parents.

Several studies have been conducted exploring the relationships between parent involvement and student achievement. When administrators are attempting to increase parent involvement, it is important to consider the invitation and possible barriers to parental involvement. The research indicated that school administrators should consider multiple parental involvement opportunities to engage more parents opposed to simply wanting or desiring more parental involvement. It has been suggested that parents be included in the decision-making regarding the types of parental involvement, and this may require planning for school administrators. Another aspect to be considered regarding school administrators is emotional intelligence. Wirawan et al. (2019) defined *emotional intelligence* as the ability to monitor one's and others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Wirawan et al. stated that effective leadership depends on one's ability to manage emotions intelligently. Additionally, Meemar (2018) indicated that critical thinking skills

develop and promote engagement for school administrators because these skills help them attain top-level thinking, rational decision-making, and problem-solving skills for school improvement. In contrast, Leithwood et al. (2019) described successful school leadership as those observable practices of the school community that support improved teacher performance and student achievement (p. 4). Evaluating parental involvement, administrator perceptions of school leadership, the role of school administrators and school administrator styles may help improve parental involvement.

Implications

The current study examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement. The study provided data helpful in increasing parent involvement at academic school events and providing educational support for parents. A school district with an increasing student population and low parental involvement scores was chosen; the results and findings will apply to elementary schools within the district. Possible implications may include changing school administrators' practices of their role when establishing parental involvement activities for student families. School districts should value nurturing the parent-school relationship by examining school leaders' understanding of their role in engaging parental stakeholders. However, it is not possible within the scope of the present research to explore all the cultural, social, and contextual variables of families and staff.

The project study provided data surrounding administrators' roles that may affect the school's ability to encourage parent involvement. Perceptions were captured, and the

data may help organize parent involvement opportunities. The study focused on establishing administrators' roles to increasing parental involvement, challenges they face when attempting to involve parents, and underlying factors to low parental involvement to create a policy paper with recommendations to positively impact parental involvement in the Mid-Atlantic district. The policy paper developed is based on the findings of the study's examination. It could help administrators their role in parental involvement and help them improve parental involvement opportunities.

Summary

The research identified in the literature review showed that parental involvement benefits students academically and socially. However, many barriers negatively influence both school-based and home-based involvement. Section 1 provided a brief overview of the study, including the problem, the rationale of the problem at the local site, the research questions, the conceptual framework underlying the research design, and a brief recognition of the study's implications. In addition, a literature review was conducted to provide a critical review of the problem.

Section 2 will review the research design, the participants' descriptions and justifications, the data collection, analysis, and limitations. Additionally, in Section 2, I will discuss the data collected and establish patterns, relationships, and themes. The evidence will be addressed, and the outcomes will be summarized. Section 3 will address the project through professional development materials, the rationale for professional development, project evaluation, project implications, and an additional literature review.

In Section 4, I will discuss the project's strengths and limitations, offer recommendations, and reflect on the significance of the data and findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

In the current study, I examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement in the local school district using a basic qualitative design (see Patton, 1982). This methodology aligns with the study's problem, purpose, and research questions because it focuses on capturing administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. The study's methodology and basic design allowed administrators to describe their roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face to address the problem of low parental involvement, and underlying factors to low parental involvement. It was the most logical design when investigating administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. The qualitative research design focuses on understanding a pertinent phenomenon's depth, richness, and complexity. According to Patton (1982), qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories.

The basic qualitative study allowed participants to share experiences from their perspective. These insights may not be possible with a quantitative study because the data collected from such an approach would not be content-rich and would not supply the extensive context necessary for the study. The qualitative approach was preferred over the quantitative approach because quantitative studies develop numerical data derived from standard categories, and quantitative methods not provide the narrative data

collected in qualitative studies. The quantitative measurement relies upon instruments that provide a standardized framework to limit data collection (Patton, 1982).

In comparison, a phenomenological study was not selected as it focuses on shared experiences, and I examined individual perceptions. The case study design would not have been appropriate for this project because a case study involves an intimate and detailed examination of a subject of study (the case) and surrounding environmental conditions (Patton, 1982). A basic qualitative approach supported the study because participants' perceptions and ideas were the basis of the current study. The basic qualitative design study allows for interviews as the sole data source; however, the participants are not connected with a defined case (Patton, 1982).

Participants

The school district in which I conducted the current study is in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, and the district has 123 elementary schools. I was able to interview eight elementary school administrators within the district. After analyzing the district's elementary school parental involvement data, I produced a list of schools with the lowest parental involvement percentages. The school district has a formal procedure for research study projects as an option. Based on the schools selected, I used public information to identify the administrators at each school. I used my professional network, direct calling, and emailing to recruit participants using the publicly available contact information. The *purposive nonprobability sampling* refers to identifying specific participants for the study. I ensured that all participants understood the phenomenon, so I selected administrators with a minimum of 2 years as school-based administrators.

Nonprobability sampling is an approach in which the sample is selected based on the researcher's subjective judgment instead of random selection (Berndt, 2020). The decision to implement a purposive nonprobability sampling was intentional because it aligned with the purpose of the study, each participant answered all interview questions (see Appendix B), and participants provided important information for the project study about their perceptions. I personally contacted each administrator by email, explain the purpose of the study, and request their participation. Participants' identities are held in confidence. I created a list of the participants' names and pseudonyms. The participant list and electronic consent forms will be maintained for 5 years and then destroyed. Electronic consent forms will be stored on my password-protected electronic device.

Data Collection

The data were sourced from semistructured one-on-one interviews. Although a basic qualitative design does not require a minimum number of participants, purposeful sampling was used in the eight selected schools. An interview protocol explained the study's problem and purpose to the participants. The protocol was used as a guide during the interview process to enhance reliability. The interview method was justified because interviews allowed participants to provide detailed responses regarding their ideas, beliefs, and perceptions. In addition, I created interview questions and followed the interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework (Yeong et al., 2018), which is an effective tool for improving the interview protocol's reliability and validity. Also, the IPR framework aligned to the interview questions and the research questions. The participants

were asked specific questions regarding their perceptions to create an inquiry-based conversation.

The questions during the interviews allowed me to investigate administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement and the possible challenges faced within Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) framework, which offers a parental involvement model for schools to impact student achievement. The interviews were held one-on-one via the Zoom videoconferencing platform (<https://zoom.us>) to understand each participant's perceptions and beliefs about parental involvement related to the research questions. The data collected from each interview provided in-depth description for each participant regarding the semistructured questions. The interview questions aligned with the research questions described by the interview protocols. The notes and my reflective journal from the interviews were transcribed for analysis. All interviews were transcribed through Zoom and edited through Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com>).

The school district required that researchers complete an approval process to conduct research. I completed and submitted the required application to the school district. Also, I received Walden institutional review board (IRB) approval to complete the study (IRB Approval No. 03-22-22-0362601). I worked directly with the school administrative staff to recruit participants.

To aid in tracking, organizing, and coding data, I used Microsoft Word. I created a chart in Microsoft Word that identified my journal notes and comments made by school administrators. Both interview notes and interview transcription were added to the organizational chart for each interview question. I intended on using the data analysis

software MAXQDA, but I found it easier to manually code transcribed responses with the use of Microsoft Word. Doing so allowed me to have a more intimate understanding of the data collected. After each interview was transcribed, I manually highlighted administrators' responses by color for each question and transferred their responses to my organizational chart for analysis. All the computers and personal data storage files are secured using encrypted security programs such as McAfee. All data were backed up using secured data storage to ensure accessibility of data in case of computer failure or virus attack. After 5 years, I will permanently delete data files.

Role of the Researcher

I interviewed 8 school administrators from different schools. As the researcher, I do not have professional roles at any of the schools used for the study. During my introduction email, I shared the significance of the project study and how I planned to protect participants' confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity. As an administrator with the district, I maintained confidentiality. I have a collegial relationship with other school administrators within the district. Still, I do not have a personal relationship with the administrators connected to the schools selected. My collegial relationship did not affect the data collection process. The researcher-participant working relationship was established when I contacted participants by email to introduce myself and the purpose of the study.

Before beginning the interviews, each participant was informed of the study expectations and procedures, and I answered all participants' questions and concerns about the study. During data collection, a researcher-participant working relationship

between researchers and study participants often develops (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I established a professional researcher–participant working relationship by following the interview protocol for all interviews. I ensured that the participants were comfortable during the interviews and encouraged them to ask questions for clarification. I made sure that all participants felt comfortable sharing their perceptions honestly.

Ultimately, I created an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance to create a solid researcher–participant relationship. As the researcher, I focused on investigating administrators’ roles in increasing parental involvement and analyzing data for common themes, ideas, beliefs, and understandings about their role.

Data Analysis

After conducting the semistructured interviews, I transcribed the data to begin thematic analysis. *Thematic analysis* is a method of analysis within qualitative research that emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns of meaning within data. Thematic analysis is fluid and does not follow a rigid set of rules or structure; however, establishing guidelines when analyzing the research data is essential to create quality and validity (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I organized the transcribed data using Microsoft Word. I manually coded each interview with highlights based on the administrators’ responses and analyzed data findings to ensure the semistructured interview procedures aligned with the research questions.

To gain a deeper understanding of the data, I read through each transcribed interview, I performed a line-by-line review of the transcription by highlighting key words under each question, and those key words were added to my organizational chart

by interview question. I repeated the steps identified for all eight interviews and made comments about any emerging repetition noticed. To ensure accuracy, I followed the six steps for thematic analysis: (a) become familiar with the data, (b) generate initial codes, (c) search for themes, (d) review themes, (e) define themes, and (f) write-up my findings (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Once the data were reviewed line by line and key words were included on my organizational chart, I proceeded to identify categories for each interview question and the overarching theme. Categories were created based on key words and themes reflected a deeper understanding of the administrators' experiences. To maintain validity, I verified that the themes aligned with the categories and key words extracted from the transcribed responses. This coding process facilitated comparison of the participant groups' responses and allowed for identifying common or conflicting perceptions among the groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As the researcher, I am accountable for my coding choices, so I used accurate and consistent coding decisions based on common themes derived from the interviews. To prevent coding mistakes, I was transparent by creating memos and journal reflections that I used to justify the coding choices. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted three basic criteria for effective qualitative research: (a) validity, (b) reliability, and (c) generalizability. The primary data collection procedures included memo writing, journal documentation, and semistructured interviews. To help with accuracy and validity in the reported findings, I used verbatim extracts from participant responses. The memos and journal documentation helped defend coding criteria and aided in overall credibility of data analysis finding. Although the coding for the project evolved as needed, I organized

the codes to develop emerging themes. I used an inductive approach and allowed the data to generate the codes during my line-by-line review. Also, journal documentation helped with coding and developed the overall credibility of the data analysis findings. The use of journaling my reflections during my review helped connect the coding back to the research questions and helped address the possibility of researcher bias. Although the interviews were semistructured, it was vital that the perceptions of the participants in combination with the observations of the researcher during the interviews were well documented for overall project credibility and validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis Results

Each interview began with an interview protocol that included a formal introduction, basic information about the study, confirmation of the participant's consent, an overview of the interview questions, and approval to record the interview. A reliable interview protocol is crucial to obtaining good qualitative data because it facilitates the interview process (Yeong et al., 2018). I conducted eight one-on-one interviews with elementary school administrators lasting 20–30 minutes. The interview included seven prepared questions and two additional questions.

Upon completing the semistructured interviews, interviews were transcribed from audio format to written transcription. The transcription included inserts with time stamps and speaker identification. I reviewed the transcribed data for coding, categorization, overarching themes based on the literature, research questions, and developed new ideas. In building on previous literature, this case presents a flexible framework for using thematic analysis that employs a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive reasoning

(Swain, 2018). The use of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental involvement framework was considered during the thematic analysis, specifically level one related to school invitations for parental involvement and level two, the types of involvement activities. Qualitative data analysis is about telling "stories," about interpreting and creating, not discovering and finding the "truth" that is either "out there" in findable form, or buried deep within, the data (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021). A deductive analysis supported participant responses to the semistructured interview questions; however, an inductive approach was used for the additional thoughts presented during the interviews. According to Byrne (2021), there are six stages of thematic analysis: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) coding the data, (c) searching for the themes among the codes, (d) reviewing the themes, (e) naming and defining the themes, and (f) writing up the final report. These stages were used to analyze the data consistently. Although I had access to organizational data software such as MAXQDA and nVivo12, I decided to code the data manually. Manually coding the data allowed a more intimate understanding of the participant's responses. Also, the participant size was manageable to handle manual coding. According to Cypress (2019), manual coding in data analysis is still and quite often used by qualitative researchers. Member checking was not implemented during the study. The results of the study will be reported through a policy recommendation paper.

Findings

In this section, I describe the major themes and findings from my analysis of the interview data. I explained the themes and findings using the interview data and related

them to the conceptual framework and the study's research questions. The study investigated the following research questions:

- *RQ1*: What are elementary administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement at elementary schools within the district?
- *RQ2*: What specific challenges do elementary administrators say they face when attempting to involve parents in activities at elementary schools within the district?
- *RQ3*: What do the administrators believe are the underlying factors contributing to low parental participation at elementary schools within the district?

Discussion of Findings

For this project, I conducted eight one-on-one interviews to address the research questions with elementary school administrators. I maintained journal notes for each interview and I analyzed participants' perceptions using thematic analysis. The data was reviewed to identify themes and patterns such as key words and phrases. There was a total of 10 questions asked during each interview and the data obtained from the interviews addressed the research questions. I followed my interview protocol and the questions were asked the same way for each administrator.

Several key codes and categories were identified; however, overall, three themes emerged from the data presented by administrators. These themes were as follows: (a) effective communication, (b) parental input/decision-making, and (c) school culture. The

relationship between these themes and each research question is presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Theme A addressed RQ1, Theme B addressed RQ2, and Theme C addressed RQ3.

Theme A: Effective Communication

Theme A addressed RQ1: What are elementary administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement at elementary schools within the district?

Table 2*RQ1 – Thematic Coding*

| School | Key words/phrases | Category | Theme |
|--------|--|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Involve parents Activities | Involvement | Effective communication |
| 2 | Vision Get to know each other Lead by example Set the tone Communicate Hear parents Relationship | Communicate | |
| 3 | Parents have a voice Communicate | Communicate | |
| 4 | Be well connected Assist parents | Communicate | |
| 5 | Parents should feel welcomed | Communicate | |
| 6 | Communicate Informing parents of academic goals Build awareness | Build awareness | |
| 7 | Be transparent Community Programs | Support systems | |
| 8 | Communicate Bridge gap Support/coach parents Inform of academic goals Help parents | Communicate Support | |

Note. Data derived from semistructured interviews.

Upon reviewing the data, I found that none of the participants referred to the district's current parental involvement administrative procedure. There was an apparent

perceptual misunderstanding of how they viewed their role in comparison to the expectations identified by the district. The district defined parental involvement as the following: (a) parents regularly checking grades through the online portal, (b) parents speaking with teachers regularly, (c) parents assisting with homework each day, (d) parents holding conversations about the school day with their students, (e) parents ensuring that students arrive at school on time each day, and (f) parents regularly participate in school-wide activities. The data findings revealed an expectation for administrators to encourage parental participation in school activities and the need to maintain consistent communication with parents. However, administrators did not address the need to communicate with parents regarding student attendance; there was no explicit recognition of supporting parents with the online grading system; or how parents are informed of nightly assignments to students in the evening. School 2 responded to the question by stating,

I would think that parental involvement, my opinion, would be parents feeling one, first and foremost welcomed in the school environment. I want like them feeling that they are valued so first of all, when people are more involved they're more engaged in wanting to be a part of the school. Welcoming them, making sure they have a voice, making sure there is an organization for them, inviting them in the building letting them know that they are welcomed in the building. Educating and having things to support them, as well.

School 5 responded,

Parental involvement in the school, setting is two-way communication.

Communication between the parents and the school. Parents possibly volunteering in the school to help out. Being involved in their child's education so academically involved at home, helping them to complete assignments. I would define it as an overall partnership between the parents and the school to improve the overall education of our scholars.

There is a clear need for professional learning to better understand administrator roles, to include principals and assistant principals.

During the interview, I asked each administrator to describe their role in increasing parental involvement and five out of eight identified the need for better communication. The administrators indicated the following: "Communication helps develop parent involvement in schools. The school administration should communicate information about school initiatives and other critical information. Finding the proper communication method, such as electronic mail, conferencing, and other online forms of communication, is vital. Parents should be provided a channel to post suggestions and other compliments about the school to ensure two-way communication." Through communication initiatives, administrators can improve parent involvement in schools as information is communicated in a first-hand form (Erdener & Knoeppel, 2018). Studies have revealed that parents are willing to help their children if there is communication between school and teachers.

School-Home Communication Efforts

During the interview, when asked if administrators had a role in increasing parental involvement eight out of eight administrators believe that that play a role in increasing parental involvement, but they were not clear about their role. The behaviors administrators consistently identified as their role was to maintain communication with parents. School 1 responded, “as a teacher, I had many activities as expensive educator, had many activities that I sponsor that involved parents, like Hoops for dad fuel days, had a big multicultural and danced night. That was a big parental involvement activity.” However, when the question was approached from an administrator stance the response was, “now as being in my administrative role, I tried the ideas I’ve done to increase parental involvement and try to share that with my teachers as well.” School 6 responded to the question by stating, “making sure that I have that open line of communication, making sure that I continue to keep them abreast of the goings on, I think that’s what is key.”

All eight administrators offered different responses, but the overall response related to improving communication. Thus, leading to the creation of theme effective communication. The administrators had a degree of perceptual understanding of their role in increasing parental involvement; however, it was limited and lacked clear examples of parental involvement behaviors. Parental involvement ranks high on the list of crucial strategies of most effective schools. For parents to be strongly involved in their child’s education, robust cooperation and communication strategies should be implemented. According to Gorica et al. (2021), the ultimate way of avoiding misunderstanding

between parents, teachers, and administrators is to establish clear and regular lines of communication. They note that when parents feel informed and included in classroom matters, they feel part of the classroom team and become more supportive and understanding. As a result, the parents are less likely to jump to negative conclusions about events at school.

Although school administrators identified communication methods as a key component of their leadership, they are unsure of effective communication modalities that meet the needs of all parents. When elementary schools intentionally reach out to parents, parents are encouraged to be active in their child's education, and parents understand their role in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Effective collaboration between administrators and parents can be increased through positive, planned parent and teacher communication (Lohmann et al., 2018). There is a need to establish effective communication between home and school. Gerzel-Short (2018) explained that parents were frustrated that educators wanted them to attend school events but were not helping parents understand how their children were performing in school or teaching them how to help with homework. Bali et al. (2019) evaluated the direct influence of communication skills on a school's effectiveness. The data analysis supported that effective communication is an important strategy for schools to achieve their determined goals.

Theme B: Parental Input/Decision-Making

As shown in Table 2, Theme B addressed RQ2: What specific challenges do elementary administrators say they face when attempting to involve parents in activities at elementary schools within the district?

Table 3

RQ2 – Thematic Coding

| School | Key words/phrases | Category | Theme |
|----------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| School 1 | Work schedule Language barrier | Parent consideration | Parental input/decision- making |
| School 2 | Staff members shy away from parents | Lack of relationship Input | |
| School 3 | Buy in Limited responses Work schedules | Parent consideration | |
| School 4 | Language/communication barrier Not very computer savvy | Parent consideration | |
| School 5 | Work schedules | Parent consideration | |
| School 6 | Lack of attendance | Input | |
| School 7 | Open forum discussions not specific to their child Schedules | Input | |
| School 8 | Work schedules | Parent consideration | |

Note. Data derived from semistructured interviews.

Upon reviewing the data, six out of eight administrators identified parental work schedules as challenging to involving parents. Statements such as “parents are trying to survive and provide food for students” and “I do not know what to do to get parents more

involved” identified a gap and need for further discussion on administrators’ perception of their role in increasing parental involvement. For example, School 2 responded the research question by stating,

Some staff members shy away from wanting parents in their class and I’m wanting parents in the building. How can we still try to make things fit parent’s schedule? Now, we can do Zoom’s. Before parents couldn’t get here, they can’t get off work or they’re already home. How do we meet the needs of our school community? It’s important to build a positive culture that invites everyone. You can’t please everyone, there’s going to be some times, where you may have a combative parent who just thinks negatively of the school or something that has happened. How do we let them express themselves, express their feelings without getting emotional or personal? Like I said we are meeting the needs of all our stakeholders and our parents are critical part that we need involved in the whole process, and if we lose them then we’re losing critical components of really pushing student success.

Many administrators shared that they have implemented multiple suggestions such as different times for events, morning and evening opportunities, and parent academies to build academic knowledge on the content being taught in school. However, I did not capture data that parents were surveyed to get their input. Administrators recognized the lack of parent participation and the demands of parental work schedules, which led to a lack of parental consideration. The data overwhelmingly identified that administrators may not have a system for collecting parental input to determine the best action steps for

their involvement. The code parental input and decision-making opportunities was consistently shared and School 7 responded,

Just the lack of wanting to be a part of it and I don't really know why. I don't know if we've even asked the question of why don't you want to come join the PTA. I don't I don't think we've ever put that out there, or why don't you want to come, you know, support the school. You know, and if something's wrong, of course, they're there, but I don't know that we've asked that question specifically to be like hey why aren't you involved.

Community Decision-Making

Decision-making is another form of involvement that supports the administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement in schools. For parents to participate in decision-making, programs and bodies like Parent Teacher Association (PTA) should be implemented in schools. Organizations like PTA allow parents to interact and consult widely before making decisions. During making decisions, the interactions allow parents and families to connect with school administrations (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). According to Daniëls et al. (2019) characteristics of an effective school administrator is to establish trust and collaboration with parents to create a positive school climate. Establishing trust and collaboration would allow parents to be included in school decisions. Daniëls et al. (2019) stated that involvement in the decision-making process itself, not solely as an outcome of qualitative communication, is also often cited as effective school leadership. The decision-making process should be instituted not only by administrators but also by teachers. Parents want to collaborate with the schools, and

teachers should include parents in problem-solving discussions (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Communication is a crucial component of school leadership, and how information is communicated may be the determining factor for parental involvement opportunities.

According to Jeynes (2018), a wise and responsible leader understands the benefits of creating an environment where parents and teachers work together. Such an arrangement improves the student's success. Heinrichs (2018) holds a similar assertion, who believes that the school becomes strong when administrators, teachers, and parents work together. An administrator can promote parental involvement by directly appealing to the parents or indirectly through the teacher's involvement. The school leaders can support teachers to invite parents through facilitation and targeted staff professional development programs (Yulianti et al., 2020). To effectively demonstrate the role of administrator perceptions, Heinrichs (2018) and Jeynes (2018) agree that there is adequate evidence that school principals' leadership behavior and practices play an integral role in how their schools involve parents and sustain this parent-school interactions or partnerships. For instance, Heinrichs (2018) noted that parents feel welcome and a sense of belonging within the school community when school leaders establish a hospitable, welcoming, supportive, and comfortable atmosphere.

Theme C: School Culture

Theme C (see Table 4) addressed RQ3: What do the administrators believe are the underlying factors contributing to low parental participation at elementary schools within the district?

Table 4*RQ3 – Thematic Coding*

| | Key words/phrases | Category | Theme |
|----------|--|--------------------------------|----------------|
| School 1 | Climate of the school | Relationships | School culture |
| School 2 | Relationships with parents | Relationships | |
| School 3 | Limited opportunity for parental input One-way communication | Parental consideration | |
| School 4 | Late work schedules Medical reasons | Availability | |
| School 5 | Different schedules Survival mode Different family care-takers Parent school trauma | Availability | |
| School 6 | Customer service Single parent households | Relationships | |
| School 7 | Work schedules Younger parents New/first time parents Relationship with the school | Relationships/ Availability | |
| School 8 | Language barrier | Communication | |

Note. Data derived from semistructured interviews

A review of the data revealed that all eight administrators identified underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement. Administrators stated there is a need for improved customer service at schools, the school's climate affects parental involvement, schools need to establish relationships with parents, and concerns about one-way communication. Additionally, when I asked participants about the invitations provided to parents to engage in more involvement, they had the following suggestions such as sending information electronically and by paper. Administrators believe that both,

administrators and teachers, should share invitations to participate in events with parents.

School 4 responded to this question by stating,

It could be medical reasons or there could be just parents not being connected, and not knowing how to be connected. Parents may not have the knowledge of how to communicate with the school. The lack of communication or the lack of involvement can affect how the student is doing in school, as well.

Parental involvement in school is significant as schools may help set conditions that parents will be able to follow at home to ensure a supportive home learning environments. School 8 responded to the question by sharing,

I would say a lot of my parents English is not their primary language, we have 85% Hispanic. We have very few parents that are able to carve out that time and stick with it, so I do think that the language barrier is probably the number one factor.

School 5 responded,

I think our parents are working, they may have different schedules and may not be working a nine to five maybe they you know they go to work and they work at night. Parents are just trying to survive, and they may have somebody else watching the kids when they go to work so sometimes they're just not available. Um, I think because they're trying to make sure they keep a roof over their head and food on the table, they're just not available. Also, just knowledge and not knowing how important their involvement is.

To develop parent involvement in schools, administrators must develop positive relationships to understand each student's needs. In understanding students' needs, schools have a role in training their staff on understanding students' and families' cultures and backgrounds. Implementing programs that support a positive school culture may result in children's academic success and improvement—this type of relationship results to respect and supervision by parents during home learning processes. The quality of relationships between schools and communities directly impacts the students' learning.

According to Momeny and Gourgues (2019), effective communication should be clear and is connected to emotional intelligence. Effective communication aimed at sustaining the parent–teacher partnership does not occur naturally. There must be some robust measures put in place to ensure it happens. These measures are more dependent on the school's type of administrator and the kind of perception that they harbor concerning parental involvement in their children's education. The parent's level of involvement can be greatly affected by perceptions of the school (Albez & Ada, 2017). The collaboration amongst school community members, including the school administrators, teachers, parents, and students may establish a positive connection. The connection is sustained by effective communication, and the person capable of strengthening this communication is the school administrator (Albez & Ada, 2017). In their efforts to regulate home and school relations, school administrators must be willing to establish a communication environment based on democracy, trust, and respect. Notably, an administrator should be aware that the established multifaceted network of communication will involve different channels, types of communication, and durations that may directly impact the school's

climate. According to Cureton (2020), communication with parents about the school activities, the rules, and regulations of the school and passing information to parents cultivates a sense of inclusion among them. They become more interested in knowing what their children are doing. They make them participants in the shaping of their children's future. Nothing brings pride to a parent more than knowing that they fully participated in their children's well-being (Gisewhite et al., 2021). However, most administrators have been unable to utilize the internal and external dynamics necessary for bringing together all the school stakeholders - including parents (Singh, 2019).

Positive Relationships

A positive school culture relates to positive relationships, and it may be best described as a partnership as it will describe parent involvement in school. In this partnership, the school administrators ensure that parents are welcomed in schools, thus family-like schools. With the family-like schools, there is a possibility of developing structures for identifying each student's needs to support parents. With a positive school culture, each student and their parents will feel appreciated and included within the school system. With the creation of the family-like schools, each family and student is involved, thus leading to academic success (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). School administrators' perceptions play a role in improving parental involvement in schools by stipulating the outright technique for identifying students' needs and thus providing guidelines for parents to guide them during activities of shaping their skills and thus great success.

The codes generated from the school administrators' responses indicates various perspectives about their role in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement in elementary schools. For RQ2 and RQ3, 100% of administrators interviewed identified challenges to involving parents and underlying factors to low parental involvement.

Although administrators did not reference the district's parental involvement administrative procedure for RQ1, each administrator identified that they have a role in increasing parental involvement. Establishing effective communication processes, systems for parental input, and cultivating positive parental relationships will provide a strong foundation for increasing parental involvement and enhance the communication practices that are currently in place.

According to Sari (2020), fruitful relations between parents and teachers should take the form of efficient and effective communication. Additionally, Dor (2018) and Coelho et al. (2018), shared that effective communication between parents and teachers would make parents more actively involved and empower teachers. Empowered teachers would derive a feeling of togetherness. Similarly, parents would also obtain the much-needed confidence by assuring that they made the right decision concerning their children's education (Coelho et al., 2018). Senin and Halim (2021) place the role of establishing effective communication with administrators. However, teachers, parents, and students are also responsible for maintaining the established communication network. Doğan (2019) singles out the use of WhatsApp by administrators, teachers, and parents in interchanging information amongst themselves. Doğan (2019) further noted that effective

communication, support from administrators, motivation, and evaluations among the parties in the school community are keys to a smooth involvement of parents in children's education. A study by Conus and Fahrni (2019) explained that schools and teachers need to rethink their role in routine communication by working to remove barriers to parental involvement, which particularly disadvantage parents from minority groups.

Discrepant Data

The purpose of the research was to investigate administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. There was a wide variation of data collected. The variation in responses did not constitute discrepant cases. For the one area for which variance might have included a discrepant case—how do you define parental involvement—although there was no unanimity in the responses, each participant identified one or more areas that supported the district's definition of parental involvement. Contradictions in the data can result in unexpected findings, ultimately strengthening findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research questions investigated perceptual differences and commonalities among administrators, and the data set was broad. It is vital to include discrepant cases because when this type of data can be explained, it often strengthens the evidence base for the typical or primary responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). If the discrepant case cannot be explained, it provides an opportunity for future research. Due to the nature of the study, every participant's perceptual understanding was accepted, recorded, and confirmed in the data gathering process.

Evidence of Quality

The data collection process followed and met the standards for qualitative data collection. I maintained consistency with the procedure outlined in the IRB's ethics protocol includes obtaining proper consent and outlining the appropriate interview protocol for all participants. The data collection of this capstone project study provided a profound description of responses. I conducted private semistructured interviews to prevent data breaches and maintain confidentiality. All of the interviews were audio-recorded. The data collected through interviews were transcribed electronically in Zoom, and a line-by-line review led to coding the data by hand. The data was organized using tables in Microsoft Word for organization.

Project Deliverable

The policy paper provides guidelines and suggestions to help support the districts' current administrative procedure on parental involvement and establish alignment of perceptions with administrators. The data from this research study is the foundation of the policy paper's recommendations. In addition, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework for parental involvement will support some of the recommendations regarding parental invitations and decision-making for involvement opportunities.

The research findings identified administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. All participants' responses recognized parental involvement as a vital to student achievement. Participants provided a wide range of information regarding their perceptions, but no one identified best practices that have closed the identified gap in their school. This persistent gap matters because schools with high parental involvement

have higher-performing students in all academic areas; students are more socially and emotionally balanced (Park et al., 2017).

Summary

There is a growing concern over the importance of the school leadership developing partnership programs that improve parent involvement in school management and instructional framework. The basic qualitative design supported the purpose, rationale, and research questions of the study because it was for an in-depth investigation of administrators' perceptions which were later analyzed and coded. The research findings indicated a gap in perceptual understanding between administrators and the district's parental involvement policy as zero out of eight administrators referred to the policy when discussing their role in increasing parental involvement. The findings also indicated challenges administrators face when attempting to involve parents and possible underlying factors to parental involvement.

Administrators identified parent work schedules as a challenge to increasing parental involvement. Despite the great desire for children's success, parents are caught up in busy work schedules, lack of time and reluctance in child care, and lack of school support lower the chances of parent involvement in school. The disparities have significantly impacted the perceptions of parents' school involvement among administrators and other parent involvement practices in the school setting (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Despite the tremendous progress in research about the success and significance of parent involvement in school, school administrators are not prepared for the uptake and implementation of parent involvement programs in schools.

School administrators have a significant impact on making family engagement initiatives successful. Some of the underlying factors to low parental involvement identified by administrators were school climate, lack of positive relationship with school staff, and language barriers. Schools must take the necessary steps to plan and strategize for initiatives that improve academic success and parent involvement. To assist schools with closing the gap of low parental involvement, the project for this capstone focused on the work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler parental involvement framework identified levels of parental involvement. For parental involvement initiatives to begin within the school setting, school administrators have a role in establishing family engagement options for student academic success.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project (see Appendix A) part of the present study is a policy paper with recommendations. Based on the interview data, the project revealed administrators' perception of their role in increasing parental involvement. The present study identified the importance of effective communication strategies when extending parental invitations. Although the school system has parental engagement assistants for some of the schools in the district, there are no specific guidelines for parental involvement structures for schools without a parental engagement assistant. To help administrators establish their role in increasing parental involvement, all school administrators should have a parental involvement policy with mandatory training. In the present study, I examined administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when attempting to involve parents, and possible underlying issues to low parental involvement at the school sites within the district. Administrators who were interviewed to identify their perceived role, challenges that impact parental involvement, and possible underlying factors. One of the findings from the study indicated that administrators do not have a clear interpretation of their role in increasing parental involvement. When administrators addressed the question about parental involvement, they missed several foundational points of how the district defines parental involvement, which indicates that they are relying on a common understanding of the term.

Based on the present study's findings, the policy paper created could assist principals with gaining perceptual alignment with the district's goals. I will present my

findings and the policy paper to school personnel at systemic meetings, which will address my first goal of understanding administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement compared to the district's definition of parental involvement. Based on the findings of the study, my second goal for the policy paper was to present effective communication strategies to engage parental involvement, which may result in positive social change by encouraging local administrators to incorporate best practices for engaging parents. Thirdly, my policy paper highlighted the need for a parental involvement policy to include a parental engagement assistant position for each school in the district. With a clear understanding of administrators' perception of their role regarding parental involvement, students' academic progress may improve because of the positive connection parental involvement has to student achievement. The project's ultimate goal is to provide the local school district with data regarding administrators' perceptions about their role in increasing parental involvement and recommendations to help improve parental involvement based on research findings.

Rationale

The project is focused on investigating administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement within schools in a Mid-Atlantic school district. Some elementary schools currently have lower parental involvement percentages than the district's average, which indicated a need to determine perceptions of administrators' roles to impact and increase parental involvement opportunities positively. The information from this examination provided research-based evidence of administrators' understandings of parental

involvement. The focus of the research was to investigate perceptions and provide a project to address the identified research problem.

Considering that the district has policies and procedures on various topics, I decided the best approach for my study was a project to include a policy paper with recommendations that can support current practices. The policy paper will correspond to the district's definition of parental involvement and help to align administrators' roles in increasing involvement opportunities.

Perceptual calibration or alignment is a key factor in administrators' understanding their role based on the identified definition of the involvement outlined by the school district. Based on the research findings, administrators believe it is their role to increase parental involvement. The administrators desire an increase in parental involvement and some administrators have a parent engagement assistant (PEA) working at their schools to support increasing parental involvement opportunities. The data also indicated that schools without a PEA often seek parental involvement by one or two ways such as participating in school events and constant communication. Using effective school policies within the local school district that will outline recommendations and provide historical background of the problem is a significant step in creating calibration. A policy on administrators' perception of their role in increasing parental involvement with steps such as professional development would create an understanding of parent involvement and possibly improve involvement of parents at the local school sites.

This project is focused on communicating the findings of administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they face when involving parents, and

underlying factors to low parental involvement, which led to the creation of a policy paper with recommendations to support current parental involvement practices within the district. Establishing policies that become the specification for a process will address the problem and establish a consistent process. Essentially, the policy paper will support the current school policy on parental involvement and possibly provide practices for continued growth with the ultimate goal of increasing parental involvement to positively impact student achievement.

Review of the Literature

In this literature review, I have expanded on the positive impact the policy paper may have on administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. I began my research using the search terms *educational leadership policies*, *educational change policies* and *parental involvement policies* limited to scholarly articles published within the past 5 years. This search resulted in over 50 articles that were filtered to meet the needs of the study. The policy paper was influenced by the work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), who identified how parents decide to get involved and how the school's invitation influences the choice of involvement. The policy created from the study will support school administrators' in increasing parental involvement because it outlines steps school leaders may implement to create consistent parental involvement opportunities.

Historically, primary literature and research on educational management and leadership were dominated by English speakers (Connolly et al., 2019). However, at the beginning of the 21st century, literacy levels had started growing as many countries, and

cultures had adopted educational policies to better their diverse cultures. The dominance of research on educational management policies by the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia began to diminish with the emergence of interests in effective educational leadership in Africa. According to Cardno (2018), leadership and management policies are central concepts in understanding organizations such as learning institutions. Thus, it is true to say that nearly all management and leadership activities in the educational systems are linked to some policies and initiatives either on the local, national, or global scale. Globally, educational management and leadership policies are facing developments to ensure improvements (Agosto & Roland, 2018). Therefore, properly structured educational management and leadership policies must be implemented to gain educational improvements. When considering school leadership, educational improvements are significantly impacted through the effective implementation of research-based educational leadership policies. According to Gorard et al. (2020), policy-makers should be required to use evidence-led programs that have a reasonable evidence base and which are also now being used in schools.

Educational Leadership Policies

Utilizing educational leadership policies is the essence of creating a clear relationship between educational administration, leadership, and management policy practice. Ideally, improving education starts with carrying the responsibilities of a functioning education system and leadership policies. There is a greater interest in procedures governing educational leadership beginning in the early part of the 21st century. During this time, there was widespread belief and notions that quality leadership

enhances significant differences in educational outcomes in schools and students. According to Cardno (2018), most parts of the world recognize that effective management and leadership may provide learners with the best education. However, studies have indicated that many unconsciously confuse educational leadership and management in achieving the goal of improving the educational systems globally (Agosto & Roland, 2018). The notion of educational management overlaps the leadership concepts in the current interest of the developed world. As Agosto and Roland (2018) asserted, educational management practices entail delegation of duties involving assigning, accepting, and carrying out responsibilities that relate to the proper functioning of the education system. On the other hand, utilizing informative leadership policy is the action and practice of impelling other people in an academic scenery to ensure the objectives are achieved through the necessitation of actions (Connolly et al., 2019). Thus, it is essential that school leaders develop better perceptions and notions about the importance of creating effective policies that define and distinguish the specific roles of educational management and leadership.

Schools require a practical management approach that utilizes policy and human resources to sustain their existence. Effective management requires full recognition of the world's changing conditions (Vélez et al., 2017). A principals' leadership behavior influences the outcomes of the school (Sun & Henderson, 2017). However, a gap exists around the role of the school leader when attempting to influence parental involvement. Goodall (2018) explained that the school leader's role cannot, and should not, be confined to only what happens within the walls of the school building. The display of

positive leadership behaviors that impact students at school and at home is a distinct balance for administrators. Liebowitz and Porter (2019) explained that there is direct evidence of the relationship between principal behaviors and student achievement to further examine this point. Leadership behaviors may positively impact home–school connection and student achievement.

Modern education leadership has greatly focused on parental involvement as a critical component of enhancing learning. This kind of leadership has been termed sustainable, and it is of particular importance to the sustainability of schools. A study by Yulianti et al. (2020) investigated the school administrator and teacher’s roles in fostering the parent’s involvement in their children’s learning. They noted that the transformational leadership of administrators and the type of invitation parents received encouraged parents to actively get involved in their children’s education. The school administrators have the required capacity to roll out and implement school policies, establish the school culture, and set up the school norms and expectations, all of which set the ground for parent involvement. Administrators are more likely to involve parents in their children’s education if they constantly showcase leadership qualities such as trust, care, openness, and communication (Yulianti et al., 2020).

Educational leaders hold the most critical roles in implementing leadership policies and interpretation. The leaders need the knowledge and skills necessary for analyzing the guidelines as it is part of the leaders’ developing, interpreting, and reviewing the policies to achieve the purpose of specific procedures (Cardno, 2018). Globally, countries are more interested in leadership and management because people

perceive the prominence of policies about governance and administration in successfully developing and maintaining schools and educational systems (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2019). However, there is little clarity about the leadership behaviors that are most likely to produce favorable outcomes. According to Connolly et al. (2019; see also Bush, 2018), creating awareness of possible alternative approaches to providing the practical tools that solve daily educational management problems remains a significant issue. The present examination focused on exploring a better analysis of the types of leadership and recommending the best leadership policy with the potential of solving current and future problems relating to educational management. According to Muyunda (2021), policies are best utilized when there are clearly stated objectives, implementation and monitoring strategies, financial, human, and legal resources are indicated. The outline identified by Muyunda on effective policy structures framed the policy paper I created to address low parental involvement.

While researching the models of educational management and leadership, it is essential to understand that policies that have served the educational systems globally have for more than 20 years been classified into collegial, subjective, political, formal, and cultural models (Bush, 2018). However, these models are generalized into managerial, transformational, instructional, and moral leadership, among others (Guskey & Link, 2019). Nonetheless, educational leadership policies that directly impact the improvement of education systems are the organizational leadership policies and the instructional leadership policies. Leadership can be understood as all the processes

influencing outcomes based on drafting clear values and beliefs for the vision of every educational institution.

Regardless of the approaches to improving educational outcomes, it is essential to build policies focusing on leadership in educational management. For instance, in South Africa, there are extreme inequalities in learning achievement, and several critics of some categories of schools seem to appear satisfied with mediocrity (Connolly et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to structure educational leadership policies that would ensure equitable access to education and proper educational management for the improvement of all schools around the world.

Educational leadership studies have favored theories that emphasize transactional management, efficiency, and achievement of organizational goals. In the 1980s, educational leadership was shifted by the policies to focus on leadership and education research from the initially overrated corporate management. According to Cardno (2018), the guidelines emphasizing the intervention of human performers have reentered distinctiveness and introduced a leader-centric interpretation whereby governance is considered a countenance of a single person's inspiration. As Guskey and Link (2019) asserted, the theoretical conception of leadership in education accounts for the commitment to methodological individualism, which gives a logical structure in which leadership analysis is reduced. Thus, educational leadership policies play critical roles in changing cultural education and school organizations to match the customary communal setup and the modern leadership prospects. Considerably, educational policies started admitting women into academic and administrative positions even when management

positions were dominated by the white, heterosexuals, and Protestants. Leadership theories in education contributed to the change in perception and reshaped educational ideas, practice, and research (Agosto & Roland, 2018). Generally, education leadership conceptions significantly contribute to emphasizing efficient and transactional management and making positive educational changes through influencing the policies.

Recently, coordinating school teams on grading and reporting policies has been often ignored. School grading and reporting policies are part of educational instructional leadership that seems to be neglected in current educational management policies (Guskey & Link, 2019). Research and literature on educational leadership and policies have presented severe problems in the daily operations of organizational and educational institutions. With the recent educational administrators concentrating more on the management and overlooking the leadership importance in control, parents are reportedly registering complaints (Guskey & Link, 2019). Generally, managing the educational policies relating to school instructional leadership has led to bridging of the grading policies. Thus, it is essential to understand that educational management can only improve performance if all policies that provide the guidelines in ensuring the interests of all parties are respected (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2019). Generally, it is brilliant to consider restructuring educational management policies in some countries, especially in Africa, to address issues relating to instructional management systems to ensure proper coordination of school teams on grading and reporting educational outcome progress.

Education Change Policies

Policymakers and educational experts scrutinize policies and professions in education globally. In most countries, accountable reforms and effective educational policies are structured and adapted to modernize and improve the quality of education. Effective educational policy changes restructure the education system and invent and innovate evaluative and regulative tools that improve education outcomes. In making effective change policies in the United States, education systems must consider the three dimensions of inclusive education: cultures, policies, and practices (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). During the second term of President Obama's leadership, the US federal government structured and implemented multi-component policy policies founded on systems thinking and change models to influence effective policy changes in education (Woolner et al., 2018). Therefore, the current study focused on how effective change policies would improve learners' health, education, and cultures, safeguard the students' rights, protect the learners and school staff from harm, and respond to the community's perception.

One of the most challenging changes to government that requires extensive and elaborative research is education. According to Bali et al. (2019), dynamic policy effectiveness requires ensuring that the policy addresses not only the problem in a given context, but also how it adapts to changing conditions and circumstances over time. The policy paper I created to address low parental involvement in a Mid-Atlantic school district addresses the current problem and identifies the importance of human capital to impact change in the future.

Literature relating to educational policy changes indicates an awareness of the physical school environment, educational leadership and practices, educational outcomes, and society's general perception of the education system (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). Consistently, research and literature on effective change policies in education are complicated, time-consuming, and, in most cases, fail to occur. Positive education system improvements are achieved through effective policy changes. Education is one of the most important tools used to solve all manner of problems in the world. Globally, countries are trying to structure, adopt, and implement policies that combine human culture's diversity with educational enforcement for a better society. However, with the ever-changing environment and emerging ideas and technologies, the education system and its provisions can no longer withstand the traditional ways and concepts to solve the modern world's problems. Thus, making changes in educational policies, adopting inclusive education, make changes in educational and leadership policies are critical to improving educational outcomes. Studies have proved that teachers play a central role in implementing educational changes. Thus, effective policy changes in education should start with changing the teacher leadership and expertise.

As Alexaki et al. (2022) asserted, effective policy changes in education must display a diversity of characteristics, practices, and recommendations, with the teachers considered as the key players in policy implementation and the foundations for the knowledge economy. Effective policies have been demonstrated to be a valuable tool for changing school processes. According to Bali et al. (2019), effective policies aim to solve

problems through a deliberative process focusing on the foundation of the policy's design.

The development of assessment tools for reforms in the educational profession and systems are influenced by international organizations and agencies that focus on quality and effectiveness. According to Wilcox and Lawson (2017), the reforming agenda on policy changes have challenged many teachers' professional autonomy, knowledge and expertise, new standard promotions, best practices, and recommendations. For instance, many paths lead to the transformation of professions and emergencies. It is important to note that bringing reforms to the education world is not only important to school management and leadership but also to governments and society (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). Generally, education professions are under disturbance (Woolner et al., 2018). The context of restructuring the education systems that have been witnessed since the early 1980s has been subjecting the newer regulatory processes and pressures on teachers' especially school inspectors and the principals, to increase their controls to a tighter work organization (Wilcox & Lawson, 2017). Even though policymakers can connect the results to the development of new mechanisms relating to the evaluation of performances, the outcomes have never been consistent hence calling for the need to have an effective policy change in education.

The pursuit of school system improvements worldwide is growing recognition as teacher agencies and professional influences become the most critical components. According to Harris and Jones (2019), teacher leadership's possibilities and potentials remain the issue in changing educational reforms and policies. Ideally, in changing the

educational leadership, it is important to change the content of teacher training and expertise because teachers are the major instigators, creators, and implementers of the needed changes. Therefore, educational leadership policy changes should start with teachers as the agencies of the policy implementation.

Educational policy changes make greater sense when it encompasses teacher leadership contexts. According to Wilcox and Lawson (2017), teachers are chief constructors of educational changes and equally significant contributors to educational policy making. The steps towards changing educational policies for effective improvement in education systems could be more empowering and positive if teachers make the changes' a central point. Woolner et al. (2018) argued that the empirical knowledge built on teacher leadership reveals more scholarly interests and the nature of enacted new educational policies. Teacher leadership is one of the most influential literature reviews that signal the centrality of the teacher roles in school transformation and educational changes.

In the United States, the federal government launched the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) in 2007 to purposefully support teachers' self-directed professional learning, knowledge exchange, and growth of leadership skills (Woolner et al., 2018). Research by Harris and Jones (2019) indicated that the value of TLLP in teacher leadership and general professional changes could greatly impact educational improvements in the United States and beyond. Therefore, making changes in the educational system starts with effective policy changes in education to embrace teachers'

interaction with the knowledge and expertise necessary for achieving the universal objective of education.

Educational changes are approached from the dimensions of creating an inclusive education culture and developing inclusive policies and practices. The relationship between the three dimensions and their combination in making educational changes is critical in developing inclusive schools (Woolner et al., 2018). Thus, effective policy changes in education should focus on inclusive education and access to quality learning. For the government, policymakers, international organizations, and education agencies to improve educational outcomes worldwide, it is important to enact policies that manage diversities and meet the needs of all particularities of children in schools.

The constant effort for schools to meet the basic needs and the particularities of all learners creates a learning environment with respect and mutual understanding for all pupils. Arguably, the specific need for improving the education systems is the change of educational policies to combine all the diversified cultures, educational policies, structure, and applied educational practices (Alexaki et al., 2022). In education, organizational ideologies are overly adopted by the school community over a long period. However, with the advancement in technologies and the ever-changing societal demands to solve emerging issues and trends, it is prudent to make changes in policies that relate to inclusive education (Harris & Jones, 2019). Therefore, the diversity of learners in schools, characterized by the modern needs of pupils, impacts not only their cognitive abilities but also their social interaction and transformation (Woolner et al., 2018). Thus,

it is necessary to make effective policy changes in education to improve educational outcomes.

Parental Involvement Policies

Parental involvement plays a significant role, especially during the early stages of a child's developmental education. Any challenge that may hamper this involvement threatens potential achievements (Kang et al., 2017; Sari, 2020). A study by Sari (2020) revealed that despite parental involvement in promoting early childhood education, most schools do not fully involve parents or provide adequate information about their children's learning process and performances.

Some teachers develop negative attitudes towards some parents, especially those that are mainly regarded as "difficult." Bang (2018) noted this and advised teachers that instead of paying extra attention to what parents perceived as "bad" behaviors, they should strive to understand them by accommodating their points of view. He argued that such perceptions by teachers could only thrive because of the overall administrative weaknesses of the school, hence implicating school administrators. From this understanding, Bang emphasizes the need for teachers to engage in efforts to reach out to parents to ensure that they are actively engaged in their children's educational journey.

Some studies have revealed how some principals rate parents in schools worldwide. For instance, Shuffelton (2020) observed that some principals had noticed parental apathy regarding involvement in school events. He viewed this as a serious challenge because when the parent lacks the enthusiasm and the interest to participate in school management, it becomes difficult for administrators to persuade them to get

involved. Goss (2019) supported this view, who suggested that lack of motivation and encouragement from teachers, coupled with parental apathy, are the most significant impediments to parental involvement in their children's education.

Another significant challenge that hinders parental involvement, according to Lechuga-Peña and Brisson (2018), is the lack of time and imbalanced socio-economic backgrounds of parents. These factors have reduced parents' interest in assisting the school and their children's education. Unfortunately, some administrators do not value the personal presence of parents in school management and their child's education. These administrators value only the financial importance of parents, so they only interact or communicate with their parents when a financial matter or need arises (Bozkus, 2022). Such administrator perspectives hamper parental involvement in their children's education. The study of Marschall and Shah (2020) examined the school-based policy index regarding parent involvement, school programs, and resources that attempt to help parents overcome barriers to participation. It was determined that parental involvement increases when school leaders implement school-based policies (parent workshops, communication systems, and opportunities for parents to volunteer) and home-required policies (explanation of lessons and homework assignments that involve parents). Furthermore, schools can foster more significant involvement by providing parents with more opportunities to participate.

Hornby and Blackwell (2018) developed a model that established the four main factors that they believed were the barriers to an effective parental engagement in their children's learning. They categorized them as individual, family, child, parent-teacher,

and societal factors. Hornby and Blackwell noted the emergence of a new trend where there was an increase in pressure on parents due to a decline in family support. It is possible to have parents going through internal conflicts, such as divorce, within their personal lives. According to Hornby and Blackwell, many social anxieties and other stressors contribute to the lack of interest in participating in school programs.

The next barrier is the perception by the school administrators that parents do not have the adequate knowledge and skills to assist their children with schoolwork. This notion is not a reserve of administrators, but it is also well supported by the teachers. Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) indicated that their homework becomes more complex and specialized as children advance to higher classes. As a result, parents may start feeling intimidated and may withdraw their attention from the child. However, school leaders have an opportunity to positively shift parental involvement through the use of effective school policies, as in the one I created with an identified problem and clear goals. According to Marschall and Shah (2020), predominantly Black and Latino schools achieve significant gains in parent involvement as the number of policies in place to support and encourage participation increases. Additionally, Myende and Nhlumayo stated that as children grow and start feeling the need for independence, they may unknowingly begin pushing their parents away. As a result, most parents become tempted to give space, so most of them back off. Most administrators may not immediately notice such tension between the learners and their parents; therefore, they may be unable to establish policies that can address such issues (Berry, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

It is imperative to note that lack of time on the part of the staff also impeded parent involvement. Sari (2020) noted that the lack of training for staff on how to work with parents is a challenge to the involvement of parents in school programs. Educators perceive lack of communication as a challenge in parent involvement. They believe this is a challenge because, in some instances, they are unable to communicate with their parents. Therefore, it becomes hard for them to communicate a child's progress to their parent. According to Berry (2019) parents who struggled in school may have developed negative attitudes toward school. Such experiences may lead the parents to avoid every chance to be at school, hindering their involvement in their children's education. Every parent wishes the best for their children. Parents feel happy when their children are performing well academically. Berry stated that parents feel motivated and are willing to stretch to whatever limits to make their children feel appreciated. According to Wong et al. (2018), such a parent will be willing to be fully engaged in their child's education journey. Unfortunately, if the child is struggling, Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) asserted that the parents will start feeling defeated, and eventually leave everything to the teachers.

Studies indicate the positive steps and changes in educational management systems and resources with the use of effective policies before and during the 21st century. The literature review of the present study focused on use of effective educational policies in the context of understanding the notions, theoretical conceptions, educational leadership policies, and instructional management. Conclusively, proper educational

management and leadership policies must be implemented by school administrators to ensure educational improvements in learning and behavior outcomes.

Project Description

The policy paper I have provided identified vital information about the misalignment between the school district's definition of parental involvement and administrators' perceptions. I have outlined a plan to review my policy paper with district leaders to help align perceptions. The goal is to review the policy paper in stages during systemic meetings in order to build buy-in and allow time for district leaders to review and implement the recommended policy. Findings from the study indicated that administrators believe there is a need for improving parent involvement. In addition, some schools are identified as a Community School and have PEAs working at the school to support parental involvement efforts.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

The policy paper identified recommendations based on the data findings to improve alignment of the districts understanding and administrators' perceptions. The recommendations will require professional learning for school administrators and PEAs regarding effective communication strategies. This is a potential barrier because of time needed and funding availability. Another barrier could be administrator acceptance of additional professional learning. Even though administrators desire to improve parental involvement, the additional professional learning may cause a hardship with time away from the school building.

Possible solutions to the potential barriers of funding concerns could be addressed by using grant funding or community partnership options to support district-wide professional learning. The barrier regarding administrator acceptance could be solved by improving administrators' understanding of the data findings and by sharing the positive responses from Community Schools and the success they have experienced with PEAs.

Proposal for Implementation

The policy paper identified needed professional development learning for school administrators to provide an overall understanding of administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement and provide an increased understanding of the district's definitions of parental involvement. In addition, professional learning will provide communication strategies administrators may use when communicating with student families. Finally, the professional learning will highlight the roles of PEAs and provide policy suggestions that all schools should have a PEA. The deliverable policy paper reviewed with school leaders during quarterly systemic meetings indicated below:

Table 5*Timeline for Implementation of District Level Project Deliverable*

| Meeting | Activity | Participants |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Summer Learning Institute | Discussion of data findings Review current policy | Chief executive officer Executive cabinet members School administrators |
| Semester 1 Administrator Meeting | Review policy recommendations - Communication best practices | Chief executive officer Executive cabinet members School administrators |
| Semester 2 Administrator Meeting | Review policy recommendations - Budget allotments Identify benefits of PEAs | Chief executive officer Executive cabinet members School administrators |

Note. PEA = parent engagement assistant.

Roles and Responsibilities

As the researcher, my first responsibility is to share the study findings with district leaders. I will use my research to show the need for professional learning and highlight the recommendations from the project. If the district accepts my policy recommendations, the district will use its discretion to make policy updates about parental involvement. School administrators would then expect to implement the policy. Accepting the policy paper with or without adjustments will establish accountability and expectation for district leaders and school administrators.

My focus was to investigate school administrators' perceptions. With the data findings, there is a need to align with the district's definition of parental involvement to meet the needs of student families. I will also encourage administrators to reflect and

discuss current research behind parents' motivations for involvement allowing administrators to consider additional options for effectively engaging student families.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Planned

The evaluation selected for the project is an ongoing formative evaluation after each administrator meeting. The goal of formative evaluation is to collect evidence and ascertain how well students learn to adjust teaching practices appropriately (Lyon & Olah et al., 2019). I will provide administrators with a formative evaluation survey to capture their view of the policy recommendations. The survey will capture administrators' ideas, thoughts and suggestions of administrators about policy recommendations.

Justification for Evaluation Plan

Summative assessments present only summative or final results compared to formative assessments. Thus, making a summative evaluation not as beneficial for this project study due to the delivery process. The formative assessment will allow me to obtain data at the conclusion of each administrator meeting to gauge participants understanding and acceptance of the information as it is being presented. Formative evaluation may include reflection, self-assessment, feedback, and structured discussion – all strategies that have been found to positively influence student learning (Center on School Turnaround at WestEd., 2018). The survey will use a Likert-type scale to measure outcomes. The scale will be organized as follows: 4 = *strongly agree*, 3 = *agree*, 2 = *disagree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*. Administrators and other participants will choose the survey response for all policy recommendations made based on their experience. The

evaluation will allow participants the opportunity to provide feedback on how they believe the policy paper recommendations would support the needed social change to improve administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement. The questions participants will respond to are the following: (a) I have read and understand the data regarding administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement; (b) I have read and better understand the district's definition of parental involvement; (c) I have read and understand the communication practices for parental involvement; and (d) I read and understand the role of the PEA. The ultimate goal was to investigate administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement and share the findings with district leaders. Key stakeholders participating in the evaluation may include school administrators (principals and assistant principals), executive cabinet members, and the chief executive officer.

Project Implications

Social Change Implications

My research focused on a specific school district, but the implications may be broad when considering parental involvement roles. A key factor determined from the research indicated the importance of aligning perceptions of the district and school administrators regarding parental involvement. The findings from the research indicated misalignment about parental involvement is evident with school administrators as many only highlighted parental involvement as coming to school events. With the alignment of the district's definition and administrators' understanding of their role, the project may promote intentional collaboration. However, because the misalignment was not

discovered nor discussed, the school district did not recognize the need for a solution with this concern, which ultimately will continue if not addressed.

Due to the pandemic, many students are struggling and parents are unsure how to support students at home. Implementing effective communication strategies will assist in creating a plan for success. The communication strategies will align with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement framework focusing on levels one and two as they relate to decision to get involved and choice of involvement. Having an identified policy to address the findings from the research is the initial process of implementing social change.

Local Stakeholders

I believe the project may hold high significance as it provides clear recommendations to support administrator's understanding of their role within the local school district. With clear alignment of the administrators' role and the district's definition regarding parental involvement, this is the initial step to improving and possibly enhancing involvement opportunities for student families.

Larger Context

The policy recommendations by way of the findings from the research may be implemented by other schools or districts in the United States to help schools and districts identify the misunderstandings of roles that may lead to low parental involvement.

Understanding perceptions and misalignments are vital to the progress of any school system. Having clarity around parental involvement expectations will guide school administrators' thinking, action steps, and communication. Although change is a

process, taking small steps towards change may lead to successful practices involving parents. Ultimately, creating a plan to engage parents may positively impact on student achievement and possibly become the design for other schools to follow.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This project study produced a policy paper that provided an in-depth look at administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors contributing to low parental involvement in a Mid-Atlantic school district. The policy paper has recommendations to address the gap of low parental involvement as a key strategy. It is hoped that, based on the findings of the study, the project will provide administrators a better understanding of their role in increasing parental involvement so parents and schools may work collaboratively to ensure students' academic success. Currently, parental involvement is strained by administrators only consulting parents when there are difficulties, rather than communicating with them throughout the schoolyear to identify the needs of students before wrongs are committed (Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

The project deliverable for the present study is a policy paper with recommendations geared toward understanding school administrators' perspectives of their role in increasing parental involvement. There are many strengths with using this policy paper. The policy paper will provide recommendations regarding effective communication strategies. The policy paper provides direct guidance to school administrators with the incorporation of the district's expectation for parental involvement. The use of a policy to increase parental involvement may have a positive impact on student achievement.

Although the administrators I interviewed for during the study's examination believed that they had a role in increasing parental involvement, there are limitations in determining appropriate steps to take to truly engage a vast number of parents. The policy paper offers sustainable options to support parental involvement efforts, but it does not speak to the needs of all parents at each school within the district. The project study offers some solutions, but they are not directly linked to solving the problem solely within the local school. Instead, the policy paper offers a solution-based strategy that may be adjusted and used for the entire school district.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem that prompted this project study was the low percentage of parental involvement among elementary schools within a Mid-Atlantic school district. In present study, I investigated school administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement at the local school. I used a basic qualitative approach and interviewed eight school-based administrators. Whereas the current study focused on the perceptions of administrators, an alternative approach would be to examine teachers' perceptions. Teachers have a direct connection with students' families, and obtaining data on their roles in increasing parental involvement would support the next steps for better parental communication to impact parental involvement. Another alternative approach would be to investigate parents' perceptions by conducting one-on-one interviews or focus groups to determine their preferred type of involvement and communication with the school. This approach would allow school administrators to better understand parental needs and their desired participation levels.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

As a scholar, I have learned that scholarship refers to the ability to prove the point of the study and to identify additional views regarding the study. Scholarship involves going deeper into the research not only to support the ideas of the study but also to gain various views on the phenomenon and determine what information is valid. The administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement are of great interest to me because I aim to become an administrator that is connected to parents in order to have a positive impact on student achievement. In the study, I identified administrators' perceptions on the topic of parental involvement; however, that is only one component of parental involvement. This journey has allowed me to be the face of change for my school district and school administrators as I strive to improve student achievement with the support of parental involvement.

Project Development and Evaluation

This doctoral journey has advanced my learning about developing policy papers, making professional evaluations, and examining feedback from colleagues. During the process of developing a policy paper with the identified recommendations, I learned the importance of establishing measurable and attainable goals. Policy papers can be profound and hold a high level of influence to promote potential change. The current study has heightened my desire to increase parental involvement to support students' academic growth. Based on my prior experiences, parental involvement in school affairs can positively impact students' educational journeys. As a school administrator, I

understand that I am responsible for implementing change. Although change happens over time, there are benefits to implementing the project. For example, the project evaluation will provide the necessary feedback to decide on the appropriate next steps to close the gap between administrators' perceptions and parental involvement in the local school district.

The policy paper (a) provides highlights from the study to develop a perceptual understanding of administrators' roles, (b) establishes the perceptual alignment of the study's recommendations with the district's policy on parental involvement, (c) recommends strategies for communication with parents to promote increased parental involvement, and (d) addresses the need and benefit of having a PEA at each school within the school district. The policy paper will be shared with executive members of the district and school administrators to close the gap that currently exists between administrators' perception of their role and the district's policy to increase parental involvement. The policy paper identifies the need for systemic monitoring of the recommendations to analyze its success. I have great aspiration that my research paper, including the policy paper and recommendations, will be examined and executed by district leaders.

Leadership and Change

As a school administrator, I understand how difficult change may be for some; however, as indicated, change is necessary for growth. To obtain the support of colleagues, it is essential that I clearly establish why the change is necessary. My doctoral journey has allowed me to serve my district as we strove for change to close this

identified gap. As a school leader in my district, I aim for the study to be the model of change. Ultimately, I wish to lead with inspirational motivation and a clear vision to improve how administrators perceive their role in increasing parental involvement to impact students' academic achievement.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

In present study, I investigated administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement, challenges they may face when involving parents, and underlying factors in a Mid-Atlantic school district. Parental involvement in urban areas is significantly lower than in suburban areas (McQuiggan et al., 2017). Although several researchers have discussed the problem of low parental involvement, the gap in practice relating to low parental involvement still exists, and school leaders are unsure of how to address this concern. The study's findings highlight a perceptual misalignment between administrators' perceptions and the district's policy regarding parental involvement, which may be a determining factor in closing the gap. Since the school district has failed to establish consistent practices to close the gap concerning parental involvement, it was imperative to investigate the school administrator's role in increasing parental involvement.

I developed a policy paper with recommendations to support the district's administrative procedure for parental involvement. The aim of the project was to provide a report to district leaders and school administrators of the administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement and practical communication strategies to improve parental involvement. The project study can further explore teacher and parent

perceptions of parental involvement activities and communication preferences. The findings of the present study may also lead to additional professional learning for administrators and teachers within the school district around school roles and effective communication strategies. I believe the current study is vital because it can positively impact student achievement by improving parental involvement practices, and it will require adjusting the perceptual understanding of school administrators within the local school district.

The project highlighted my perceptions as a school administrator. During the interviews, I was conscious of how I framed questions about participants' perceptions of the impact of leadership styles on parental involvement. I believe an administrator's leadership style has an impact on their ability to involve parents; however, I did not want my bias to influence the participants' responses. I was forced to self-evaluate during the interviews to ensure that my bias did not influence the participants' responses. The current study is too important for ambiguous responses, so I developed a policy paper that makes recommendations based on how administrators perceive their role in increasing parental involvement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The practical implications for school administrators are to be aware of their influence on parental involvement. Parental involvement in schools is important because parents are involved in the upbringing of their children and therefore have information about their children and a great opportunity to influence their development, which is significant for all parents (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). Parental involvement can help

influence children's education outcomes. To add to our understanding of the effect of parental involvement on the success of children's educational outcomes, the following theories were examined: ecological systems theory, social capital theory, and overlapping spheres theory. These theories were based on an examination of the social factors of human beings (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017) and provide an in-depth understanding of how parents' involvement in schools can improve children's academic success. In the three theories, schools should create an environment that is appealing for families' engagement. When schools implement parental involvement initiatives in schools, students feel that their presence is considered, thus feeling special and included (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). Inclusion motivates students' success and will thus be a motivating factor for parental involvement.

School leaders may apply the recommendations made in the policy paper to impact parental involvement within the local school district. The study found that administrators believe they have a role in increasing parental involvement. Based on the policy paper recommendations, districts could create professional learning for school administrators to know how to establish positive relationships with parents through transparency and building trust. The current study may lead to additional training for PEAs on enhancing their position and truly connecting with parents as the bridge between home and school.

School administrators could also consider the motivating factors identified in the policy paper when deciding how to engage parents. In districts with low parental involvement, school leaders may use the recommendations as a model for establishing a

policy specific to their parental involvement concerns. The present study could also be a support for many school districts when conducting research and establishing policy recommendations regarding administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement.

As traditional education programs in higher learning institutions may not have instilled in graduates the importance of parental involvement, the chance of administrators having educators who value collaborative relationships is low. However, despite the growing demand to address the importance of parental involvement in schools, higher learning institutions have not yet implemented programs that prepare future administrators and teachers to promote parental involvement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Therefore, further research is needed in the area of higher institution courses relating to parental involvement. Moreover, developing partnerships between higher institutions and local school districts could influence new graduates to improve parental involvement as a vital part of the process of student achievement. Teachers and parents could also be surveyed to determine how to close the parental involvement gap in the local school district.

Conclusion

Despite the evidence revealed by studies about the importance of family and parental involvement, many schools have struggled to implement initiatives that promote these partnerships (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Some contributing factors to low parental involvement are work schedules, language differences, individual perceptions, and lack of personal relationships with school staff. The present study provided research-based policy recommendations based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental

involvement framework. The intention of the policy paper is to establish perceptual alignment, encourage best practices for parental communication, and highlight the benefits of having a PEA at each school. As the researcher, I hope the local school district will improve parental involvement in schools by implementing the outlined suggestions.

The study's findings indicated a perceptual misalignment between administrators' roles and the school districts' administrative procedures for parental involvement. This gap in understanding might contribute to the low percentages of parental involvement. The findings also revealed that although administrators believed that they play a role in increasing parental involvement, they were unclear about the tasks the district has identified as activities that promote parental involvement. While I did not determine that this misunderstanding was the reason for low parental involvement, the findings indicate a need for professional learning to align administrators' perceptions with the school district's procedure for parental involvement. Parental involvement is vital to students' education, and the implementation of research-based policies and strategies is necessary for student achievement.

I have learned from this doctoral journey that school administrators must have a plan to determine the most effective method for closing this gap of low parental involvement. Listening to the needs of the school and the individuals involved will help resolve the issues more effectively. It is also critical that the school routinely reviews the effectiveness of the parental involvement plan as the needs of the school change. By providing an effective example of parent-school collaboration, schools can train students to become involved parents when their own children begin school.

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Appendix A: The Project

Background

This project study investigated school administrators' roles in increasing parental involvement in schools, challenges they may face when attempting to involve parents, and underlying factors to low parental involvement. Understanding administrators' perceptions is essential for closing the local district's low parental involvement gap because it is believed that a lack of parental involvement contributes to low student achievement. Research has shown that parents play a vital role in their children's education, and a relationship between parental involvement and student success does exist (Li & Fischer, 2017). The study's primary construct focused on identifying elementary school administrators' perceptions about parental involvement in schools for growth and quality education. *Parental involvement* comprises behaviors such as volunteering at schools, home learning support, being active and attending parent-teacher conferences, and being included in making decisions concerning school and education. Parental involvement also means that parents create an environment within their homes that is friendly for home learning (Dueñas, 2017). With this understanding of the importance of parents' involvement in schools, the school administration should consider a clear definition of the frameworks and variables that influence the involvement (Dueñas, 2017). Upon review of the findings from the study, I have developed a policy paper with recommendations to assist the district with increasing low parental involvement.

The school district collects data every two years from teachers, students, and parents regarding parental involvement. The data collected through surveys indicated that several elementary schools showed rates of parental involvement below the district's average. The data from the surveys identified eight schools with parental involvement percentages of 0%–56%, and that computes to an overall average of 43%. The district's overall average parental involvement in elementary schools was 56.8%. By interviewing administrators from the identified schools, I examined their roles in increasing parental involvement. Because of the pandemic the 2019 survey was not conducted; therefore, the last survey collected by the district was in 2017.

Unfortunately, I was unable to interview three elementary administrators assigned to schools with the lowest parental involvement rates, as identified in the school district's 2017 climate survey, which limited the participant size for the study. Also, in 2017, the climate survey was an independent instrument, and the data for each school were independent and easily accessible; however, since 2019, the data have been included in each school's report card, which is located online for the general public. Within the school's report card, I was able to locate the school quality and student success score including parental involvement scores. Now, each school has a star rating that is identified based on the average of the following areas: (a) academic achievement, (b) academic progress, (c) progress towards English proficiency, and (d) school quality and student success.

To further research the district's stance on parental involvement, I located through an online search, an administrative procedure dated September 1, 2008, which identified

a nine-step practice to support school-based administrators when involving parents. However, when interviewing the administrators, none mentioned or identified the administrative procedure as a way to increase parental involvement. Many of the participants shared challenges when attempting to involve parents and were unsure how to close the gap. Research has indicated that many public-school leaders feel inadequately prepared to encourage parents to become more involved (Slater et al., 2018).

The Mid-Atlantic school district has 123 elementary schools serving 50,257 students from kindergarten to Grade 5. The district has 26,772 African American students, 19,170 Hispanic students, 1,988 White students, 1,449 Asian students, and the remaining 878 students are identified as others. The school district has increased minority enrollment over the past 5 years. The 2019 District Report Card indicated that despite an improvement, the school system did not meet the annual target for academic achievement in elementary schools. The school system met the annual target for elementary schools the area of progress in achieving English language proficiency.

Many research studies support parental involvement (Kalaycı & Öz, 2018); however, administrators have difficulty determining the best approaches to involving student families. The first step is to clarify administrators' roles and align them with the district's parental involvement administrative procedure. The present study is a step in the right direction, and it provides data to assist in closing the gap. Research has indicated the need for the coherence of productive parental involvement for school staff and parents to impact student success (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). To develop consistent

parental involvement practices across the school district, school staff and administrators may consider professional learning. According to Liebowitz and Porter (2019), professional development training is essential for shaping urban education and increasing parental involvement. The findings from my study identified misalignment of perceptual understandings and clearly indicated that professional learning would assist in obtaining calibration for school-based administrators.

Findings

The findings from the study indicated that a misunderstanding exists in terms of administrators' perceptions and the school district's definition of parental involvement. The school district defines that parental involvement entails (a) regularly checking grades through the online portal, (b) speaking with teachers regularly, (c) assisting with homework each day, (d) holding conversations about the school day with their students, (e) ensuring that students arrive at school on time each day, and (f) regularly participating in school-wide activities. However, administrators in the study defined parental involvement as meeting with teachers, volunteering, and learning beyond the classroom; only three out of eight (37.5%) administrators understood what the school district has determined as parental involvement.

The data revealed that all the participants believed that the format of invitation that parents received may affect their level of participation. The participants believed that parents should receive both paper and electronic invitations to participate. This finding is significant because the school district has adopted improved technology; however, not everyone has technical skills or access to the internet. Thus, to include all parents in the

communications, schools must share information in various formats and languages. Schools must share information in various formats and languages to involve many parents. The participants also stated that the school administrators and classroom educators should share invitations to participate in school events multiple times before the event; however, administrators believe that parents are more enthusiastic about participating when the event is specific to their child. For example, standard Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings may have low participation, but back-to-school nights are well attended. Also, it is essential that the school shares information with families they can connect to and understand allowing them to provide their input. Administrators must be intentional about parental involvement opportunities to ensure that parents receive the necessary information to support their children's academic growth.

The findings showed that all eight participants believed that the administrators' leadership style may impact their ability to increase low parental involvement. The study participants shared that "administrators should be someone easy to talk to," be "open to feedback," be "mindful of facial expressions," be "a warmth that parents can gravitate to," be "approachable," and "be a transformational leader who understands their strengths and areas of growth," as well as a "collaborative leader." The participants suggested that certain dispositions and leadership styles could positively impact the relationship between school administrators and parents by establishing trust and building a solid foundation for interactions that promote student success.

The data also revealed that all participants believed that a positive relationship exists between parental involvement and student achievement, recognizing parents' critical role in their children's achievement. The administrators understood that they have a role in increasing parental involvement; however, they were unsure about how to promote parental involvement. Their perceptual misunderstanding of the district's expectations of parental involvement may have impacted their ability to close the gap of low parental involvement. Because of the various definitions the participants had of parental involvement, it is clear that calibration and alignment are necessary to improve parental involvement efforts. The responses indicated a need for additional professional learning to implement cohesion and a strategic plan for success.

Evidence from Research and Literature

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified personal motivators for parental involvement, and the contextual motivators are invitations from the school, specific invitations from the school, and specific invitations from the child. It is suggested that invitations that come from students have the most impact when parents decide whether to participate in school events. While all invitations are important for ensuring family engagement, invitations from children are the strongest predictor of family involvement (Whitaker, 2019).

Schools should conduct needs assessments to strategically address parental needs and increase parental involvement. As there is growing concern over the impact of parents' involvement in schools, the need for administrators to evaluate and assess families' needs is key. School administrators are encouraged to establish a positive

parental involvement climate that, in turn, can lead to positive academic success. Parents' involvement in a child's education has a significant impact, as children rely on their parents' influence. In this context, administrators should incorporate assessments to understand the needs of families. Also, the lack of flexible work schedules and socioeconomic struggles lead to declined parental involvement in schools. To ensure that parents' involvement increases, administrators should ensure effective communication when opportunities arise for parental involvement. The lack of precise communication mechanisms between administrators and parents hinders parental involvement in their children's growth and development (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Other barriers that hinder the development and growth of parental involvement in schools are the lack of teacher training related to parental involvement and insufficient skills for administrators to administer the outlined frameworks for parental involvement. As administrators play a critical role in ensuring increased parental involvement in schools, they should consider adopting frameworks for continued professional learning on how to engage parents to promote children's academic success.

Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory in 1979 to explain the different layers within the system that influence children's development. According to the theory, the layers in children's development environments include relationships, norms, and regulations. Four factors were established to determine a child's development from this perspective, which Bronfenbrenner described as microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Hirano et al., 2018). The microsystem layer encompasses the child's parents, the social environment, the peer group, and the school to which the

child is closely attached. The mesosystem layer encompasses the family and the community and connects with the environment. The exosystem layer consists of external environments, such as the workplace for parents, which are indirectly included in a child's development. The macrosystem describes the cultural environment, which includes cultural and societal aspects, such as the economy and politics.

According to this theory, the mesosystem, the family system, has a high potential to influence a child's development. Primarily, the decisions that parents make concerning school have a strong potential to impact an individual's academic success directly. Also, the socioeconomic setting has a significant influence on a parent's ability to avail of resources and support for educational success. In this context, middle-income administrators and staff within the school setting may try to strategize on engaging low-income earning families but end up missing the step to analyze the needs of these families to ensure involvement (Hirano et al., 2018).

As schools continue providing and playing important roles in students' lives, they do not fill the relational role that parents play. In this context, school administrators play a primary role in indirectly educating children; however, with parental involvement, learning and teaching can occur at school and at home, thus leading to more successful academic outcomes. Schools should assume the role of nurturing the relational role parents play within a student's life and thus invite parental involvement in schools (Hirano et al., 2018). Several studies have revealed that parents play an important role in a child's life development. Through the role of school administrators, relationships

between parents and their children should be nurtured, because they form the basis for children's development.

I examined the social capital theory to further explore the effects of positive relationships in schools. The theory comprises three components: (a) the reciprocity of relationships that rely on obligation and expectation, (b) control and norms, and (c) information channels. Based on the components, socioeconomic status, schools, families, and communities form the basis of social capital. Thus, these components have a significant impact on students' academic success. This theory examines bonds that people with similar ideas share and often bridge people with diverse ideas. The theory suggests that if a child identifies an adult whom he or she can trust, then this bond can be resourceful in supporting students when difficulties arise in school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). From this perspective, school administrators must develop strategies that encourage and nurture such relationships between teachers and children for successful academic outcomes. Schools help create instrumental frameworks for learning so parents should seek assistance on how to help their children acquire academic support and promote their learning for academic success (Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020). From this perspective, school administrators play a role in improving parental involvement in schools through the setting of frameworks that parents can help their children learn. To promote successful educational outcomes, school administrators should provide parenting tips and parental involvement initiatives.

Social capital theory also states that communities create norms and specific expectations for youth behaviors, which can be used to establish support for preventing

peer pressure and to form a basis for character development. Through this aspect of social theory, parents help each other develop students' expectations within the school setting (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). With this type of support, schools play a vital role in developing strategies to which communities and schools can relate and thus bring about parental involvement in schools.

Recommendations Connected to Evidence

The components that may shape administrators' perceptions of parental involvement include communicating, parenting, home learning, volunteering, collaboration with society, and decision-making. Parenting is the ability to promote and foster parenting skills that help develop an environment for homes to support their children (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). Parents can learn how to create a supportive environment for home learning through parental involvement in schools. Administrators believe in promoting parental involvement in schools as they provide an understanding of parents' frameworks in their children's development and changes in their development (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). To develop parental involvement in schools, administrators should establish mechanisms to understand each student's needs. To do so, school districts should train their staff to understand students' cultures and backgrounds. Through cultural diversity professional learning, administrators may learn how to promote parental involvement in schools by understanding individual needs, resulting in children's academic success and improvement. Establishing a positive relationship with parents may increase the respect parents have for education and increase parental

supervision during home learning activities. The following policy recommendations address this problem:

- Establish perceptual alignment (school administrators and district) by sharing the findings of the study and the district's parental involvement administrative procedure with all school administrators.
- Create professional learning opportunities for administrators on the best communication practices for parental involvement.
- Appoint PEAs at each school with systemic monitoring that promotes school-based reflection and necessary process adjustments.

The policy paper with recommendations rollout should follow three stages:

1. Summer Learning Institute – Discussion of data findings and review of current administrative policy on parental involvement.
2. Semester 1 Administrator Meeting – Review policy recommendations and provide best communication practices, per Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997).
3. Semester 2 Administrator Meeting – Review policy recommendations to establish a PEA at each school and identify the benefits of PEAs and systemic monitoring.

Perceptual Alignment

The study discovered a gap in the perceptual understanding of the district's parental involvement administrative procedure and the school administrators' perceptions of parental involvement. This discrepancy highlights the need for perceptual alignment to

create a more collective perception of parental involvement for all administrators. Perceptual differences can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications. Thus, communication is critical for achieving success. Any initiative that aims to improve academic success, in the school setting, must follow specific guidelines provided by the responsible authority (Mac Iver et al., 2018). Therefore, school leaders should review the district's parental involvement procedures and connect the processes outlined to their initial perceptions of parental involvement to gain perceptual alignment. School leaders should also discuss the findings of the current study and reflect on how they promote parental involvement. The perceptions that school administrators have of parental involvement are key to thinking in a broader way than traditional practices, thus bringing about transformative communication that will create a learning environment for student success (Dueñas, 2017). Administrators have a vital role in influencing parental involvement in schools by incorporating acceptable frameworks that create an environment of engagement in which these partnerships can develop. I therefore recommend establishing professional learning opportunities for administrators on how to align the district's parental involvement administrative procedure with administrators' perceptions of the administrators' role in increasing parental involvement. The goal is to establish a mutual perceptual understanding by sharing the data findings and professional learning within the local school district. The next step would be to use the information learned to develop coherency at the school level to strategically engage parents to positively impact student achievement.

Policy Review

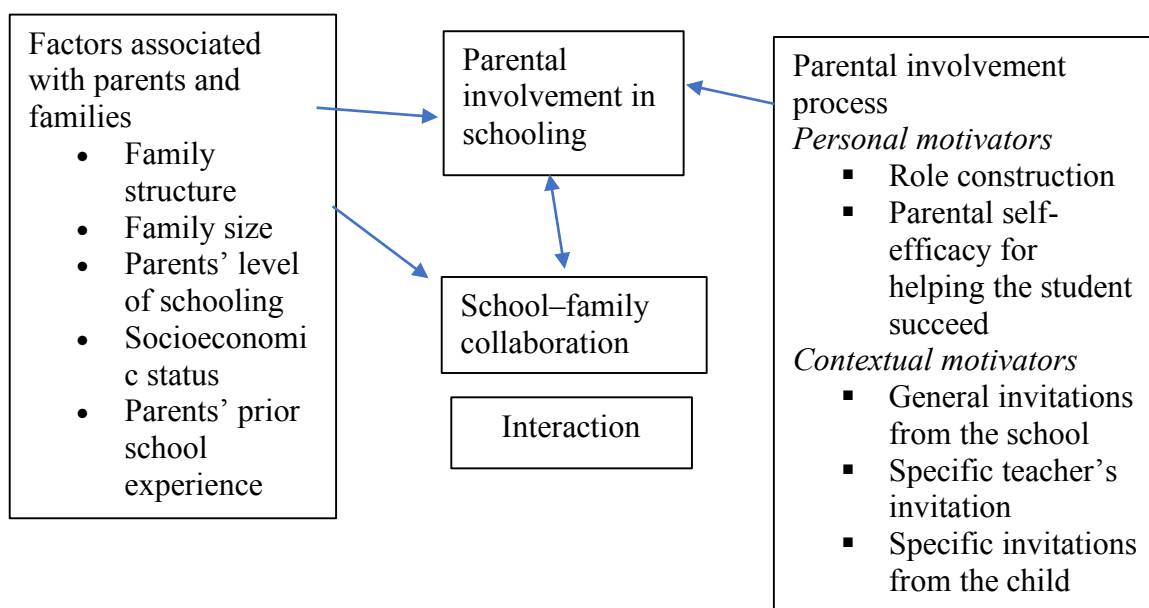
The policy review will ultimately lead to additional professional learning opportunity for administrators will encompass a review of data findings from the study, a self-reflection of current practices, and a discussion of best communication strategies to increase parental involvement. The policy paper review timeline should be intentional and succinct to support an increased understanding of the district's expectations for administrators' role regarding parental involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), parental involvement in schooling is considered a critical factor in improving student achievement and an avenue for narrowing the gap in student achievement between high and low social and economic status (SES).

Research indicated that the integrative model, which focuses on partnerships, is evolving with a focus on school–family collaboration. Moreover, parents are more likely to participate in a warm and welcoming environment in which administrators show concern and offer collaborative communication. By highlighting Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) framework for parental involvement, Deslandes (2019) claimed that relating to parents' beliefs and ideas about their role (understanding the role), their sense of competence, and their perception of invitations to participate (family processes) could remove obstacles to school–family collaboration. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), factors such as those shown on the left of Figure 1 may hinder the parental involvement processes shown on the figure's right. Additionally, the two groups of processes influence each other, but they also lead to specific practices of parental participation and promotion by the school and teachers (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,

1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler further suggested that SES might impact a parent's decision to become involved, and the type of invitation that parents receive may impact their decision to become involved in school activities.

Figure A1

Integrative Model of the Factors and Processes Linked to Parental Involvement and School–Family Collaboration



Note. From “Why do parents become involved in their children’s education?” by Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M., 1997, *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3–42.

The following suggestions presented by Spier et al., (2018) are derived from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s framework to promote parental involvement: (a) be clear and concise about how parents can be involved, (b) build on parental involvement through school programs and student performances, (c) create many opportunities for parental involvement to attract a more significant number of participants, (d) provide parents with specific guidance about how to oversee homework and suggestions

throughout the year for supporting their children's learning, (e) inform parents of behavioral and academic problems in a timely fashion, and (f) provide parents with positive feedback about their children.

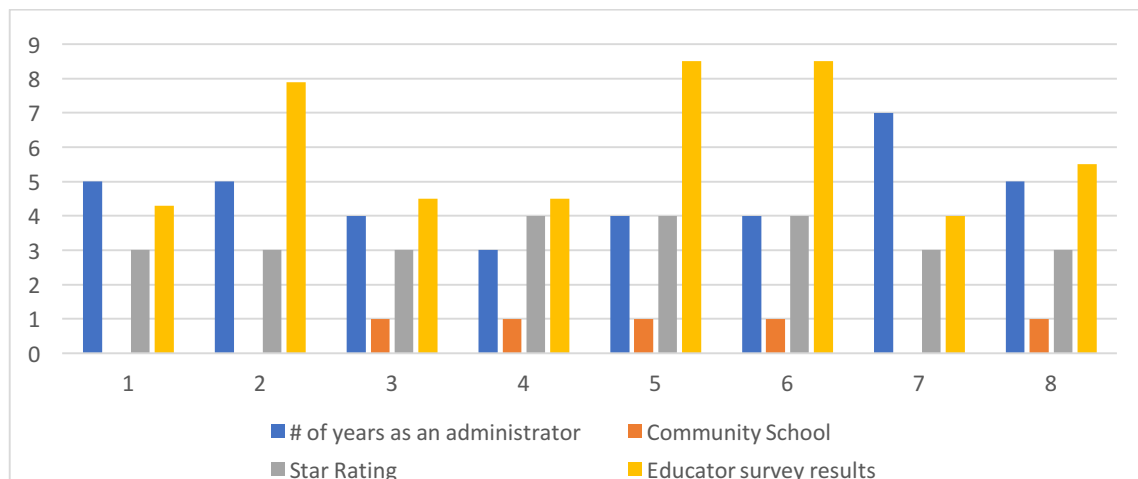
Yulianti (2020) advanced the notion of parental involvement invitations based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental involvement framework by indicating that transformational leadership practices further support parental involvement opportunities. Yulianti (2020) defined *transformational leadership* as school leadership that encourages parental involvement and enables the establishment of a solid home-school partnership to increase students' academic success. Yulianti (2020) defined teacher invitations for parental involvement as specific invitations compared to general invitations that come directly from the school. By contrast, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research on parents' perceptions has established a parental involvement framework which identified general invitations as those from the school to encourage parental involvement, but suggested that teacher invitations may function as an essential decision-maker for parents thinking about getting involved. General invitations from the school may influence parents' understanding of teachers' interest in their help, parents' beliefs about being needed in the educational process, and parents' knowledge of their children's work (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parent Engagement Assistants – Systemic Monitoring

Several schools in the district are identified as community schools. *Community schools* are public schools that partner with parents and community businesses for school improvement. Of the district's 123 elementary schools, 63 are considered community

schools. All community schools have a PEA that support the six pillars of the program. The pillars are identified as (a) expanded and culturally relevant curriculum, (b) effective teaching practices, (c) inclusive leadership, (d) multi-tiered systems of support, (e) families and community partners, and (f) community support services. The PEA position supports school administrators in creating parental support and involvement opportunities.

Figure 2 identified the eight administrators who participated in the study, the years they have worked as administrators, community school identification, and the star rating. Star ratings range from one to five stars and are established by the state. The criteria for the stars include academic growth, English language learner proficiency, and climate survey data. Five of the eight schools identified as community schools, and three had a four-star rating. One community school with a three-star rating is just 4% shy of the 60% needed to be identified as a four-star school. The non-community schools have three-star rating. To ensure perceptual alignment and proper execution, we must have systemic monitoring of the recommendations implemented. Therefore, I recommend conducting a survey each semester (twice per year) for school administrators, PEAs, teachers, and parents to determine parental involvement and ensure perceptual alignment with school-based personnel. I also recommend that systemic monitoring offer a reflective component of the survey to share the challenges and successes of the parental involvement initiative. The data will be reviewed with the school-based leadership team to determine the appropriate next steps. The findings from the survey should be shared with the school community for transparency.

Figure A2*School Profile Data*

Parents' involvement impacts children's academic success, regardless of the parent's educational background. While it is typically least expected for students with parents with a poor educational background to perform well, parental involvement in school programs positively impact students' attitudes, aspirations, and general behavior, which in turn promotes their academic success. Finding ways to improve and strengthen relationships and partnerships between parents, schools, and communities will result in positive school attendance, improved behavior changes, and many other beneficial changes that lead to academic success for students. Similarly, parental involvement in school programs helps develop and motivate children to make progress in academic excellence (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Through volunteering, parents can help to identify the needs of students, which will encourage support for positive academic outcomes.

Volunteering is represented in the involvement model and is described as the act of supporting school objectives and the learning process from a broader perspective at

any time and place. However, this type of involvement may face difficulties with inflexible schedules and training parents (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). However, the presence of parents in school and classroom settings communicates the importance of schools to students. Therefore, administrators should promote parental involvement in schools by creating an appealing environment for parents.

According to the interviews, administrators perceive home learning as a type of parental involvement that could be increased. Parents have revealed that they are willing to provide support and guidance for their children during home learning if the teachers and administrators provide the necessary skills and communicate their needs (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). Parents are interested in learning the necessary skills to improve their children's learning in specific subjects to help them achieve academic excellence. Home learning connects families to the learning at school and creates opportunities for students to show their skills. Promoting cognitive learning at home by discussing current or social issues also helps create opportunities for parents to support their children's needs.

Another form of parental involvement is collaborative initiatives with the community, which involve parents and those who affect and are interested in the performance of students. The quality of relationships that develop between schools and communities directly impacts students' learning. By building relationships with communities, students can learn different skills that will be useful for their future careers (Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

Conclusion

The policy paper with recommendations is focused on establishing perceptual alignment with school administrators and the district's current parental involvement administrative procedure. The implementation of systemic monitoring should enhance the effectiveness of the recommendations identified in the policy paper. The study's findings identified that school administrators desire to improve parental involvement as research acknowledges that parental involvement is a force to help improve their children's academic success. In promoting educational improvements, school administrators must address parental involvement relationships with schools through strategies that foster these relationships. School administrators should create relationships with parents to further students' learning processes and achieve quality improvements (Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017). School administrators play a significant role in promoting parental involvement in schools by incorporating strategies that promote the development and interaction of the stakeholders, thus contributing to students' positive educational outcomes. In the growing concern of promoting and improving children's educational outcomes, school administrators need to create frameworks through which parents, teachers, and communities can engage and interact, and thus bring about positive impacts and results (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019). Finding ways to improve and strengthen relationships and partnerships between parents, schools, and communities may result in positive school attendance, improved behavior changes, and many other beneficial changes that lead to academic success for students.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How would you define “parental involvement” in a school setting?
2. In your professional understanding, what role do you, as an administrator, play in increasing parental involvement?
3. How do you, as an administrator, currently promote parental involvement?
4. Does leadership styles affect an administrators’ ability to promote parental involvement?
5. What challenges, if any, do administrators face when attempting to increase parental involvement?
6. Do you believe the type of invitation affects parental involvement?
7. In your professional understanding, what do you believe is the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement?
8. What actions by administrators could further support and encourage parental involvement?
9. Does your school have a Parent Engagement Assistant (PEA)?
10. What do you believe are underlying factors to contribute to low parental involvement?