2015

Parenting Practices of Lower Socioeconomic Status Parents of High Achieving Students

Michael S. Elia
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Michael S. Elia

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Candace Adams, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Sara Rofofsky Marcus, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Karen Hunt, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Parenting Practices of Lower Socioeconomic Status Parents of High Achieving Students

by

Michael S. Elia

MS, University of Scranton, 1999

BS, East Stroudsburg University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2015

Abstract

Many lower socioeconomic status (SES) students at the middle school level in a school district were not achieving academically, and many of their parents were not involved in the school. To assist these parents, this qualitative case study examined the perspectives of lower SES parents of middle school students who were experiencing academic success. The intent of this investigation was to illuminate the parenting practices and involvement that appeared to be effective for this subpopulation. The theoretical framework was Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Research questions focused on lower SES parents' practices that supported their child's academic success. Data were collected through individual interviews with 10 lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students, as indicated by their grade point averages. Data were coded and common themes were identified as keeping clear lines of communication with school, providing encouragement, and keeping parent involvement consistent and persistent. These themes were not unique to this group of parents as anticipated, but they supported findings from the literature. Findings support general recommendations for the local school district for developing a comprehensive plan to encourage consistency and persistence of parental involvement and for training of teachers on increasing parental involvement opportunities. Implications for social change include parents supporting student learning and success and teachers becoming more effective in working with parents on strategies that can support their children academically.

Parenting Practices of Lower Socioeconomic Status Parents of High Achieving Students

by

Michael S. Elia

MS, University of Scranton, 1999

BS, East Stroudsburg University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2015

Table of Contents

iv

Section 1: Introduction of the Study

Introduction

The need for middle school educators to support students and parents is greater now than it has ever been due to a number of pressures. For instance, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has intensified its academic expectations being placed on students and the role of the parent in assisting students to find academic success is more important than ever. Parents and students are also being educated on the additional requirements and standards being mandated by the state of Pennsylvania and on the teachers' responsibilities to deliver the updated common core curriculum (PA Dept. of Ed., 2013). Many students are not used to the new rigor and depth of the classwork and assignments and are shutting down emotionally due to the pressure. With the new academic requirements, students need the support of their parents. As students progress from middle school through high school, they will be competing for higher education opportunities, job placements, acceptance into the military, and business or technical school. Parents will need to provide the necessary emotional support students will need to navigate through this decision making process. By taking an active role in their education, parents can better understand student pressures and support them to achieve academically (Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011).

In addition to academic, emotional, and career pressures, middle school students have to contend with growing up in the world of constantly changing social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Unfortunately, many students are making poor choices in how they exercise their use of technology. Many students get involved in

inappropriate usage of technology such as: cyber bullying, sending inappropriate texts, e-mails, or pictures, or unauthorized internet searches that create legal problems. These poor choices can impact future aspirations and goals for some students. The academic, social, and emotional toll of social media is additional stress and pressure that today's students are facing. Parents are having difficulties with handling all of these additional academic and social pressures that students are dealing with on a regular basis. For today's students to find success, it will take a genuine partnership between the schools and the parents to address their academic and emotional needs (Larocque et al., 2011).

The pressure on the public school system began to intensify with The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which placed an emphasis on students test scores. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 identified three groups: school administrators to lead their schools in the most effective manner, teachers to deliver their curricula well, and students to achieve well academically (Powell, Higgins, Aran, & Freed, 2009). Missing from this directive was the role of parents and parenting practices and involvement in student academic achievement, the primary focus of this study. In August 2013, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was approved for a waiver from NCLB. It was replaced with state developed plans to prepare all students for college and career readiness and improved teacher training programs (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2013). Even though the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has shifted away from a single focus on student test scores to a more global view of career and college readiness, there is still tremendous

pressure for all students, especially lower socioeconomic status (SES) students, to

achieve academically.

In addition to these added pressures of testing on today's students, the lower

socioeconomic student has many other issues to handle. Students of a lower SES have to

deal with health care issues, food insecurities, family instability and violence, and

neighborhood stressors (Berliner, 2009). Because of the challenges that face lower SES

students, these students can develop certain beliefs about their academic ability at an

early age, and these beliefs continue to develop as a student begins and continues

attending school (Bandura et al., 1996). These beliefs, based on positive or negative

experiences, build each student's perceptions about his or her academic abilities

(Bandura, 1994). These beliefs may give the student the confidence to push forward with

a challenging task or the fear of failure that makes him or her shy away from a task

(Bandura, 1994). This study on lower SES parenting practices of successful students

identified parenting practices that have helped increase the self-beliefs about their own

academic abilities and success.

Research has shown that the self-efficacy beliefs of lower SES students are not

positively correlated with academic achievement. Krasner (1992) found that children

who grew up in low socioeconomic environments struggle in academic achievement, and

the consequences are long term; Berliner (2009) stated that experts agree that

undernourished children become more apathetic and have impaired cognitive capacity,

seriously jeopardizing all other investments school districts make in education for poor

children; and Pajares (2007) noted that low self-efficacy, not lack of capability or skill, can be responsible for a diminished interest in school leading to poor academic performance. These researchers provided evidence that the student's beliefs caused by negative socioeconomic conditions can greatly impact his or her success in school.

Typically when students are school age, their education becomes the responsibility of the teachers and the school administrators. However, in some cases educating today's students is becoming increasingly more difficult based on educators trying to deal with, support, and understand the complexities of arising family issues. School leaders and teachers are attempting to address the needs of students of lower SES; however, these educators are not always able to relate well to what these students are dealing with daily (Berliner, 2009). For example, between 3 to 10 million children who are living in poverty witness family violence each year (Berliner, 2009). Witnessing this violence can lead to symptoms that resemble post traumatic stress disorder, increased bed-wetting, nightmares, and physiological effects (Berliner, 2009). Many teachers are not trained to identify these symptoms. Even if the teachers identified these symptoms in their students, many of them do not know how to encourage, motivate, and support these struggling lower SES students.

Moreover, lower SES parents tend to work long hours for minimal wages or hold multiple jobs to try to pay the bills. Because of this, they are able to provide less attention, time, and energy to their children and their academic needs (Jensen, 2009). Since lower SES parents cannot much give much time to their child's academic needs,

schools need to find realistic expectations that parents can meet. This partnership between the parents of lower SES students and the school is dependent on parents feeling comfortable to work with the teachers to become more involved in their child's education. However, lower SES parents who did poorly in school are less likely to encourage best academic practices for their children (Jensen, 2009). Additionally, lower SES parents are less likely to contact their children's teachers because of their own past negative experiences (Jensen, 2009). Furthermore, Danielsen, Hetland, Samdal, and Wold (2009) asserted that "because of inequalities in parents' resources there can also be inequalities in school-related parental support" (p. 306).

To further support the importance of parent involvement, Grogan, Kaylor, and Woolley (2006) found that supportive parents communicate academic expectations and become involved in their middle school student's education, resulting in improvement of school outcomes across a continuum from behavior to grades. Additionally, parents of successful students were involved at school significantly more than parents of struggling students (Jensen, 2009; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Based on this research, if educators are going to assist lower SES students to find academic success, the school should work to establish a positive, effective partnership with parents of lower SES. A positive partnership can be used to end the negative beliefs in parents and students that academic success is not possible.

The environment in which students learn and their relationship and perceptions of their administrators, teachers, and peers also have an impact on their academic

achievement. On the topic of environment, Bishop and Pflaum (2005) found that the students expressed that grouping students in teams, attending to school size, ensuring all students are well-known, and engaging them in meaningful work are a good beginning to foster the type of belonging the students require for academic engagement. Bishop and Pflaum, in their investigation of 20 rural middle school students' perceptions of academic engagement, stratified the schools for socioeconomic status, grade level, gender, history of academic achievement, and school type. They found that, with respect to the social conditions of the classroom, students perceived a strong positive influence through an authentic community and leadership opportunities.

Teachers can involve lower SES students more in the school community by personally engaging students who are not making an effort. For example, teachers can reveal more about themselves and ask students to reveal more about themselves, through team building and ice breaker activities (Jensen, 2013). Taking time for teachers and lower SES students to learn about each other allows the teacher to encourage excitement through asking about their areas of interest and connecting it to real-life examples. By lower SES students feeling more excited about their teachers taking an interest in their passions and by learning more about their teachers' interests, lower SES students are more likely to show effort in school and attend more regularly. These positive influences of being part of an authentic community in school, a community that allows the lower SES students to reach his or her greatest potential, must be a goal of administrators and teachers (Jensen, 2013). As lower SES parents become more aware of the authentic

community established by the teachers and the school through conversations with the teachers and their child, parents may also feel more comfortable to ask questions about their child to the teacher and become involved in school functions and activities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Some research indicated lower SES students feel different and ashamed due to their financial situation, especially when it comes to connecting with peers (Harris, 2006; Jensen, 2009). According to Veronneau, Vitaro, Pederson, and Tremblay (2008), peer acceptance or rejection is thought to be crucial to children's psychological development. Veronneau et al. (2008) stated that affiliating with friends who developed positive attitudes toward school and authority figures, who intend to undertake postsecondary education, and who displayed good study habits is likely to predict a student's secondary school completion. Similarly, Booth and Sheehan (2008) investigated the impact of different school models on young adolescents' perceptions of their school climates and analyzed the importance of people and place in the positive and negative attitudes that middle level students develop about their schools. They found that relationships with other people inside the school influence young adolescents the most. Furthermore, Booth and Sheehan expressed that "knowing peers in school and developing friendships seem to improve students' comfort level in and subsequent satisfaction with school" (p. 741). Peer influence is a very important factor in a student's life. The social support from peers may act as a stabilizing factor for students in which their academic achievement will be less likely affected by lower SES (Malecki & Demaray, 2006). With an understanding of

friendships in school, lower SES parents can monitor, discuss, and advise their children on social opportunities. Additionally, with this understanding of friendships and a rapport with the teacher, lower SES parents have the opportunity for updates from the teacher to find out if these friendships are positively and negatively impacting student academic performance (Staples & Diliberto, 2010).

Understanding how to connect more effectively with lower SES students by understanding their perceptions about themselves and beliefs about their own academic ability is a major concern for all educators trying to bridge the gap between school and family (Berliner, 2009). This introduction has highlighted the main themes of this study: socioeconomic status, parenting practices and involvement, and the overall influences that parenting practices may have on lower SES students as it relates to academic achievement. A more detailed explanation of these themes will follow in Section 2.

Lower SES students can find academic success if both the school and the family understand how to best support their needs. This study focused on examining parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students to understand how to support lower SES students and assist them within the school setting. These findings will not only assist lower SES parents but will hopefully cross over to assist families of different backgrounds and cultures and assist schools, rural, suburban, and urban. A deeper understanding of parenting practices and involvement is imperative for teachers and school faculty members to help identify the source of the negative perceptions of students from lower SES backgrounds. Thus, identifying these

negative perceptions is essential. These negative perceptions can be identified by the teachers and faculty members. Through mutual communication and understanding between the parents and the school, a lower SES student's academic self-efficacy can increase, perceptions become more positive, and academics improve. When an understanding of the parenting practices and any barriers to parent involvement are identified, the school and the family can put support systems in place early in a student's academic career to help ensure that these student perceptions stay positive.

Problem Statement

The problem is many schools do not know how to effectively assist lower SES parents with getting involved in their child's education. Many parents from lower SES families do not have the resources, time, education, or understanding to help their child succeed academically (Hernandez, 2012). Because many lower SES parents have limited resources, they tend to avoid connecting with their child's school, teacher, and school support systems (Jensen, 2009). Additionally, many lower SES parents are not engaged enough in their child's life both at home and school to provide the necessary support for their child to find academic success (Barnard, 2004). Parents who provide behavioral structure, organization, and support during home-based learning activities such as homework or structured play promote on-task behavior, an environment that is consistent, and protect students from distraction (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Lower SES students often have sole responsibility for their own academic success or failure because lower SES parents do not know how to help and support their children or do not

have the time to do so (Hernandez, 2012). When lower SES students lack parental support during their elementary and middle school years, many students begin to lose interest in school and in their ability to be academically successful. Rumberger (2011) reported that predictors of dropping out of school as academic performance, attitudes and behavior toward learning, and background. When lower SES students do not receive positive parent and school support, it can negatively affect their willingness to engage in their academics. When this loss of interest and value in education occurs, truancy and behavior issues can begin to arise, leading to a student dropping out of high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). Not completing high school can result in making $7,000 less per year and 20% less over a lifetime than a high school graduate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). One of the outcomes of this study is to identify ways that teachers and schools can assist lower SES parents in supporting positive development in their children throughout their elementary and middle school years with a view for long-term academic success. Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy will be a lens to ascertain how parents have contributed to their children's capabilities in achieving academic success.

Since many schools do not know how to effectively assist lower SES parents with getting involved in their child's education, schools also struggle with providing support for lower SES parents and students. The inadequate support for lower SES parents and students continues to widen the communication gap for school districts and parents to work together effectively in the best interest of these students (Menzies, 2013). This lack

of support of the school district for lower SES parents and students can strongly

discourage parent participation and involvement in their child's education. With the lack

of parent involvement and necessary school support, lower SES students can get

discouraged about school and show signs of disengagement in their academics. A large

part of preventing children from dropping out of school is identifying risk factors early

and taking steps to intervene and redirect at-risk student's energies (American

Psychological Association, 2012). It is essential to find out from lower SES parents who

currently have academically successful middle school students how they addressed any

risk factors through their parenting practices.

Federal funding in economically impoverished communities for preschool

education that incorporates parent involvement is imperative to lessen the educational

gap before students enter kindergarten (Deming, 2009). Furthermore, parents will be

exposed to the importance of their involvement in their child's academic development

and success (Larocque et al., 2011). After preschool, school districts may continue the

commitment to the partnership in kindergarten between the parents, the student, and the

school. The earlier the school understands the beliefs and perceptions of the family and

the student, the more comprehensive the plan can be developed between the school

faculty and family. This plan is essential in preventing the student from losing interest in

school and eventually dropping out of high school (Larocque et al., 2011). The school

can convey its academic expectations to the family and the student and, by listening to

the needs of the family and student, the school can offer strategies and resources so the parents have the tools to support each child's academic needs (Bramesfeld et al., 2013).

An example that demonstrates the need for an early partnership between a low SES family and the school is a study by Mulligan, Hastedt, and McCarroll (2012) that used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study from students who attended kindergarten in the United States in the 2010-11 school year. The demographics of this study focused on 53 % of White kindergarten students of which 25 % of them were living in households with incomes below the federal poverty level. The results of this study indicated that scores on reading and math were lowest for first-time kindergarteners in households with incomes below the federal poverty level. Reading and mathematics scores were highest for those kindergarteners with household incomes at or above 200 % of the federal poverty level. Additionally, these researchers reported that assessment scores for reading and mathematics were higher with increased parental education level and when more than one parent is in the home. Since these lower SES students have spent no time in school, it is clear that schools cannot be the primary cause of these gaps.

Even with researchers who expressed that lower SES students come into school with some disadvantages, schools can be effective in helping to support these students to find academic success. Gameron (as cited in Harris, 2007) suggested that schools can help disadvantaged students learn and at about the same rate as other students. This instructional gap that occurs with many lower SES students upon entering school could be addressed if schools were to adopt certain instructional practices more widely

(Baroody, 2011; Oakes et al., 2004). Harris and Herrington (2006) reviewed evidence which demonstrated additional school resources, although they may not always influence achievement for the average student, do have benefits for disadvantaged students and have contributed to the reduction in achievement gaps.

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. A study of these parenting practices from lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students will benefit middle schools in dealing with the barriers of parent involvement that lower SES families face. The essential information from these lower SES parents will more effectively support the efforts from the educators in working with families and students both in school and in providing families with effective strategies at home. In this study, I explored how their parenting practices and involvement have contributed to their child's academic success despite most of the research expressing that lower SES students struggle to find academic proficiency.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The parents chosen for this study have middle school children performing on the advanced level in both reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Tests. By gaining a deeper understanding of parenting practices and involvement of these lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students, school

administrators and teachers can learn from the lower SES parents the most effective skills and strategies and to understand the values that these parents have instilled in their academically successful children. This knowledge can be used to motivate struggling lower SES parents and students. These expectations, skills, strategies, and values can also be shared with elementary teachers and administrators so they can work effectively to assist struggling parents with elementary age students. Additionally, gaining a deeper understanding of how these parents assisted and supported their children to find academic success is crucial in helping other lower SES parents work with their children to find academic success in the future, possibly through parent mentoring programs. An examination of these parenting practices took place through semistructured individual interviews. Furthermore, I identified resources shared by these parents during the interviews that the lower SES students participated in throughout years that assisted with their academic success.

Effective educational resources including parent education may assist school officials with meeting with parents of lower SES students who are not finding academic success in school. This study provided detailed information that parental awareness of educational resources may lead to parents encouraging their children to access these resources to obtain their educational goals. An example of a resource that is becoming more available for parents that many schools can promote as a way to include parents in their child's education is the online parent portal. Parents who check the parent portal

online tracker to monitor student grades and attendance has been shown to support the efforts of students working toward academic success (Hutchins, 2013).

The purpose of this study was also to provide information to enlighten elementary and middle school educators of the need to bridge the communicate gap of the unique support of lower SES parents and students as they move from elementary to middle school. This study demonstrated the need to address the communication with lower SES families when a student registers for kindergarten. By having valuable lower SES parent input, this study might provide elementary educators and school boards with more reasons to add additional educational resources at the elementary level. If parents of elementary students are aware of a teacher's instructional goals and support these goals in the home, student motivation for learning can remain high (El Nokali et al., 2010). The student then can choose educational opportunities that the parents will support in future years because the student believes he or she can accomplish these educational goals.

Nature of the Study

The research of this study offers a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The total sample for this qualitative study consisted of 10 parents from 10 different families who currently have a child who is age appropriate for middle school (aged 10-14). A qualitative case study was conducted and data were gathered through individual interviews. The following criteria were used for the parent sampling: their child scoring in advanced level in reading and mathematics on Pennsylvania State Standardized

Assessments, qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program, students not being retained academically at any point in their educational career, being a parent or step-parent currently living with the child, and having a middle school student attending a traditional public middle school. The lower SES parents in this study have students who were attending a suburban middle school.

The need for a deeper understanding of how educators and parents can help lower SES students to become academically successful continues. These deeper understandings may help educators who teach children from economically impoverished homes. This information is significant because these students are succeeding academically when the research expresses that they should not be (Jensen, 2010). This qualitative case study approach may contribute to the body of literature that addresses ways to gain this deeper understanding and connect with these parents on a personal level.

Middle school students are in a transitional time physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially due to the structural and functional changes in the brain (Steinberg, 2011). Because of this, the formal interviews with parents of this population were a more consistent option than interviewing the students. The more information that was gained from these parents, the more thorough of a job can be done by the schools in the future to support the needs of lower SES students and parents.

Research Questions

1. How do lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and involvement in their child's education?

2. What are parents' perceptions of their child's motivation, persistence, and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?

3. What are the lower SES parents' perceptions of practices and involvement that can be used to assist middle school faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices of lower socioeconomic parents of high achieving middle school students who are achieving at the advanced levels on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment in reading and mathematics. I focused on the effect of these parenting practices on student achievement through the lens of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is "one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). Additionally, Bandura (1994) expressed that self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. According to Bandura (1994), four sources of influence help to develop a person's beliefs about his or her self-efficacy. These four sources of influences include mastery, vicarious, physiological, and emotional, plus social and verbal. The methodology of this study addressed these four sources as

reported by the study participants. Section 2 provides more details about these four sources of influence.

Within the Section 2 literature review, a deeper explanation of the conceptual framework of Bandura's self-efficacy theory will occur. This was necessary due to the theory's influence and its connections to so many areas of a student's personal, social, and academic development. Some of these areas included middle school and self-efficacy, poverty, parenting practices and involvement. A strong sense of efficacy can enhance productivity and personal well-being (Bandura, 1994). In contrast, people who doubt their capabilities tend to shy away from difficult tasks that they view as personal threats (Bandura, 1994). This previous statement by Bandura encompasses the power of self-efficacy, both positively and negatively, which was the core behind the exploration in this study.

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement: Student scores in the advanced range in both reading (range of 1456-1497 or higher) and mathematics (range or 1446-1483 or higher) according to the Pennsylvania State Standards Assessment (PA Dept. of Ed., 2013).

Lower socioeconomic status (SES): Defined as economic status (relative poverty) of a family whose income is insufficient to meet its society's average standard of living (Jensen, 2009).

Middle school students: Young adolescents, ranging from 10 to 15 years old attending a public or private school ranging from grades 5 to 8 who are experiencing significant social, emotional, and cognitive changes (Kinney & Tomlin, 2013).

Parent involvement: An amount of involvement a parent has in his or her child's education, both at school and at home (Olsen & Fuller, 2009; Reilly, 2008).

Parenting practices: Parenting styles and strategies used in working with their children; academically, personally, behaviorally and socially (Baumrind, 1971, 1978, 1989).

Assumptions

This qualitative case study included several assumptions. First, the parents selected for this study answered the interview questions honestly. Second, the parents acted genuinely while the interviews were occurring. Third, it was assumed that the parents of the students did not prediscuss the possible answers in any way that would influence change the genuineness of their answers during the interviews. Furthermore, personal issues on the day of the interviews did not impact responses in the interviews. Finally, the parenting practices and involvement of these lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students represented the opinions and perspectives of all parents who come from lower SES families and who are advanced in reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment. The responses given represented the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and expectations of the parents. In addition, I assumed that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate method for this study.

Limitations

This study included a number of limitations. First, I was a middle school principal, and I had some personal beliefs on this topic of study. Even though this study occurred at a local middle school, I proceeded as a professional by keeping my own personal beliefs to myself throughout the process.   The parents participating in the study may not have answered the questions as completely as they should because of a possible negative experience with past school administrators when they were in school. Second, an assumption of this study could not be made to all middle schools because many middle schools have more diverse cultural backgrounds. The basis of this study included parents who have children attending a suburban middle school lacking cultural diversity. Third, this study did differentiate for students recently qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program as opposed to those who qualified at the start of their school career. For example, a student might have recently qualified for the free and reduced lunch program because a parent just lost his or her job. However, before the job loss, this student did not qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Finally, this study depended on each parent to self-report perceptions, values, beliefs, expectations, and feelings both presently and in the past. Because of possible embarrassment and shame of the family's financial situation, these parents may not have openly shared as much information about their experiences.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations to this study. This study focused on lower socioeconomic status parents and did not consider that other parent perceptions and practices of middle or higher socioeconomic statuses may also effectively assist struggling lower SES students. Second, this study did not consider middle and higher socioeconomic status students who are struggling academically in school. Third, my research questions narrowed the focus of the study and did not include the knowledge of other family members that may have contributed to the academic success of the middle school student such as grandparents, other siblings, aunts and uncles, and close family friends. Finally, a case study was chosen to research examining parenting practices and involvement of lower socioeconomic status parents of high achieving middle school students. The case study option focused in on a smaller number of parents to understand their parenting practices and involvement. This research design narrowed the amount of parent participants due to the in-depth individual interviews.

This study was conducted in northeast Pennsylvania in a public traditional middle school. It did not include other educational institutions in which middle school students are educated in such as: private schools, charter schools, and home schools. Additionally, this study did not include lower SES parents from any other middle school from any other region or state.

Scope of the Study

This study consisted of 10 parents from 10 different families who had middle school children attending a Pennsylvania traditional public middle school. All parents participating in this study had children who attended a suburban middle school with a student population of 850 students, Grades 6 to 8. This middle school was in the top 25% of all middle schools in the state of Pennsylvania for achievement on the standardized state tests. The criteria for parents who participated in this study were as follows: their children scoring in the advanced level in reading and mathematics on Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment, qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program, students not being retained academically at any point in their educational career, being a biological or step-parent currently living with the child, and having a middle school student attending a traditional public middle school. All 10 parents were asked to volunteer and were provided written documentation in order to participate.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study supported that effective parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents will lead to improved academic efficacy and achievement in school. Understanding how the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents have positively influenced academically successful lower SES students will assist teachers, counselors, administrators, and other educational professionals in providing support for other lower SES parents with students who are struggling academically.

School districts struggle each year with students not wanting to attend school, having behavioral issues, and showing poor academic performance. Year after year, educational professionals attempt to put certain programming into place to address these issues reactively in the hope that these programs will make positive change. However, these reactive programs, though sometimes successful, still do not address all of these issues (Baroody, 2011). This study will assist educational professionals with a proactive approach to address student academic struggles by learning about the family's financial situation through the perceptions of the parents. With this understanding, an educator can better understand and challenge a student's belief system. Additionally, with this understanding, educational professionals can meet the needs of the parents and provide relevant support that is easy to follow and sustainable by parents.

By having an understanding of the parental practices and involvement, this study will assist educational professionals in understanding the importance of knowing lower SES parents in a deeper more meaningful way. This knowledge will allow educational professionals, in partnership with the parents, to have more open conversations on the academic needs of their child. As a lower SES student feels more supported in school, he or she can begin to enjoy more aspects of school, be more willing to participate in activities and discussion, be less of a behavioral problem, and want to be an active part of the school community. The result will be a well-adjusted student who desires challenging tasks for self-improvement and a motivated student achieving academic success.

Implications for Social Change

This study will increase knowledge of two aspects of social change: the knowledge on self-efficacy and the growing need to understand the impact parenting practices and involvement can have on a student's perceptions, beliefs, and capabilities for academic success. In today's society, more students are growing up in nontraditional families such as living with a single parent, living with guardians or brothers and sisters, living in a divorce situation, or living with grandparents. These situations are becoming more prevalent and educational professionals are becoming less able to address students who develop negative perceptions about their capabilities. Educators need to address this problem because students are allowing their negative beliefs to grow and impact their decision-making skills. As each academic year passes, a student may sink deeper into the negativity and self-doubt that can impact his or her capabilities to perform well academically.

This study will assist educational professionals, especially at the elementary levels (principals, counselors, and teachers), to identify and address academic perceptions that students bring to school with them. To meet the individual needs of a student, school programs and specialized plans can place a student in a position to challenge his or her academic perceptions. A strong connection between elementary and middle school will be vital so that struggling students do not return to negative perceptions because of a lack of communication (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Once the students are middle school age, the middle school administration and faculty must be aware of each child's needs and

continue to address any academic perceptions by challenging students to make more positive academic choices.

Summary and Transition

The following research study included information to help educational professionals and parents to better understand the importance of bridging the communication gap between parents and the school and to address potential negative beliefs and perceptions of middle school students who come from lower SES families. The communication between the parents and the school is essential in helping to ensure academic achievement. The conceptual framework of Bandura's self-efficacy theory was the basis for this qualitative case study. Additionally, this case study gathered parents' perceptions of their support and involvement and what support and involvement might help teachers to support other parents of similar students.

The literature review was constructed to provide detailed research beginning with a deeper look into self-efficacy and its impact on adolescents, family, and academic achievement. The literature review also has information on the impact and effects of poverty on a student's perceptions about themselves and his or her academic capabilities. In addition, Section 2 includes researchers' perspectives on the influence that parenting practices and involvement can have on a student's beliefs in their academic abilities. Finally, the literature review concludes with the role of parent involvement in the school and home and the barriers to parental involvement. Section 2 includes the research design, description of the setting and sample, data collection process, and data analysis

procedures. Section 3 provides the research methods of the study. Section 4 provides the results of the study. Section 5 summarizes the conclusions and recommendations.

Section 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The beginning of this literature review will focus on the theory and the work of

Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997) and other researchers who have contributed literature

concerning the self-efficacy theory. The literature supporting Bandura's theory follows,

along with recent literature supporting the impact this theory has made in understanding

how children's sense of self-efficacy can impact education and other areas of his or her

life. Additionally, the research of Pajares (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) is part of this

literature review under the topic of self-efficacy because of his depth of knowledge on the

research and theory of Bandura. Furthermore, this literature review includes research on

how poverty impacts parenting practices and involvement in both the home and school.

These factors provide support for the impact on how parenting practices and involvement

may influence a student's perceptions related to his or her self-efficacy and academic

performance.

The literature presented in this review was drawn from several EBSCO databases

including: Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, Political Science

Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text,

Teacher Reference Center, and ERIC; and the World Wide Web produced studies related

to these supporting factors. The keywords used throughout this search either in

combinations or individually include *lower socioeconomic status, poverty in school, free*

and reduced lunch, poor students, middle school students, school climate, self-efficacy,

No Child Left Behind, perceptions, parenting styles and practices, academic achievement, teacher expectations, parent involvement, leadership styles, student expectations, self- esteem, self-concepts, and peer influence. The literature was found from three university libraries and one public library. This search recovered more than 200 research articles and peer reviewed studies related to this topic.

Self-Efficacy

The theory of self-efficacy originated as part of the social learning theory, which Bandura published in 1977. The roots of social learning theory began at the Yale Institute of Human Relations in the 1930s under the direction and leadership of May and Hull (Pajares, 2004). In 1953, Bandura joined the faculty as a professor at Stanford University, where his initial research focused on social monitoring in human motivation, thought, and action (Pajares, 2004). During the 1960s, Bandura began his research on children's development of self-regulatory capabilities. Additionally, the social learning theory (1977) increased the interest in social learning and psychological modeling (Pajares, 2004). By the 1980s, Bandura's theory developed into a social cognitive theory of human functioning, which focuses on the cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes of human adaptation and change (Bandura, 1986). Bandura expanded his theory by focusing on the self-efficacy belief system in 1997 in his book, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control.*

Self-efficacy is "one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy is part of

the larger theoretical framework of social cognitive theory. This theory postulates that human functioning results from interactions among personal factors (e.g., cognitions, emotions), behaviors, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy affects an individual's task choices, effort, persistence, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995). However, self-efficacy is not the only influence on learning and achievements. According to Schunk and Meece (2005), "no amount of self-efficacy will produce a competent performance if requisite knowledge and skills are lacking" (p. 73).

Bandura (1977) expressed that "expectations of personal efficacy are based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (p. 195). Their self-efficacy is impacted by this, but schools can reverse these negative beliefs. Bandura stated that "performance accomplishments are especially influential because they are based on personal mastery experiences. A person's successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them" (p. 195). Bandura also noted that "occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort" (p. 195). If a school setting can provide positive experiences for the student, the student may become more determined to do better.

Vicarious experience is another major source of information. Students need to see peers being successful in school situations. Bandura (1977) stated that "people do not

rely solely on experienced mastery as the sole source concerning their level of self-efficacy; many vicarious experiences are from seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences" (p. 197). Bandura continued that "these vicarious experiences can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts" (p. 197). However, these observations must be positive and must help the student feel better about him or herself. Furthermore, "vicarious experience is a less dependable source of information about one's capabilities than is direct evidence of personal accomplishments" (Bandura, 1977, p. 197). According to Pearson (2008), "obstacles provide an opportunity to discover how to turn failure into success by honing one's capabilities to exercise better control over events. The vicarious influence experience is partly an appraisal mediated through observing others' attainments" (p. 83).

Verbal persuasion is the third positive source of personal efficacy. Bandura (1977) stated that "verbal persuasion is widely used because of its ease and ready availability. People are led through suggestion into believing they can cope successfully with what has overwhelmed them in the past" (p.198). However, often a student from a lower socioeconomic background has received very little positive persuasion. Efficacy expectations induced in this matter are also likely to be weaker than those arising from one's own accomplishments because they do not provide an authentic experiential base for them (Bandura, 1977, p. 198). Pearson (2008) stated the following:

The social and verbal persuasion influence experience convinces the individual

that he or she is capable of accomplishing the task. People who are persuaded

verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given skills are likely to

demonstrate greater effort and endurance than if they entertain self-doubts and

dwell on insufficiencies when problems arise. (p. 85)

Furthermore, Pearson stated "it is easier for someone to sustain a sense of efficacy

especially when difficulties arise, when significant others express faith in him or her and

convey the idea that he or she has the ability to master the skill" (p. 85).

Physiological arousal is the fourth source of information for self-efficacy.

Pearson (2008) noted that "the physiological and emotional influence refers to how the

emotional state of individuals affects their behavior. Health and affective states can

produce widely generalized effects on one's beliefs in different realms of human

functioning" (p. 85). Pajares (2005) with Bandura (1977) expressed that "emotional

arousal is another constituent source of information that can affect perceived self-efficacy

in coping with threatening situations" (p. 198). A student who is upset about other

factors may not be able to function well in school. The reverse may also be true: a

student who feels emotionally safe and stable may have a better chance of functioning

well in school. Furthermore, Bandura (1977) expressed the following:

People rely partly on their state of physiological arousal in judging their anxiety

and vulnerability to stress. Because high arousal usually debilitates performance,

individuals are more likely to expect success when they are not beset by aversive

arousal than if they are tense and viscerally agitated. (p. 198)

Helping a student to feel that the school atmosphere is non-threatening will provide an

environment that allows for deeper academic inquiry. "Individuals who come to believe

that they are less vulnerable than they previously assumed are less prone to generate

frightening thoughts in threatening situations" (Bandura, 1977, p. 199). Those whose

fears are relatively weak may reduce their self-doubts and debilitating self-arousal to the

point at which they perform successfully. Once performance success is achieved, self-

efficacy is strengthened (Bandura, 1977). The more fear or anxiety a student feels the

less likely he or she is to find academic success. These fears and anxieties must be

addressed and dealt with by educators for a student to improve academically.

Pajares (2004) noted the following:

Bandura proposed a theory of human functioning that emphasizes the role of self-

beliefs. In this social cognitive perspective, individuals are viewed as self-

organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating rather than as reactive

organisms shaped by environmental forces or driven by concealed inner impulses.

(p. 340)

Pajares (2005) agreed with Bandura's theory of human functioning and states:

Human thought and human action are viewed as the product of a dynamic

interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. How people

interpret the results of their own actions informs and alters their environments and

the personal factors they possess, which, in turn, inform and alter future actions.

(p. 340)

Pajares continued by explaining, "This is the foundation of Bandura's conception of reciprocal determinism. This reciprocal determinism is the view that (a) personal factors in the form of cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) behavior, and (c) environmental influences create interactions that result in a triadic reciprocity" (p. 340). According to Pajares, (2005), "the reciprocal nature of the causes of human functioning in social cognitive theory makes it possible to direct attention at personal, environmental, or behavioral factors" (p. 340). For example, Pajares explained "well-being can be fostered by improving the emotional, cognitive, or motivational processes of young people that are keystones of their personal factors" (p. 340).

Pajares (2005) expressed that the following information results from the discoveries on the relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement:

Some self-efficacy researchers have suggested that teachers and parents should pay as much attention to young people's self-efficacy beliefs as to actual competence, for research findings have demonstrated that the beliefs are better predictors of motivation and future academic choices and career decisions than are factors such as preparation, knowledge, competence, or interest. (p. 353)

Pajares stated "it is unrealistically low self-efficacy, not lack of knowledge of skill that can be responsible for maladaptive academic behaviors, disciplinary problems, and diminishing school interest and achievement" (p. 353). Furthermore, Pajares (2005)

noted that many students have difficulty not because they are incapable of performing

successfully but "because they are incapable of believing that they can perform

successfully, they have learned to see themselves as incapable of handling academic

work or to see the work as irrelevant to their world" (p. 353). As a result, "students'

difficulties in basic academic skills are often directly related to their beliefs that they

cannot read, write, handle numbers, or think well that they cannot learn even when such

things are not objectively true" (Pajares, 2005, pp. 353-354).

Adults have the responsibility to identify the inaccurate thoughts and beliefs of

students and challenge these judgments by providing positive strategies to help students

become more self-sufficient (Pajares, 2005). Additionally, Pajares expressed "in school,

assessing students' self-beliefs can provide teachers, counselors, and administrators with

important insights about their pupils' academic motivation, behavior, and future choices"

(p. 354). Furthermore, Pajares stated inaccurate self-beliefs, rather than poor knowledge

or skills, are often responsible for students doubting their capabilities personally, socially,

and academically. With the early identification of low self-efficacy, students can have a

better understanding of their potential to succeed in a desired path (Pajares, 2005).

A study conducted by Pajares and Usher (2006) investigated the relationship

between Bandura's (1997) four hypothesized sources of self-efficacy and students'

academic efficacy beliefs. Four hundred sixty-eight students in sixth grade attending two

public middle schools in Southeastern United States were the participants. The results

from this study found support of Bandura's contention that four hypothesized sources of

self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and

physiological state, predict self-efficacy (Pajares & Usher). Additionally, perceived

mastery experience proved a consistent predictor of the academic self-efficacy of all

students (Pajares & Usher). Pajares and Usher expressed that clearly, "students who

interpret their school work as successful approach subsequent academic tasks with a

greater sense of confidence, whereas those who report fewer mastery experiences have

lower self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 11). Social persuasions were also predictive of the

academic self-efficacy beliefs of all students indicating the vital role peers play in

sending encouraging messages to students about their capabilities (Pajares & Usher).

Furthermore, the second and central aim of this study by Pajares and Usher was to

discover whether invitations serve as additional sources of self-efficacy when control is

used on the four hypothesized sources. "Invitations predicted the academic self-efficacy

beliefs of boys and of girls, as well as of White students and African American students"

(Pajares & Usher, 2006, p. 11).   "For girls, social persuasions predicted self-efficacy,

even when invitations were included in the model. This lends support to the contention

that social persuasions may be more relevant to girls than to boys as girls form their

academic confidence" (Pajares & Usher, 2006, p. 11). Finally, Pajares and Usher found

that social persuasions remained predictive of African American students' academic self-

efficacy.

Middle School and Self Efficacy

Adolescence can be a unique and stressful developmental period because of the transition from childhood dependency to adulthood independence and self-sufficiency (Smith, Cowie, & Blades, 1998). The transition in school from grade to grade can cause changes in self-efficacy in regards to academic performance (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). According to Zimmerman and Cleary (2006), "when students enter middle or junior high schools, they are no longer under the direct control of a single teacher but instead are taught by a number of teachers in different classrooms, often with different classmates" (p. 46). Furthermore, "at this middle level of schooling, a significant part of students' academic work is completed outside of class, including reading assigned texts, writing papers, and preparing for tests" (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006, p. 46).

A major increase in the difficulty of the academic work assigned in middle or junior high schools complicates an adolescent's success in making this developmental transition (Kinney & Tomlin, 2013; Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996;). All of these changes between elementary and middle school may have negative impacts if communication is not effective between educators and parents. "If adolescents fail to regulate this demanding academic environment effectively, their academic grades will likely decline often leading to a loss of self-efficacy about succeeding in school" (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006, p. 46). As their self-efficacy diminishes, adolescents can become embedded in a downward cycle of academic achievement that may involve aligning themselves with peers who possess unfavorable views about the value and

importance of school (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). Furthermore, "children who are considerate of their peers and are accepted by them will experience the favorable school environment as more conducive to learning than if they behave in socially alienating ways and are repeatedly rejected by peers" (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996, p. 1209). "When classroom environments emphasize competition and normative evaluation (performance goals) rather than individual mastery and self-improvement, adolescents can experience a decline in their self-efficacy" (Schunk & Meece, 2005, p. 80). "To succeed in school, adolescents develop diverse self-regulatory skills, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, time management, and self-evaluation" (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006, p. 46)

For Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is one of the cognitive factors associated with student performance. The following research supports this claim:

Students often develop goals for learning through the examination and their understanding about themselves, the task, and their expectations of success. Students with high self-efficacy often take on more challenging tasks, put in more effort, persist in the face of difficulty, and use strategies to make learning more meaningful. When students believe in themselves, they may also be more likely to develop enabling goals that when executed will facilitate the accomplishing of the task. Students with sabotaging beliefs about their capabilities, however, may avoid the learning task and opportunities to seek help. (Cho, Hsieh, Liu, & Schallert, 2008, p. 35)

Educators must be able to distinguish between a student who lacks ability and a student whose poor self-concept keeps him or her from not performing academically. Pajares (2007) stated that "students who lack confidence in their writing skills are less likely to engage in tasks in which writing is required, and they will more quickly give up in the face of difficulty. When problematically low self-efficacy is identified, students can be helped to develop a better understanding of their potential to succeed in a desired path or academic area" (p. 45).

According to Szente, (2007), once children can think positive thoughts about themselves and their abilities, the next step is to teach them how to set realistic and achievable goals. Furthermore, Szente stated that once action plans exist, it is important that children keep visualizing themselves achieving their goals. Continual feedback from adults as well as discussions are also important to ensure that children are progressing toward their goals and are overcoming potential set-backs. By learning appropriate goal-setting procedures and receiving continuous feedback and monitoring from adults, most children can take on the academic challenges of today's schools (Szente, 2007).

Friedel, Cortina, Turner, and Midgley (2010) analyzed the impact of school transition on students' self-efficacy beliefs through the changes in classroom context, taking into consideration students' perceptions of the home environment. This study sought to demonstrate that self-efficacy beliefs, as an indicator of psychological adjustment to the learning environment in school, are sensitive to the perceived changes in the classroom goal structure across the transition to middle school in mathematics.

The results suggested that "a decline in the self-efficacy beliefs were most pronounced for students who perceived a lower emphasis on mastery goals in their middle school classroom compared with their experience during sixth grade of elementary school" (Friedel et al., 2010, p. 110). Furthermore, Friedel et al. (2010) expressed that "students who perceived an increase in mastery goal emphasis across the transition showed a significant increase in their efficacy beliefs" (p. 110).

Mucherah and Yoder (2008) examined middle school students' reading motivation and its relations to their performance on the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP+) in reading. This study involves more than 380 students in grades six and eight in two considerably different socioeconomic schools. School one is in an upper-and-middle-class environment, whereas, school two is in a low-income neighborhood. The results indicated that female students had high reading efficacy, read more challenging material, read for curiosity and for esthetic reasons more often than male students (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008). Furthermore, Mucherah and Yoder reported that "eighth grade students scored higher on key aspects of reading motivation compared to sixth-graders. Eighth-grade students had high self-efficacy in reading and read more challenging material, aspects identified as significant predictors of the ISTEP+ achievement" (p. 227). Their motivation was different from sixth graders. Sixth-graders' motivating factors were grades and recognition by their parents, teachers, and friends. These factors were more important to sixth grade students than to eighth grade students (Mucherah & Yoder). Finally, the results also indicated that, because eighth graders have

less desire for recognition for their reading, their motivation involves less extrinsic goals and more intrinsic goals (Mucherah & Yoder). The school with the higher socioeconomic population (school one) performed better on the ISTEP+ test compared to the school in a low income neighborhood (school two).

Ramdass and Zimmerman (2008) conducted a study that looked at the effects of self-correction strategy training on middle school students' self -efficacy, self-evaluation, and mathematics division. 42 participants in fifth and sixth grades participated, and the task involved solving four long division math problems. The results indicated that students who received strategy training also displayed a higher level of math division performance than students in the control group. However, there were no significant differences in self-efficacy between self-correction strategy training students and the control students. Ramdass and Zimmerman expressed from this study that "teachers need to monitor students' self-efficacy judgments as well as their mathematics learning in order to provide optimal instruction. Students learn various strategies in school to solve various mathematics problems, but they may not apply the strategies if they don't see the value" (pp. 36-37). Finally, Ramdass and Zimmerman stated that "teachers need to show the connection between strategy training and self-efficacy judgments and how these psychological variables relate to better mathematics performance" (p. 37).

Introduction to Poverty

The overall impact of poverty on middle school students can be devastating on academic achievement. These challenges encompass and impact every facet of their

functioning. As mentioned in section one, today's students are faced with many serious challenges to perform well in school. A child of poverty faces the same challenges as the middle and upper class students; however the challenge for a poor student is much greater (Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Joyce, Sibieta, Sylva, & Washbrook, 2010). A child of poverty faces the struggles of proper health care, appropriate living conditions, basic needs of food, water, and shelter, chronic stress, dangerous neighborhood, depression, and uninvolved parents due to unemployment or long hours at low-paying jobs (Hernandez, 2012). All of these are factors that low SES students have to deal with on a daily basis and they are still expected to perform well in school and be motivated about their futures. This section of the literature review on poverty explores the early role of poverty, its effects, the role of the family and parents, impact on student achievement and the role of the school. A deeper understanding of how poverty impacts the overall family and the importance of the school in helping students deal with these challenges was the central focus of the literature.

According to CLASP (2013), almost 22 % of children in the United States are poor. In 2012, over 16 million children were living in poverty according to the official measure, defined as living in families with income under 19,090 for a family of three. Population statistics indicate that those who earn a college degree are more likely to have year round, full-time employment earnings on average $23,000 more than a high school graduate and $31,595 more than a high school dropout (Olson, 2007), are more likely to have financial security in their adult years and have healthier interpersonal relationships

(Scanlon & Mellard, 2002). Unfortunately, parents that have been living in poverty for generations may have not witnessed any immediate family members graduate from college. The allure of foregoing postsecondary education to earn money immediately after high school is hard to resist for many young adults, particularly those growing up in poverty (Lindholm, 2006). Urban schools are much more likely to have low-income students resulting in areas of concentrated poverty, exposing students to many difficulties that include regular medical care, single parent households, increased crime rates, increased likelihood of teenage pregnancy and lack of school resources (Kenny, Blustein, Haase, Jacking & Perry, 2006; Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves, & Howell, 2004). Additionally, many urban students have to make career decisions in the context on indigenous support systems, leaving them conflicted about pursuing their educational and occupational goals or staying in their communities (Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998).

The definition of poverty that best correlates to this study is from Jensen (2009) that defined poverty as a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul. Additionally Jensen (2009) identified six types of poverty: situational, generational, absolute, urban, and rural. A short explanation of the six types of poverty by Jensen is provided. Situational poverty is caused by a sudden crisis or loss and is often temporary. Generational poverty occurs in families where at least two generations have been born into poverty. Absolute poverty involves a scarcity of such necessities as shelter, running water, and food. Relative

poverty refers to the economic status of a family whose income is insufficient to meet its society's average standard of living. In generational poverty, the living environments, coping behaviors, lack of basic needs, and financial limitations are for essential for researchers to understand daily struggles. For this study, parents and students that were experiencing relative poverty was the focus.

Poverty and the Early Years

According to Huston (2010), scholars studying children have increasingly come to recognize the importance of experiences in the first few years of life, including the prenatal period, for children's long-term health and development. These experiences of lack of proper nutrition and care from a mother in poverty begin to shape the direction of the child even before birth. After the child is born he or she is put at even a further disadvantage as reported by Jensen (2009) that exposure to toxins, and stress have a strong influence on the developing child. Furthermore, Chowdry et al. (2010) suggested children in poverty typically have lower birth weights than middle class children and are more likely to not be breastfed. Many low SES mothers are not able to breastfed due to the need to return to work for financial reasons. According to Huston (2010), "the environments experienced by children in poverty affect not only early developmental progress, but also have lasting impacts on intellectual development". (p. 2)

The importance of the prenatal care, positive nurturing and nutrition of the child are essential because a child's brain is formed in the first two of three years through a complex set of interactions between genes and experience (Huston, 2010). Children in

low-income families are already at a considerable developmental disadvantage by the time they reach their second birthdays (Huston, 2010). These disadvantages may include developmental delays in speech and language and social skills. If these delays are not addressed by parents in a timely fashion, these delays will follow them as they enter school. Chowdry et al. (2010) reported that "differences in the home learning environment, particularly at the age of 3 have an important role to play in explaining why children from poorer backgrounds have lower test scores than middle class families" (p. 6).

These differences in home learning environments are because as Jensen (2009) reported many lower SES children face emotional and social instability. Many lower SES families have this instability in their homes because they are either being raised by one parent, have two working parents on a non-traditional schedule, or have to stay with neighbors or friends due to their parents' work schedule. Many lower SES children do not receive an environment that fosters healthy learning and exploration for optimal brain development (Jensen, 2009). It is imperative that lower SES children under the age of 3 years old need parents that will provide unconditional love, guidance, and support within a stable, safe, predictable environment (Jensen, 2009). Chowdry et al. (2010) suggested there are big differences in cognitive and social and emotional development between children growing up in poor families by age 3. This gap grows even wider by age 5. Children in poverty tend to experience a home learning environment without developmental books or games or a regular bedtime routine that includes reading.

Without a supportive home learning environment, low SES parents have the opportunity to enroll their children in early learning programs such as Head Start. This program was designed to fill in learning and social gaps created by growing up in poverty. Long-term studies by Sherman, Trisi, and Parrott (2013) that studied children who participated in Head Start have found that it raises school completion rates and performance. Deming (2009) researching the long-term impacts of Head Start found that children who participated in the program between 1984 and 1990 were more likely to attend school regularly, complete high school, maintain a healthier lifestyle, and be employed after graduation. According to Deming, the Head Start program closes one-third of the gap on a combined measure of adult outcomes. The Head Start program models best practices for low SES parents and children. The model of learning and parenting support by all Head Start programs helps ensure the importance of regular school attendance. This is vital because Hernandez (2012) reported that low-income children are more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to lose out on intensive literacy instruction in the early grades.

According to Duncan, Ziol-Guest, and Kalil (2010) a longitudinal study by the Panel Study of Income Dynamics that has been following families since 1968 reported that "poverty during the first five years of life predicted poor school performance throughout the school years as well as low adult educational attainment" (p. 5). This study demonstrated that many low SES children are put at a tremendous disadvantage academically and socially upon entering kindergarten. To support this further, Chowdry

et al. (2010) suggested that elementary school students in poverty tend to view themselves as academically inferior. They are not able to make real-life connections to the importance of school and due to this demonstrate hyperactivity, behavior problems and peer issues. According to Hernandez (2012) many children arrive to kindergarten without the academic and social skills they need for learning such as holding a pencil correctly or how to interact appropriately with peers. Lower SES students will be absent from school frequency because of health or family concerns. These absences will continue to increase the academic and social gaps that already in place leading to further frustration and anxiety. Lower SES students regress further in the summer due to not having access to constant supervision and support of the school and to educational materials (Jensen, 2009). According to Jensen (2009) children of poverty because of their stressors can develop learned helplessness as early as 1st grade. This learned helplessness needs to be combated aggressively by educators because it contributes to poor school performance, low motivation, and potentially dropping out of school.

According to Pogrow (2009) "students born into poverty, grades 4 and 5 are a boundary where their learning needs change dramatically and in ways that have been consistently misunderstood throughout the many waves of well-intentioned reform over the past century" (p. 408). As a result, because of a lack of addressing these learning needs in grades four and five, students started to fall behind at an accelerating rate (Pogrow). The identification of their learning needs allowed specialized approaches to help accelerate the learning of these students (Pogrow). Relying on re-teaching basic

skills and test prep is not as effective after third grade because the curriculum becomes more complex, integrated, and content focused (Pogrow). Additionally, Pogrow stated "when children born into poverty don't retain learned content, it's viewed as a knowledge deficit" (p. 409). Furthermore, Pogrow expressed that "by 4th grade, thinking skills are as essential for retaining new content as they are for applying it, and re-teaching content over and over again has little impact on retaining it in long-term memory" (p. 409). A better approach to filling content knowledge gaps is to help students internalize the thinking skills necessary for imbedding new information in long-term memory. This will enable students to retain more content information the first time it's taught (Pogrow).

According to Pogrow, (2009), "most children born into poverty reach 4th grade without understanding what it means to understand" (p. 410). Without the skill of understanding, many 4th and 5th graders are unable to apply what they are learning and due to this, students have trouble retaining school content (Pogrow). Pogrow noted that "students can develop a sense of understanding through intensive, small-group, Socratic conversation" (p. 410). "Underperforming 4th and 5th graders born into poverty probably don't get such conversation at home, and teachers can't make up for that with sufficient intensity in the classroom to overcome the home-conversation gap – no matter how skills the teacher" (Pogrow, 2009, p. 410).

Effects of Poverty

According to Yoshikawa et al. (2012), "the effects of poverty are cumulative; the consequences at one stage in a child's development can hinder development at a later

stage" (p. 274). Jensen (2010) expressed that not only are the effects cumulative, they interact with so many aspects of a students' life. Because of this, students who grow up engulfed in economic insecurity often face many obstacles: parents without an education and inability to support students in their education, lack of proper health care, minimal cognitive stimulation, lack of enrichment activities; such going on educational trips, violent neighborhoods. In addition to the obstacles stated above, Hernandez (2012) reported that children whose families live in poverty often lack resources for decent housing, food clothing and books, and they often do not have access to high quality child care and early education. Furthermore in high crime neighborhoods where children in poverty are more likely to live have mostly with low-performing schools. According to Jensen (2009) low SES children are often left home before and after school. Because of this situation, older children are usually left to take care of the younger siblings while their parents work long hours. These older SES students are left with enormous responsibilities of making sure that their younger siblings receive the proper sleep, nutrition, and supervision. In addition, these SES students need to care for themselves. These extra responsibilities provides additional pressures to a SES student and puts them in a position in which they are not mature enough or have the experience to handle appropriately. Because of the untraditional work schedule of parents, it is difficult for parents to create a trusting environment that builds security for their children (Jensen, 2009).

Jensen (2009) identified four primary risk factors afflicting families living in poverty. These risk factors are emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stress, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues. An example of these risk factors is provided by Jensen (2009) that "expressed with limited access to adequate medical care, the child may experience cognitive or emotional damage, mental illness, or depression, possibly attended with denial or shame that further prevents the child from getting necessary help (p.7)." Chronic socioeconomic deprivation can create home learning and living environments that undermine the development of self and the capacity for self-determination and self-efficacy (Jensen, 2009).

Chowdry et al. (2010) suggested lower SES students by age 14 are more likely to participate in high risk behaviors such as smoking cigarettes or experiment with marijuana, and being truant from school. Due to having a lower sense of self-efficacy, lower SES students are also more likely to experience frequent bullying by age 14. A combination of high risk behaviors along with a low sense of self efficacy, lower SES students can experience more serious challenges. According to Jensen (2009) common issues in low income families include depression, alcohol use and chemical dependence. According to Gorski (2012) overall there seems to be no evidence that alcohol use or addiction are more prevalent among low-income people than among those of any other socioeconomic level. However, if students engage in these behaviors they can directly impact a student's experiences and negatively impact their ability to practice a healthy lifestyle. Because of these issues a child's self esteem, sense of safety in their

environment, and optimistic attitudes are damaged many times beyond repair (Jensen, 2009). In addition to the emotional and health issues, Jensen (2009) reported that lower SES children are highly exposed to adverse and dangerous social and physical environments. Low-income neighborhoods are likely to have lower quality social, municipal, and local services. Poor neighborhoods tend to be more hazardous and less likely to contain green space than better neighborhoods. This is because of a higher volume of cars and people, higher crime rates, and vandalized playground area. Furthermore, often a playground or park in a poorer neighbor is often a haven or drug deals, criminal activity, and bullying. Jensen (2009) reported that children in poverty tend to spend less time exploring the environment and experiences around them due to fear and stress. Lower SES students tend to spend more time dealing with the daily struggles of the basic needs of survival.

Being exposed to these risk factors at an early age, low SES students have a difficult time interacting positively with others, even adults in a school setting. According to Jensen (2009) "children raised in poverty rarely choose to behave differently, but they are faced daily with overwhelming challenges that affluent children never have to confront, and their brains have adapted to suboptimal conditions in ways that undermine good school performance" (p. 14). Because of the social, emotional, and environmental stress of living in poverty, low SES children have a difficult time building positive relationships teachers and rewarding friendships with children their own age. These positive relationships with teachers and with peers their own age are many times

missing from their lives. It is essential for children in poverty to build these relationships

because many times the school is the only positive support system they have to work

their way to a more productive future by finding value in earning an education.

The emotional risk factor of chronic stress and its effects and impact on a low

SES student is important in trying to understand the complexities of their daily struggles.

Chronic stress can cause children of poverty to react aggressively in school due to not

have that warm, supportive home environment (Jensen, 2009). Some of the aggressive

behaviors include: talking back to teachers, getting in their face during a confrontation,

using inappropriate language, and making inappropriate facial expressions. Students can

also exhibit behaviors that are passive aggressive such as: not answering questions from

teachers when called upon, sleeping in class or ignoring teacher directions, and refusing

to complete or hand in assignments or homework. However, students living in poverty

can begin to address their stressors by being aware of and work on managing them. As

an example, low SES students can begin to manage their situation by participating in

activities that reduce stress such as: exercise, mediation, talking to a therapist or

counselor and having a balanced diet (Jensen, 2010).

If chronic stress is not managed or addressed, the outcomes can have long-term

effects. Chronic stress can be devastating on a child's physical, psychological,

emotional, and cognitive functioning (Jensen, 2009). According to Jensen (2009)

"chronic stress can be so severe for poor children that the frontal lobes of the brain which

is responsible for making judgments, emotional memory and learning can shrink which

impacts learning, behavior and performance" (p. 25). Additionally, chronic stress can shrink the hippocampus in the brain which can negatively impact a student's learning memory and mood. If a child in poverty has experienced severe abuse and neglect, the chronic stress can be more severe and debilitating. It is the cumulative effect of all the stressors that children in poverty have to endure that lessens their chances of finding personal and academic success. Some additional stressors not mentioned above but are a reality for children living in are poverty include living in an overcrowded, unsafe housing situation in high crime neighborhoods, domestic violence in the home, and absent parents or divorce situations (Jensen, 2009).

Chronic stress can be elevated by interventions in the school setting (Jensen, 2009). This chronic stress releases adrenaline and cortisol, triggering the fight or flight response (Jensen, 2009). In school, many students with chronic stress instead of using inappropriate language or engaging in a verbal confrontation will freeze up in class, shut down and not complete work or participate in class discussions. Teachers can plan more hands-on activities and lessons that can make connections to reasonable, attainable goals for the students. To further combat student stress, teachers can put low SES students in leadership roles where they know have strengths. The building of student strengths can help them to begin to gain the confidence to begin seeing school in a positive manner (Jensen, 2009). During these hands-on activities, teachers can use some of those opportunities to address some of this chronic stress by teaching their students coping mechanisms. Embedding and blending some coping mechanisms in lessons such as:

appropriate social interactions, questioning skills, being assertive instead of aggressive,

and taking turns allows the low SES students the opportunities to gain the skills they

desperately need while not feeling singled out (Jensen, 2009 & 2010).

Keeping the learning standards high and enriching vocabulary should be the focus

of schools and teachers of children in poverty. A child's vocabulary is important for

learning, memory, and cognition (Jensen, 2013). Students from low-income families are

less likely to identify and understand certain words a teacher uses in class or the words

that appear in reading material. This is because many low SES students do not receive an

enriched home learning environment before entering school. Therefore, students are not

reading and using conversation with parents, adults or peers that assists with their

vocabulary building. The building of vocabulary in every discipline during school should

be a priority for the brain growth of a poverty student.

Parenting and Poverty

Parents of low SES students are dealing with many challenges. Trying to manage

the responsibilities of maintaining a home and providing for a family, especially when

more than half of all children in poverty have only one parent in their lives is a

tremendous challenge (Jensen, 2013). Furthermore, when only one parent is trying to

manage a household and childcare, the daily structures that children need are not

apparent. Having only one parent in the home can create both instability and uncertainty

because the children are missing a role model (Jensen, 2013). Low SES children having

a parent that can model appropriate behavior and structure can create the stability that

many low income families are lacking. When children's early experiences are

dysfunctional and one or both of the parents are absent, the developing brain often

becomes insecure and stressed. In addition to the child's stress, Jensen (2013) expressed

if parents or guardians are stressed about health care and food, they are more likely to not

be engaged in their daily lives or offer positive and supportive comments to their

children.

According to Jensen (2009) "low income parents are often overwhelmed by

diminished self-esteem, depression, and a sense of powerlessness and an inability to cope

feelings that may get passed along to their children in a negative way without

consideration of the needs of the children" (p.17). With these issues that low SES parents

face, the cycle of managing parental and child stress related to their economic situation is

a daily struggle without many solutions. This cycle of stress continues because low SES

parents are not working in high paying jobs. Jensen (2009) stated that parents are

struggling just to stay afloat will work extra hours, overnight shifts, or several jobs.

Because of their situation, they are less able to provide attention, structure and role

modeling that their children so desperately need.

Huston (2010) reported that "children born into poor families are disadvantaged

by having parents with low levels of the qualities needed for acquiring income, and the

children in turn have relatively poor intellectual and social skills as a result of both

genetic and environmental influences provided by their parents" (p. 3). According to

Yoshikawa et al. (2012) parents in low paying jobs experience greater job frustration,

higher incidence of conflict on the job and instability and the potential of job loss at any time due to cut backs. However, due to most low SES parents not having a high school or college degree, a technical degree or any special skills training, parents must be accepting of the low wages and undesirable shifts. Taking it a step further, if a parent is underemployment or losses their job, it puts additional financial strain on the family and it will prevent them from being able to purchase resources and food, maintain a home, and a safe environment necessary for appropriate child development. These potential economic struggles can shake the fragile structure low SES parents are attempting to maintain by impacting their overall parenting quality. According to Sherman, Trisi, and Parrott (2013) for low-income parents, access to reliable child care is important for long-term job retention. Parents will be more likely experience work disruptions due to the use of informal child care arrangements such as, staying with a neighbor. With these work disruptions due to child care problems, parents are more likely to get fired from their employer (Sherman et al. 2013).

In a study to highlight the importance of parents receiving a high education and its connection to economic stability, Liu and Lu (2008) completed a study of ninth grade students from rural areas of the five provinces in western China. They authors concluded that, "students with a relatively high family socioeconomic status have fairly good family economic conditions, and the parents' educational background of these students is comparatively high" (p. 79). Furthermore, Liu and Lu (2008) expressed the following:

Families with relatively good economic conditions have the sufficient economic

capability to buy their children school supplies and books or hire them a tutor. In

families where the parents' education background is relatively high, the parents

are competent to tutor their children themselves. (p. 79)

Therefore, Lui and Lu (2008) suggested that there is a positive correlation between

student academic performance and family socioeconomic status.

Despite low SES parents not being involved in their children's lives as much they

would like because of economic struggles, Menzies (2013) reported that disadvantaged

students still often have high aspirations. However, many low SES students may not

know how to achieve their aspirations and may struggle to maintain them. According to

Menzies (2013) it is particularly important for low SES parents to assist their children to

understand their choices and be able to guide or refer them to resources if they cannot

help them. It is essential for the positive aspirations of low SES students are encouraged.

Parents can play an important part in recognizing positive role models and can encourage

their children to avoid other potential negative role models that could be attractive to

children, but are not health choices. To support this statement, Jensen (2009) expressed

that strong, secure adult and peer relationships help stabilize children's behavior and

provide the guidance necessary to build lifelong healthy social skills and positive

aspirations. Chowdry et al. (2010) suggested that the aspirations, attitudes, and behaviors

of parents and children potentially have an important part to play in explaining low SES

students typically do not perform well in school. Low SES students often fail to build

healthy relationships which can be detrimental to their school performance and future aspirations.

The Role of the School and Teachers Working with Students of Poverty

According to Ladson-Billings (2011) "the law mandates that all children regardless of the condition of their schools, the quality of their resources, and the preparation of their teachers, must achieve at the same levels of proficiency on standardized tests of reading, writing, and mathematics" (p. 14). This is a difficult task for a low SES student. Jensen (2009) expressed those children in poverty often feel isolated, not supported, and unloved which can lead to poor academic performance, behavioral problems, dropping out of school, and drug abuse. This raises the achievement level even higher for educators because they not only have to educate the children in poverty; they have to fill in the social and emotional gaps of caring and support that these children are lacking to get the best academic results. If teachers and educators to not fill in these gaps, low SES students will not find the value in getting an education, lose aspirations and motivation, and rule out post-secondary education as even an option. Unfortunately, the perpetuate cycle of poverty continues. This is the challenge that faces all educators.

The first step in addressing the issue of effective teaching of children in poverty is to understand as an educator that they need to be taught differently. Jensen (2013) expressed that if children in poverty were exactly the same cognitively, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally as those for the middle class, then the exact same teaching

provided to both middle class students and students from poverty would bring the exact same results. Research has indicated that the children in poverty are not the same as middle class students and teachers need to adjust their teaching styles to meet their needs. Pogrow (2009) stated that "teachers must understand that children born into poverty are as bright as anyone and their apparent struggles to retain and apply content and ideas have nothing to do with their cognitive or intellectual abilities" (pp. 409-410).   Students born into poverty must first master an initial, specialized, thinking development stage (Pogrow, 2009). Additionally, Pogrow stated "many of these bright children don't understand how to work with ideas and have trouble retaining content largely because they haven't experienced sufficient conversation about ideas in their homes, conversation that typically occurred around the dinner table" (p. 410). These conversations are critical for vocabulary and cognitive development.

Teachers that are uneducated about children in poverty may perceive their low SES students to demonstrating very little effort in class because they don't care (Jensen, 2013). One reason many students seem unmotivated is because of lack of hope, optimism and feelings of despair. Jensen (2013) explained that students who show little or no effort are simply giving you as the educator feedback. Teachers can build relationships with low SES students by sharing things about themselves so they are seen as a real people. This will demonstrate to the students that they are truly interested in helping them feel more motivated and understood. If low SES students can begin to feel more comfortable with their teachers, they will begin to share their own experiences with

the teachers. If the teachers can connect with those experiences and can help validate

them, students will begin to build their trust (Jensen, 2013). Furthermore, teachers can

begin to blend real-life example into the curriculum and homework assignment.

Once the teachers are aware that they have to teach children in poverty

differently, understanding how to help them manage their stress and help them achieve is

the next step. Teachers can help foster student aspirations of hope, motivation, change

and optimism and security. Additionally, teachers can help children deal with stress in

school by engaging their brains in activities that build capacity. These academic

activities can focus on memory, processing and sequencing skills (Jensen, 2010). Some

activities that teachers can engage students in are: team building activities, music, drama,

singing, dancing, and debate. According to Jensen (2010) to address the chronic stress of

poverty, teachers should inquire into student's dreams and goals and giving them positive

feedback. Jensen (2013) expressed that "teachers can help provide hope for students by

guiding them in making smarter strategy choices and cultivating positive attitude" (p. 4).

Jensen (2013) explained that teachers need to focus on the core academic skills that

students need the most. Learning how to be organized, to study, take notes, prioritize,

and to remember key ideas. After the core academic skills are taught, along with how to

be a better student, high order thinking skills can be addressed such as: problem solving,

processing and working-memory skills.

Once the core academics are in place and students begin to demonstrate better

work habits, teachers can encourage, highlight, and support students' strengths. Pushing

students academically helps keep them focused on their studies and assists them with understanding that they are capable on higher level work. To support this statement, students taking more intense academic loads are more likely to pursue higher education than those taking easier classes (Scanlon, Saxon, Perez-Gualdron, Cowell, Kenny, & Jernigan, 2008). According to the research by Scanlon et al. (2008), the barrier most identified by 31 students interviewed as limiting their chances of achieving their post school goals was school. Additionally, Scanlon et al. stated that the second most commonly identified barrier to career aspirations and non-learning disabled students was money. Thirteen students out of the 31 interviewed for this study were eligible for a free or reduced lunch program and 22 students had learning disabilities. This study demonstrated the power that school can have on a student's overall self-efficacy and their willingness to pursue high level courses. Based on this study, students look at school and the lack of money as two major barriers to their future success which supports this need for this research.

Many school districts have identified that early student dropout identification is critically important so that the district can potentially intervene early in a student's schooling career to help prevent dropouts (Bowers, 2010). According to the longitudinal study by Bowers (2010) which looked at the cohort-based grading histories, grades 1 to 12 in two school districts in the United States found that the risk of dropout from the data begins in Grade 7 in middle school. The results showed that "grades as measured by noncumulative grade point average were predictive of students at risk of dropping out,

and that this risk was greatest for students who received the lowest grades" (p. 204).

Bowers suggested that schools wishing to assess if a student is at risk of dropping out,

that student's longitudinal grade history should be considered as a predictor of risk (p.

204). Furthermore, Bowers expressed that the results showed that students begin to

experience a risk of leaving school at the middle school level, which rises over the

upcoming years. To support the importance of grades in the elementary grades,

Hernandez (2012) reported that according to a longitudinal study of nearly 4,000 students

researchers find that those who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times

more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. Based on the

evidence in this study, there should be a sense of urgency for teachers and administrators

when they see a drop in grades.

Looking at the pedagogy of teachers is a very important step in addressing the

learning needs of children in poverty. However, it is as important to get a commitment

from the school district on its approach to teaching and leadership with low SES students.

According to Baroody (2011) many low-performing schools are led by novice principals,

with an unstable teaching faculty that includes a disproportionate number of teachers that

have only been teaching between one to three years. Over the first five years of teaching,

the attrition rates for new teachers in high-poverty schools average between 40% and

50% (Amatea & West-Olatunja, 2007). Many low performing schools cannot provide the

necessary professional development for teachers that are dealing with student's emotional

and behavioral issues. Teachers and administrators that are put into this position by a

school district are likely to get a few years' experience and then move on to a more stable school district and environment. According to Baroody (2011) "districts need to understand the experience level, skills and capacity of the leaders and teachers at all schools within the district in order to assess both what changes are required at low-performing schools and what resources across the district arte available to help support those changes" (p. 5). Many schools will need to provide additional time beyond the school day in order to provide additional academic minutes to students who are significantly behind to improve in math and reading (Baroody). According to Baroody, school districts must ensure that low SES students have access to basic social, emotional, and health support to ensure that these students are ready and able to learn such as: a nutrition breakfast and lunch, free tutoring services, and access to district health partnerships; free dental and physical exams.

Teacher Education and Poverty

According to Ladson-Billings (2011) "teacher education has not created a strong pipeline of diverse scholars who can challenge conventional thinking about what it means to teach diverse groups of students. The teaching force is not diverse, the teacher educators are not diverse, and the coursework does not adequately prepare students to teach a diverse set of students" (p. 15). For school districts to begin to tackle the complexities of teaching and leading within a school that has students that are predominately low-income, a commitment to a professional development is necessary for all administrators and teaching staff. According to Hawley and Nieto (2010) teachers

need opportunities to witness diversity responsive practices. Administrators can identify teachers who are more effective than others with students of diverse backgrounds. Teachers that are in need of watching these practices can be given time by their administration to gain these important skills (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Additionally, administrators and teachers need to understand that families of students of diverse backgrounds often feel unwelcome and uncomfortable in schools and can be reluctant to engage in the kinds of activities that schools sanction. As a result teachers and other educators may conclude that these families do not value education. However, research has shown this not to be true. Through professional development, teachers and administrators can learn how to break down this barrier. Educators should learn about their students' families by communicating with them consistently and respectfully (Hawley & Nieto, 2010).

According to Gorski (2008) the socioeconomic gap can be eliminated only when we stop trying to fix children in poverty and begin to address the ways in which our schools perpetuate classism. Through their professional development opportunities, teachers can learn the importance of showing students respect, admiration and keeping the learning standards high help so low SES students are better engaged in school (Nieto, 2008). According to Nieto (2008) teachers must understand individual students and devise specific pedagogical strategies to help them navigate those contexts successfully. Teachers can use race and ethnic responsive teaching practices such as respecting and being interested in students' experiences and cultural backgrounds, supporting higher

order thinking, building on students' knowledge, values, and experiences, avoiding stereotyping of students and engaging families directly in their children's learning (Nieto, 2008). For teachers to be most effective they should learn about the students they teach as well as about their families, prior experiences, goals, aspirations, cultural practices, and values (Nieto & Hawley, 2010).

Teachers and administrators must extend their assistance far beyond the walls of the school. Efforts for involving parents must remain persistent. According to Gorski (2008) schools must continue to reach out to low-income families even if they appear unresponsive. Schools must understand that students living in poverty may not have access to resources such as computers and internet service. Projects and assignments must be tailored so completion by all students can occur (Gorski, 2008). Schools need to build parents' capacity to support learning. Even though low SES parents cannot assist their child with the homework, they can still help by providing a quiet space for students to work or by limiting distractions during study time (Menzies, 2013). Educators cannot provide the best possible educational experiences to students from families in poverty without a willingness to reject stereotypes and prejudices (Gorski, 2012). It will be a combined effort between the school and the parents for children in poverty to succeed.

History of Parenting Practices

Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) put out a publication that documented patterns and processes of child rearing through intense interviews with parents (Grusec, 1997; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Based on analyses of the qualitative data, Sears et al. (1957)

classified material disciplinary techniques into one of two distinct types: love-oriented and object-oriented (Spera, 2005). The love-oriented style, as described by Sears et al. (1957), consisted of material use of warmth, praise, and emotional affection to respond to their children's behaviors (Spera, 2005). The object-oriented style consisted of material use of tangible objects, such as toys or extra playtime, to respond to their children's behavior. Sears et al. found that these disciplinary styles impacted children's internalization of their parents' values.

Since these disciplinary styles have such an impact on a child's value system, it is important to expand on these claims. Sears et al. (1957) noted that children of parents who used a love-oriented disciplinary approach were more likely to internalize the values of their parents than children of parents who used an object-oriented disciplinary style (Spera, 2005). The authors also found that the parental use of love-oriented strategies was associated with children's display of self-control and self-regulation (Spera, 2005). Sears et al., (1957) suggested that children who are exposed to object-oriented disciplinary techniques following a less than desirable behavior spend their cognitive and physical energy trying to avoid object withdrawal. According to Spera (2005), "as a result of spending their energy trying to avoid object withdrawal, these children do not exert sufficient cognitive effort to understand their parents' actions and, as a result, do not internalize their parent's values" (p. 132). Finally, children who are exposed to love-oriented disciplinary techniques gain a better knowledge of their parents' thought process of providing love and as a result internalize their parents' values (Spera, 2005).

Hoffman (1970) expanded upon this further by pointed out that disciplinary strategies on parental disciplinary techniques, depending on the situation would include induction. Hoffman defines induction as parents' reasoning for taking disciplinary action and their belief system and values behind those actions (Spera, 2005). Hoffman suggested that parents' use of induction encourages children to focus on learning the reasons behind their parents' actions (Spera, 2005). Hoffman contended that other-oriented induction allows children to understand the positive or negative impact of their behaviors on others. (Spera, 2005). Hoffman concluded that parental use of induction was positively related to children's internalization of parental values and to their development of altruism and moral reasoning (Spera, 2005). Hoffman suggested when parents explain their actions to their children it assists them to better understand their parents' reasons for the actions, thus communicating the transference of values from parent to child (Spera, 2005). Hoffman also suggested that other-oriented induction techniques facilitate children's development of empathy (Spera, 2005).

Baumrind (1971, 1978, 1989) conducted extensive observations and interviews with parents that resulted in the most influential typological approach. Baumrind identified three primary parental typologies: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Baumrind (1978) suggested that authoritative parents are warm and responsive, providing a balance of discipline, loving attention, and support as children attend to school and interests. These parents have high expectations of behavior but foster this balance of warmth and responsiveness through open communication between children and parent.

Authoritative parents score high on measures of warmth and responsiveness and high measures of control and maturity demands (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Baumrind's (1967) results concluded that the authoritative style of parenting fosters self-esteem, maturity, cognitive development, responsibility, and independence.

Baumrind (1978) suggested that authoritarian parents are neither warm nor responsive to their children. Parents have high maturity demands for their children primarily because they are intolerant of selfishness or inappropriate behavior (Spera, 2005). "Authoritarian parents are strict, expect obedience, and assert power when their children misbehave" (Spera, 2005, p. 134). "When socializing their children, authoritarian parents express their maturity demands and expectations through rules and orders" (Spera, 2005, p. 134). Authoritarian parents score high on measures of maturity demands and low on measures of warmth, communication between child and parent, and responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parents may choose extracurricular activities, class schedules, and social events for their child with no input from the child at all.

Baumrind (1978) continued by noting that permissive parents are moderate in their responsiveness toward their children's needs. These parents are described as having lower expectations for their children's level of maturity and tolerance of misbehavior. "When socializing their children, permissive parents are usually dismissive and unconcerned" (Spera, 2005, p. 134). Permissive parenting involves little enforcement of rules (laissez-faire), few demands if any on their children, and a general acceptance of

behavior whether good of bad (Hoang, 2007). Some examples of permissive parenting when dealing with their children may include not having a curfew, having few or no chores at all, allowing their children to talk back, and giving little direction regarding academics including homework (Hoang, 2007).

The work of Baumrind received interest from others in the research field on parenting styles during the 1980's. Maccoby and Martin (1983) added a fourth dimension to the Baumrind typology: indulgent. Maccoby and Martin described indulgent parents as similar to permissive parents in their control and maturity demands but different from permissive parents in their level of responsiveness and warmth. Indulgent parents score low on measures of responsiveness, warmth and control (Spera, 2005). Baumrind (1991) added further clarification by reducing parenting styles into two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness. Demandingness refers to "the demands parents make on their children to become integrated into the family and the society" (Spera, 2005, p. 135). According to Baumrind (1991), aspects of parental demandingness include the extent to which parents hold maturity demands for their children, provide supervision, and enact disciplinary efforts when needed. Baumrind (1991) continued by identifying responsiveness as referring to parental behaviors that intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion in their children. Finally, Baumrind (1991) expressed that parental responsiveness include the extent to which parents are sensitive toward, involved, and supportive of their children.

With complications and struggles of today's family structures, parents have to be even more responsible for the overall caregiving of their children. Since the traditional family structure has changed over the years, along with today's adolescents, the need for continued research in parenting practices is still apparent. To support the need for more research on the parenting practices, in a study by Hoang (2007), which focused on the relation between parenting practices and motivation supported that student's perceptions about his or her parents' parental practices are related to their motivational attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, Hoang found that parents who are perceived to be more authoritative, develop open communication with their children, were responsive to their needs both emotionally and academically, and allowed their children the opportunity to gain independence will have children achieve more success. Hoang concluded that students who perceived their parents to be more authoritative also believed themselves to be more autonomous in pursuing their school work.

Poor parenting practices can have a detrimental influence on young adolescents. The study by Dogan et al. (2007) which examined the role of adolescent perceptions of parental behavior and disrupted parenting in the continuity of antisocial behavior across generation, which included 430 adolescents and their biological parents during the period from ninth to twelfth grades, found that parental anti-social behavior predicted the adolescent's perceptions of parent behavior as deviant, which in turn predicted the adolescent's subsequent involvement in deviant behaviors. Additionally, Dogan et al. concluded that "an adolescent's perceptions that his or her parent is antisocial may be a

key component for choosing and validating his or her own behaviors" (p. 343).

Furthermore, Dogan et al. indicated that "awareness of a parent's antisocial behavior may

give the adolescent permission to engage in the same types of behavior" (p. 343). The

study reported that "parents' antisocial behavior significantly decreased parenting quality

which, in turn, predicted increases in adolescent antisocial behavior" (p. 343). Finally,

Dogan et al. indicated that "the adolescents' perceptions of parent behavior as antisocial

mediated a relatively large proportion of the effect linking parent and adolescent

antisocial behavior" (p. 343).

To support the negative impact of poor parenting practices on adolescents,

researchers have expressed that parent and adolescent problem behaviors have a

connection through inconsistent parenting practices that show as poor supervision of

behaviors, anxiety and anger, and harsh discipline (e.g. Conger & Simons, 1997; Smith &

Stern, 1997; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991; Laub & Sampson, 1988). Expanding on this

further, Chapman (2002) found that children who perceived one of their parents as

drinking alcohol had higher intentions to use alcohol as an adolescent. Additionally,

there is research to suggest perceptions of parent drinking and inability of families to

respond positively to stress predicts an increase in adolescent substance use (Stephenson,

Henry, & Robinson, 1996).

In examining the impact of parenting practices on student school performance,

Bronstein, Ginsburg, and Herrera (2005) examined the pathways between parenting

practices and children's motivational orientation toward school work over the transition

to middle school. The results suggested that parental behaviors may have long term effects on children's motivational orientation over the transition to middle school. Bronstein et al. (2005) reported that children of parents who exerted external control in fifth grade tended to show a more extrinsic motivational orientation by seventh grade. "Children whose parents foster independent thinking and the ability to meet challenges with confidence are likely to handle the academic demands of middle school more successfully, and to retain an intrinsic motivational orientation toward schoolwork" (Bronstein et al., 2005, p. 562). According to the results by Bronstein et al. (2005) "parents' critical and punitive reactions in the fifth grade to children's receiving a bad grade, along with the low grade itself, might have increased children's discouragement, so that they expended less effort doing schoolwork, causing their overall grades to decline" (p. 570). Furthermore, "anxiety aroused by the likelihood of parental disapproval or punishment might have impeded learning, resulting in poorer academic performance" (Bronstein et al., 2005, p. 570). Some children reacted to their parents' criticism and punishment with resistance, causing a drop in academic performance and success (Bronstein et al., 2005).

Students perceptions can be influenced by parenting practices in how they behavior and perform, both in school and at home. Additionally, when adolescents are in not in school, opportunities for other activities become available. A study by Sharp et al. (2006) investigated how parenting practices and adolescent motivational styles influence adolescents' experience of interest during free time. Sharp et al. found that these results

suggested that "although adolescence is a period of the lifespan when individuals gain more autonomy and have more opportunity to direct their own developmental experiences, youth are becoming less motivated, engaged, and interested in their free time activities" (p.368). Sharp et al. also reported that "parental knowledge had a direct positive impact on adolescent interest while parental control had a direct negative impact on adolescents' interest" (p. 369). Additionally, the results suggested that, when parents are knowledgeable about their children's activities, children are more likely to structure their environment to seek out interesting and engaging free time experiences (Sharp et al., 2006). The study also found that research on the impact of psychological control in the parent-child relationship suggested that controlling parenting practices may interfere with children's self-beliefs and worth and self-efficacy (Barber & Harmon, 2002). "Adolescents who perceive their parents as controlling and intrusive in free time feel less competent and efficacious more generally and are less likely to explore different kinds of activities and develop a sense of their interests and talents" (Sharp et al., 2006, p. 369).

Introduction to Parent Involvement

A significant body of research indicates that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an improvement in student achievement (Barnard, 2004; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, & Green, 2004). Parental involvement has been observed to be associated positively with student behaviors and attitudes in such areas as increased school attendance, fewer discipline problems, and higher scholastic aspirations (Epstein & Sanders, 2002;

Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, Pettit, 2004). Furthermore, parental involvement across racial and ethnic groups is a significant contributor to school performance (Roopmarine, Krishnakumar, Metindogan, & Evans, 2006). Some researchers argue that general parenting and positive attitudes, values, and practices of parents in raising young children lead to later cognitive development and student achievement (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). Other researchers believe that only specific forms of early parenting behaviors, such as visiting the library or museum, talking about family history, or working on projects together, are directly related to later cognitive functioning and student achievement (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997).

According to Epstein and Van Voohis (2010) when a collective group of school, family, and community stakeholders work together, achievement gaps decrease. Based on this research, understanding how the school and the parents can work together for the best interest of the child should be the goal. Understanding the importance of parent involvement creates better relationships between and among the parent-student-school triad (Epstein et al., 2002). Parent involvement improves school attendance overall educational performance, and student emotional well-being (Epstein, 1997, 2005). Since parent involvement is crucial in the overall success of a student, parent involvement even before kindergarten can assist in the future success of a student.

According to El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010) parent involvement is a key component of early childhood education programs, such as Head Start. Early childhood education programs positively encourage parents to be actively involved.

Parents can participate in academic centers and other activities at school which can facilitate parent-teacher communication and feedback for parents. According to El Nokali et al., this type of parent involvement may enhance academic achievement indirectly by promoting children's motivation and persistence in challenging educational tasks. By beginning the process of parent involvement early in a child's educational career, the school and the parents can begin evaluate student strengths and weaknesses, through a partnership. Finally, the results suggested that higher parent involvement, as reported collaboratively from the school and parents, promotes better social skills and fewer problem behaviors during in elementary years (El Nokali et al., 2010).

Parent involvement at the middle level is also essential for overall student success. However, the research indicates that amount and type of parent involvement changes in middle school. According to Reilly (2008) parent involvement is critical at the middle level because parents tend to become less active in their child's education. Parents can become engaged and involved in their child's academics without entering the school building. For example, parents can ask their children to share stories of what happened in school, both academically and socially. This involvement usually helps adolescent develop a sense of ownership for their education and builds trust between the parent and their child.

According to Hill and Tyson (2009) middle schools are large and complex, often making it difficult for parents to figure out how to become effectively involved. Also, many middle school teachers are responsible for instructing a large number of students,

making it difficult for them to build deep personal relationships with parents similar to the ones that can be developed at the elementary level. Furthermore, Hill and Tyson reported that "the increase in the number of teachers each student has across subjects makes it difficult for parents to know whom to contact to obtain information about adolescents' progress" (p. 742). Due to this, adolescents need to play more of a role in their education in middle school. With an increase in a middle school student's independence, self-efficacy, ability, and self-motivation in understanding the academic and personal responsibilities for their present and future goals, a decrease in direct parent involvement is likely to occur (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Even though the type and duration of parent involvement changes at the middle school level, parent involvement is still positively related to achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). The researchers identified academic socialization as having the strongest positive relation with achievement. Academic socialization is defined as an open communication between the adolescent and the parents concerning aspirations of future academic goals. This academic socialization provides students with a voice and a say in the direction in their academic future (Hill & Tyson, 2009). To connect with adjustment of middle school parental involvement, Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) which examined the idea that children parent-oriented motivation underlies the benefits of parents' involvement on children's engagement and achievement in school found that as children entered seventh grade that parents' involvement in children's learning was predictive of children's parent

oriented motivation in school over time. Overall, student engagement in school increased along with achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

Parental Involvement in School

Larocque et al. (2011) stated that families play a critical role in the education of their children. Further, working with the school, parents and caregivers can help create collaborative partnerships that support all aspects of a child's achievement at school. The school, community, and the parents each have a role to play in the educational achievement and success of students. Identifying the most effective ways for each partner to become involved in a child's education is the challenge facing our schools. According to Larocque et al., schools need to shift away from the approach that all parents and families can be treated the same and that results will continue to be positive. Since parental involvement in schools and in the education of their children is positively correlated with increasing educational achievement, it is imperative that the schools continue to explore ways of involving parents in their child's education (Larocque et al.).

The collaboration between the school and the parents also has additional benefits. According to Jeynes (2011) when teachers, principals, and the school staff are loving and supportive to parents, they respond better as a partner in their child's education. Larocque et al. (2011) stated that a higher level of parental involvement has been associated with better attendance, higher graduation rates, and less grade retention. Parental involvement has benefits for families; they become better informed about teachers' objectives and the needs of their children. They develop an understanding of

the direction of curricula and the goals of the teachers. Parents develop higher

educational aspirations for their children because they are better equipped to assist their

children due to their involvement (Larocque et al.). Parent involvement produces

benefits for teachers as well. Teachers gain insight on how to better meet the needs of

theirs students by receiving information from parents. Through differentiation of

instruction, teachers can provide in class assignments and homework at the learning level

and style of the student. This communication allows parents and teachers to be on the

same page regarding the child's educational progress. (Larocque et al.)

   According to Cripps and Zyromski (2009), adolescents determine personal self-

worth, self-efficacy, and self-esteem based on perceptions gained from parental

involvement. Middle schools should focus on parent education to share the impact of

perceived parental involvement on student personal, social, and academic achievement.

Since teachers are the usually the first direct contact for parents, schools can begin

offering teacher professional development on ways to increase parent involvement.

Larocque et al. (2011) stated that teachers admit that they have little training in strategies

for working with parents and will avoid contact at times. Teachers report that they

struggle to effectively involve parents in the education of their children. Teachers

expressed that most parent interactions involve managing difficult parents due to a

misunderstanding, rather than using strategies to engage more meaningful parent

involvement (Larocque et al.).

If school districts recognize the overall value of teacher professional development on parental involvement, they can develop comprehensive parental involvement programs which tend to be more effective because they continue to highlight the daily importance of parent involvement and its correlation student achievement. Once teachers receive the necessary training on parent involvement, teachers can look for ways to further parent involvement. Teachers can shift their negative mind set to a positive one by thinking that parents are a valuable resource with powerful knowledge that can be used to help students succeed. This can come from building mutual trust between parents and teachers (Larocque et al., 2011). Historically, many lower SES parents have felt excluded from the educational system because they may not have been successful in school themselves. The teacher can play a vital role in expediting the process of building back the trust of these families. Taking time to learn the acceptable way to address the parents is a good faith commitment to showing parents that they are respected (Larocque et al.). Teachers can invite parents into school to discuss the students' expectations and learn about expectations of families. With regular interactions and the teacher encouragement, parents can begin to feel more comfortable and confident in the school setting (Larocque et al.).

According to Larocque et al. (2011), teachers can present a variety of ways in which parents can participate. To do this, teachers need to create a sense of community and to understand family challenges. Teachers need to communicate their willingness to have parental involvement. Parents are much more likely to become involved when they

feel welcomed and valued (Larocque et al., 2011). It is important for teachers and parents to demonstrate cultural reciprocity when it comes to ethnic backgrounds. This process involves teachers and families exchanging values, knowledge, and perspectives of their different cultural backgrounds. This can take place if there is mutual respect with parents and the teachers have been established (Larocque et al., 2011).

According to Jarmuz-Smith (2011) the key to parent involvement is providing meaningful engagement opportunities that offer concrete ways for parents to build knowledge of and the capacity to involve themselves in the educational system. If we ask parents to help, research shows they will, and this directly and positively affects student achievement. Some additional suggestions to involve parents in the school include: the administration facilitating a parental involvement committee and students can get parents excited about what is happening in school by discussing after school activities and certain productions during the school day (Larocque et al., 2011). Information from parents can help teachers develop successful strategies for working with all students. By showing parents that their voice matters, the schools can empower them to get involved in areas that they didn't even though were an options such as: being a guest speaker or offering to make certain foods within their particular culture to share with other students.

Reilly (2008) reported that parents can provide support, knowledge, time and assistance when they are encouraged to become active in a school. Furthermore, parental involvement provides a direct avenue for teachers to become more familiar with students' backgrounds. According to Reilly having the parents share their family history and

background with the teacher and can be an invaluable learning opportunity for the teacher. Having a well-developed parental involvement system in a school can limit or prevent the number of angry parent meetings, phone calls, and e-mails to the school (Reilly, 2008). Teacher can develop a positive flow of information by being willing to make contact with parents to praise students' successes in addition to seeking assistance when things are not going well. Furthermore, sending home progress reports throughout the quarter, rather than waiting until the end to send one when it may be too late for intervention, also can keep parents involved and partners in the child's education (Reilly, 2008).

Once parents are engulfed into the school system and their voices are being heard, parents can become involved in a variety of activities throughout the school year. This will send the message to the community that teachers and the parents are a real collaborative team working together for the best interest of the students (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). According to Kersey and Masterson (2009), teachers need to build bridges and strong ties with families. They can begin to do this by shifting the focus from children's problems to affirming children strengths. Kersey and Masterson stated parents feeling comfortable and helping them know that as teachers we want the same things they want for their children is well worth the time and energy it takes.

For successful teacher and parent collaboration in parent involvement some key components include: building parent rapport, developing a communication system with a maintenance plan and creating additional special event opportunities for parent

involvement. According to Staples and Diliberto (2010) building parent rapport at the beginning of the school year sets the stage for open communication and continued involvement. This can be accomplished by contacting parent by phone, e-mail, and or invite them to classroom activities, field trips, and special lunch parties. If a parent phone call is made after a student is doing poorly in school and the relationship has not been built with the parents, Fan, Williams, and Wolters (2012) reported that it is likely that parents will have follow-up conversations with their children that can be negative, discouraging and punitive. These conversations can decrease students' confidence, self-efficacy, interest and engagement in school.

In an effort to help parents feel important when they are invited in, teachers can prepare folders for the parents with important information including all school contact numbers. This can provide the parents with a sense of security that they may not have had before. Teachers should also consider sending a classroom newsletter which should include the teacher's personal description with an explanation of the teaching philosophy, behavioral management plan, classroom expectations, and daily parent-teacher journals (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Often parents dislike attending conferences at school because they are reminded of unpleasant experiences when they were in school. As a way of addressing this stress of the parents head-on, teachers can begin to send writing correspondence home prior to a teacher parent meeting to elicit feedback. If parents get a sense that they are not going to be verbally attacked and the teachers intentions are good, parents are more likely to attend a meeting. Before the meeting, to avoid providing

parents merely opinions of performance and progress, teachers should prepare notes of observed performance and behavior, student progress monitoring data, and collect examples of completed student work (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Teachers are encouraged to open parent meetings with the small things that contribute to building a respectful relationship, such as offering a friendly greeting and smile and focusing on students' successes (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009). This can help ensure a success parent teacher meeting by providing a warm and welcoming environment.

The role of the principal is critical in shaping the perceptions of teachers and staff in a school. The principal needs to encourage parents to be more involved in schools (Ferrara, 2009). According to Ferrara (2009) when looking at principal's trying to involve parents in the schools, they report that they provide a calendar of events for school activities at the beginning of the school year. They also provide information about the standardized testing, assistance to low income families, and how to participate in school committees. Principals did not include parents as an essential resource and how the school could provide learning for parents. Additionally, less than 20 percent of principals that were surveyed in this study found a way to include parents as partners in academic programs or in school governance. Parents were not taken into consideration for workshop opportunities and technology skill development. This study demonstrates the need for improvement of school leaders in involving parents as partners in school.

According to Gordon and Louis (2009) it is the job of the districts and schools to inform parents and to organize school and family connections to foster increased

involvement. Because of the low levels of parental involvement in some districts, most parents need direction and assistance from the schools in order to know how to be productively involved in their children's education (Gordon & Louis, 2009). Olsen and Fuller (2009) expanded upon this further by expressing that for schools to maximize the overall educational success in students, educators will need to take an active role in assisting parents with parenting skills, helping in understanding adolescent development and providing ideas for creating a home environment that supports children's learning at each grade level. For this to happen, Olsen and Fuller suggested that teachers and administrators need the parents to assist the schools in becoming better informed about their children and families. This information should include: the child's personal and family background, needs, interests, goals, and expectations. According to Olsen and Fuller schools can provide support to families in a variety of ways. Once schools receive this information formal or inform meetings and workshops can be designed to help parents become more involved. Additionally, if parents cannot attend these meetings, schools can e-mail the information or provide the information through web videos (Olsen & Fuller). Finally, the researchers suggest that parents should be given an ongoing survey of the needs of the parents so that the school can be responsive to their requests. Workshops and meetings can be offered in response to the information in the surveys. These meetings can be held in multiple locations throughout the community which may provide some parents an opportunity to attend due to it being closer to their home (Olsen & Fuller).

If students perceive that the school is not open to parent and family involvement, their attitude and academic performance may suffer. According to Barnyak and McNelly (2009) students' development and academic progress are affected by the beliefs and practices of the teachers and administration within the school district. Schools must consistently encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning at all grade levels even if it becomes more difficult in the older grades. If parents do not get involved at school, their involvement at home may decline as well. Barnyak and McNelly reported that teachers felt that the students whose parents did not take part in home learning activities with them were at an academic disadvantage. Research by Barnyak and McNelly has identified some different methods for parent involvement that teachers and administrators agreed were beneficial. Some of these methods include informing parents about homework and school policies through a handbook, providing a welcoming parent orientation including ways they can become involved in the environment of the school, and teacher and school newsletters to parents. Additionally, teachers and administrators agreed that parent resource rooms, parent tip sheets, activity calendars, parent in-services, district and teacher web pages and e-mail's to parents were positive ways to inform parents about upcoming educational opportunities (Barnyak & McNelly). Furthermore, the teachers in this study agreed that they should may themselves accessible to parents for meeting and phone calls during prep time, before and after school, and by appointment.

The lack of parent involvement can create a relationship with the school that is unproductive, both for the teachers and the parents. If parents do not feel welcomed by

the school, they can perceive that the teachers and administrators are against them as a family and their children. According to Patel and Stevens (2010) when middle school teachers communicate less with parents, they also receive less information from parents. This can create misunderstandings about the ways by which parents can and do participate with their children. Patel and Stevens expressed that parents' reports of actual family involvement are inconsistent with school reports of family involvement which is common with low SES families. The relationships between parents and teachers are an integral factor in the creation of productive social ties between the community and school (Patel & Stevens).

To further support the importance of parent involvement, a study by Gould (2010) examined the relationship between parental involvement in the education of middle school students and the student's satisfaction with school related activities and to determine if a difference in satisfaction levels existed between students who resided with only their biological parents and those who did not. The results indicated that there is a relationship between parental involvement in education and student satisfaction with school related activities at the middle school level. The results also indicated that students who reside with only their biological parents have higher levels of satisfaction with school compared to students who do not reside with only their biological parents. Furthermore, students who do not reside with only their biological parents have lower levels of satisfaction with school compared to those who reside with only their biological parents (Gould).

Parental Involvement in the Home

According to Jeynes (2011) the most important component of parent involvement is maintaining high expectations of your children in school and at home. According to Staples and Diliberto (2010), a positive communication system between the teachers and the parents will allow the teachers to know levels of performance at school and at home to effect a seamless transition between them. This parent and teacher communication can be in the form of a parent-teacher journal, e-mails, phone calls, newsletters, and corresponding through writing in a student's agenda. This positive communication will build parents' self-efficacy by believing that their involvement will have a positive impact on student educational outcomes and because of this they will be more likely to collaborate with educators (Staples and Diliberto).

Danielsen et al. (2009) expressed "parents contribute to student outcomes by providing the home background for their children, and, as primary caregivers, they are the main providers of social support for children's needs" (p. 305). Danielsen et al. reported that "parents can show positive attitudes toward and interest in the school and teachers; and they can provide a structured home environment, encouragement, help, assistance with school work and studies, and daily care and observations of their children" (p. 305). Furthermore, "parents can arrange a wide array of possible learning opportunities and stimulating experiences for their children outside school, and that arrangement probably enhances their children's scholastic competence" (Danielsen et al., 2009, p. 306). Danielsen et al. expressed that, because of inequalities in parents'

resources there can also be inequalities in school-related parental support. Danielsen et al. stated "inequalities in school-related social support provided by parents probably contribute to and can be one explanation of the reproduction of social inequalities in education" (p. 306).

With a consistent effort from parents to hold their children accountable at home and through informing the school, better overall student academic and behavioral results can occur. According to El Nokali et al. (2010) parent involvement may also encourage positive behavior at home and in the classroom as parents and teachers collaborate to enhance social functioning and address problem behaviors. El Nokali et al. reported that if parents are aware of a teacher's instructional objectives, and daily and weekly goals, parents can provide support, resources and activities at home that mirror that the curricular efforts at school. Further, the consistency of addressing behaviors in similar ways between the school and home will provide the student with the solid message that school and home are on the same page. When this occurs, behaviors, both in school and the home are likely to decrease. These parenting practices are associated with higher academic success in the early grades (El Nokali et al.).

Some parents struggle to understand the importance of the collaboration between the school and home to help ensure future success. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) expressed that "parents who believe that their role is only to get children to school, which takes over responsibility for their education, will not be willing to be actively involved in either school based or home-based parent involvement" (p. 39). When this instance occurs, it

puts a great deal of additional pressure on the individual student to stay organized, motivated, and have a desire to succeed. In response, Olsen and Fuller (2009) feel that parents should form the foundation for their children's success in school by providing and maintaining a positive home environment that is conductive to learning and the development of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional skills and values. Parents' providing behavioral structure, organization, and support during home-based learning activities such as homework or structured play promotes on-task behavior, an environment that is consistent, and protects students from distraction (Hoover-Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong, & Jones, 2001). Parents can provide this consistent environment at home by staying up to date on the daily curriculum and making sure their children are as well and also connecting other learning opportunities outside of school to what they are learning in school. Staples and Diliberto (2010) stated that home-based parent involvement includes, reading with children, signing agendas, and other educational enrichment activities such as educational field trips.

According to Phillips (2009) parents who are involved with their children will make sure their home is conductive to education. The home should have plenty of books available for their children to read. Additionally, the home will have several kinds of reference materials and tools available such as: internet access, trade books, educational magazines, computer and learning pad, calculator, pens, pencils, and paper. Phillips reported that some parents will provide homework to their children if they are not given any that evening from school. This practice demonstrates the deep understanding of the

importance of practice in the home to support the learning process. When parents assist with homework, students are more likely to believe that school is important (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Parents can take their involvement one step further as expressed by Reilly (2008) who states that parents can also sign off on projects once they have discussed and assisted their child with completing the requirement. This parent involvement demonstrates to the child that not only is it important to finish the project but the quality is just as important. Parents that are involved the daily functions of their children will know and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the students (Reilly). This information should be shared with the school so they are better able to support them with their concerns and struggles.

Parent Involvement Barriers

Family involvement can be generally defined as the parents' investment in the education of their children (Larocque et al., 2011). Factors that affect the ways in which families are involved differ and are often based on a number of personal and social factors. These factors may include socioeconomic status, parents' own past experience with their learning, and if they felt supported in school when they attended. Larocque et al., 2011 stated that some logistical barriers are inhibitors for effective family involvement. Some of these factors include employment issues, inadequate health insurance and other benefits, and non-traditional hours worked by parents that tend to be low paying. These factors sometimes prevent them from participating whereas; parents with more stable high paying jobs may have more flexibility. Furthermore, due to the

non-traditional hours, late shift 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. or overnight shift from 11 p.m. to 7

a.m., parents may not be able or are too tired to participate during the regular school

hours. Their efforts to advocate for their children lead to frustration because many

parents find out there are problems after the fact from not being able to check in with

their children. This can lead to anger or accusatory conversations from the parents to the

teachers.

Many parents that are working long non traditional hours feel guilt because of not

being involved in their child's education. Furthermore, when they are available to assist

their children, many times they do not understand the work or assignments. To support

this, Larocque et al., 2011 expressed that some parents do not feel adequate to the task of

supporting their children because of their own low level of education. However, today's

parents are not expected to understand all of their child's educational work or many

challenges of new educational language. The support can come in the form of

nonacademic tasks such as providing a regular place and time to complete homework

minus distractions, checking for completion of the homework, or contacting the teacher if

the child is consistently taking a long time or is struggling with the homework, project, or

take home assignments (Larocque et al., 2011).

Many parents also face physical barriers to parent involvement. Schools can

tremendously assist with helping parents hurtle these physical barriers. A school can

provide a variety of meeting times and days for parent-teacher conferences. Teachers can

also offer a safe, neutral place in the community to meet with parents that may be closer

to their homes (Larocque et al., 2011). In some cases, parent conferences can be conducted in the home and on a conference call with the parents and teachers. Additionally, schools can provide daycare for parent-teacher conferences. Transportation can be provide to parents by bus for school related events and activities (Larocque et al.).

According to Staples and Diliberto (2010) some additional barriers to parent involvement, involve having to take care of extended family responsibilities and other children. Additionally, setting priorities as a parent and not letting other demands get in the way is difficult for some parents. Furthermore, many parents perceive involvement as time consuming and difficult to fit into a busy schedule. In some cases, parents believe that it is the sole responsibility of the teachers to educate their children. They do not see the importance of a positive partnership with the school and teachers. Some parents believe children's intelligence is fixed and that school achievement is mainly due to children having high ability, not in them getting involved in their children's education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The researchers expressed that some parents believe that children's innate ability will set a limit on their achievement so that such things as encouraging children to do their homework or attending parent-teacher conferences at school are viewed as a waste of time (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). For some parents that may want to get involved in their child's education as stated Hornby and Lafaele are lacking confidence in helping their children and they feel they cannot communicate effectively with teachers. Finally, the lack of confidence from parents may also come

from taking the view that they have not developed sufficient academic competence to effectively help their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) stated that "parents who believe that achievement at school depends as much on effort as ability, and that children's abilities can always be developed, are more likely to be positive about parent involvement" (p. 40). Furthermore, "parents who believe that the way they bring up their children will have considerable impact on their development are much more likely to be positive about parent involvement than parents who believe they can have little impact on their children's development" (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011, p. 40). When parents perceive that teachers are not open to involving parents in the structure and environment of the school, parents view that as a major barrier to parent involvement. Many parents are unsure of their roles in the school. The feeling of disconnect grows stronger as their children move form grade to grade in middle and high school (Ferrara, 2009). In a study Ferrara (2009) reported that parents may not be encouraged to participate in school activities by teachers, especially if they perceive the parents as not knowledgeable. Further, when schools are welcoming to parents and make it clear that they value parent involvement; they develop more effective parent involvement. Schools need to recognize the complexities of positive public relations and how even one poor experience from a parent perspective is extremely difficult for a school to repair.

Many parents need affirmation and reassurance from their child's teachers and administrators to build trust and deal with their feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy or

sometimes even intimidation (Kersey & Masterson, 2009). According to Risko and

Walker-Dalhouse (2009) families who live in poverty believe that they should not intrude

on teachers' decisions making. Teachers and administrators need to make sure that they

are delivering information to all parents at their level of understanding in a non-

intimidating way. To support this Kersey and Masterson (2009) expressed that a teacher

may use language a parent doesn't understand or describe a child's progress in

educational jargon, which the parent is reluctant to admit confuses him or her. In

addition to feeling confused in a meeting with a teacher, many parents may still have

unresolved feelings of failure and discontent carried over from their school experiences

and worry that their children may not succeed because they will follow the same

unsupported path. Further, it is important for teachers to remember that not all adults had

good experiences in school and we may have to work hard to dispel their perceptions and

fears (Kersey & Masterson). Through teachers learning from the past experiences of

parents, they can harvest positive relationships build on trust, communication, and mutual

respect.

A parent's level of education may also serve as a barrier to parent involvement.

Parents who did not complete high school may feel unable to assist with homework and

assignments once their child gets to high school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Furthermore,

parents without college degrees may feel in some ways inferior to teachers and are not

willing to openly discuss the needs of their child due to feeling embarrassed. A

combination of level of education and being a single parent increases the likelihood that

parent involvement will be scarce. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) stated that single parents with young families or large families may find it difficult to get involved as parents because of all of their caretaking responsibilities. As a single parent, much of the focus is on putting food on the table and paying the bills. In addition to this money could be any issue to pay babysitters in order to get to school meetings.

To complete the literature review on parent barriers, a study was chosen by Kao and Turney (2009), which used data from The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Cohort (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001) to examine race and immigrant differences in barriers to parental involvement at school. The study found that minority immigrant parents perceived a greater number and magnitude of barriers to getting involved in their children's elementary school than did native-born White parents, after controlling or other demographic and socioeconomic variables. Kao and Turney noted that "although some barriers (e.g., problems with safety or language) are reported by relatively few parents, minority immigrant parents were more likely to experience these barriers than were their native-born White counterparts" (p. 267). Similarly, Kao and Turney founded "that minority immigrant parents were less likely than were White native-born parents to participate in activities at their children's school" (p. 267). Furthermore, Kao and Turney expressed that "among immigrant parents, time in the United States and English language ability were positively associated with involvement" (p. 267). Finally, Kao and Turney found that these children seem to suffer the

consequences not only through their actual levels of participation but by the obstacles themselves that likely represent general domestic hardships.

Review of Comparable Research Studies

Many quantitative and qualitative research studies have been conducted addressing similar issues related to low SES parent practices and involvement in school. Berkule-Silberman, Dreyer, Huberman, Klass, and Mendelsohn (2010) conducted a quantitative cross- sectional analysis to determine if potential sources of parenting information would be used by new SES mothers to assist them in their parenting education and when they planned to initiate shared reading during infancy. This article directly connects to the importance of early parenting practices, involvement, and the need for SES mothers to expose their children early to reading. They authors concluded that family and friends were the most common source reported as important parenting information followed by print media and health-care related sources. Additionally, mothers who reported print media, health-care, or family and friends as important sources of parenting information were more likely to have plans to initiate shared reading during infancy. These findings support the importance of SES parent involvement at an early age with their children and that early exposure to reading by SES parents to their children can lead to academic self-efficacy and positive start to a SES student's educational career. Another quantitative study conducted by Niditch and Varela (2011) explored relations among perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting, emotional self-efficacy and anxiety in adolescents between the ages of 12-18. The authors found that emotional

self-efficacy and material rejection predicted anxiety and that paternal rejection and control were not associated with anxiety. It is suggested by the authors that maternal acceptance and involvement may play an important role in adolescents' perceptions of emotional competence. This study supports the overall importance of parent involvement in a child's life. This study demonstrates the positive influence of the mother in a child's mental well-being. If a middle school student feels accepted by their parent or parents, their emotional competence can stay positive which can led to less anxiety and better school performance.

A qualitative study by Ma'ayan (2010) explored a student named "Erika" who was part of a large study conducted on adolescent girls and their literacy practices. Erika was a poor student who was at risk and not performing well in school. The results of this study revealed that Erika was disengaged from her studies because the topics and discussions in school, she could not relate to in anyway. In fact, the teachers struggled to find ways to connect with Erika in class however the topics that Erika wanted to discuss were too controversial to be discussed in the class room. The results of the study suggest that Erika's mother needed to provide her with outside reading books that she could personally relate to. However, due to the constant turmoil and crisis in the family, Erika's mother was not involvement in her schooling and in fact; Erika was an emotional support to her mother who was having a difficult time. The study also reports that due to all of her family responsibilities, Erika continued to be disengaged and the school did not know how to help her. This study demonstrates the need for parents in be directly

involved in their child's education. This study showed that without direct contact with the family to better understand their issues and stressors, the school cannot properly help the child and the struggling family.

A quantitative study by McMahon, Felix, and Nagarajan (2011) looked to better understand the relations between chronic neighborhood stressors (economic hardship/poverty), social support (parents and teachers), and self-worth in at-risk African American students in grades 6-8. The results revealed that the students consistently identified the female members of their families (mother, grandmother, sisters) as social supporters. Teachers were listed as instrumental support by the peers in the study. The researchers concluded that given the students poverty challenges that they may need to look to others (teachers) to ask for additional things they need or want. Additionally, parent support was the only source of social support found to have a significant longitudinal effect on student self-worth. The study demonstrates the importance of parent involvement with lower SES students.

A study by Baer, Kim, and Wilkenfeld (2012) examined the relationship between lower SES mothers and generalized anxiety disorder. The findings suggest that anxiety in mothers of poverty is not usually psychiatric, but a reaction to severe environmental deficits. It is suggested by the researchers that the anxiety due to these environments deficits can result is negative parenting. The researchers recommend that these lower SES parents need concrete support to cope with their stress to accompany positive

parenting skills. The school can provide this concrete support for SES parents so parents can positively dealing their stress and provide better parenting to their children.

A quantitative study conducted by Mc Coach, Goldstein, Behuniak, Reis, Black, Sullivan, and Rambo (2010) wanted to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to student achievement in Connecticut schools. The study identified achievement profiles that exceeded or fell short of their expected achievement levels based on a variety of demographics and background variables. This study identified two schools (one over-performing) and (one under-performing school) to study factors that contribute to student achievement. The results expressed that although parents in both schools reported similar perceptions about parent/teacher communication, however the over-performing school had teachers and administrators have more positive perceptions of parents. The teachers from this school perceive the parents in their school as being more involved in their children's education and they encouraged high levels of parent involvement. Furthermore, this study found that parent involvement and parent perceptions were key variables that helped to explain the differences in the two schools. It is recommended by the researchers that communication and collaboration among parents, teachers, and faculty appear to be critical factors in predicting the success of low-SES schools. This study clearly supports the connection parental involvement and the academic success of their children.

A study by Murray, Haynie, Howard, Cheng, and Simons-Morton (2010) examined the relation between perceived parenting practices and aggression among 6th

grade students who lived in neighborhoods and attended schools characterized by high levels of violence. The findings indicate that students who reported having parents who have expectations of non-violence strategies such as: walking away or having peaceful conversation was less likely to engage to potentially aggressive behaviors. This study supports that these parenting practices assist at-risk students to make better choices with their behavior which can translate to fewer suspensions, more time in class, and a better positive attitude and approach to their academics.

A review of research literature on case study methodology identified a case study approach as ideal for this type of study. This case study was intended to meet multiple levels of educational interest and audiences such as: teachers, community members, parents, school board members, school administrators, and educational historians. The case study approach allows for multiple audiences to read and review the information without necessarily having any background in research. Since this case study has the potential to reach many different audiences and diverse backgrounds, the report was geared specifically to assist educational professionals by reporting the findings and comparing the results to previous and current research. However, the findings will also provide elements that are relatable to parents and community members (Yin, 2009).

This case study provided literature that will inform the current research on parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The case study approach allowed for the case study report to provide a detailed amount of information while controlling the length of the report to meet the

needs of the designed audience (Yin, 2009). Since this case study was designed to be used by educational professionals, the information in the report needs to be engaging to the reader, transferrable and applicable to be used in the current educational environment. In the current educational environment of high stakes testing and overall student achievement, this current research identified a specific educational need of struggling lower socioeconomic students. This case study examined lower SES parenting practices and involvement of high achieving middle school students to provide information to its reader on the most current evidence on this topic so they can determine they own perspective based on their review of the literature (Yin, 2009).

Summary

Lower SES parents do not typically have a positive impact on their children both in the home and at school. These parents do not tend to have enough of their own self-efficacy to assist and support their children to be successful academically. School faculty need to help lower SES students to develop self-efficacy by gaining a better understanding of their needs. This can occur by teachers learning about their students' needs by asking them about their lives and inviting the families to come into the schools to discuss their backgrounds. Through detailed communication and an open invitation for parents to get involved in the schools, this partnership between the parents and the school can provide the safety nets necessary for lower SES students to find future academic success. Eliminating the barriers that prevent parent involvement in schools can foster this open communication between parents and teachers. It will allow parents

the opportunity to provide vital information about their child and family because of the level of safety and security provided by the school.

Many teachers of lower SES students do not know how to help their students because they do not understand their needs and background. Additionally, most teachers are not trained in how and what to discuss with families and struggle to understand the why lower SES parents may feel intimidated to get involved in the school or attend parent conferences. Teachers and administrators need to focus on the value of offering a welcoming school environment for lower SES parents. To accomplish this, the school needs to pay attention to the needs of the parents and listen when parents express their ideas and thoughts. By doing this, the entire school environment will change positively and all parents and students can benefit. Unfortunately, lower SES parents still do not feel comfortable getting involved in their child's school. In order to increase lower SES parent involvement in school, the schools need to make it a priority to train teachers and administrators on how to break down the barriers that prevent lower SES parents from getting involved in the schools. Additionally, it is essential for teachers and school officials to understand the backgrounds and needs of the children. Through open communication and listening skills, the teachers can gain an understanding of the student's upbringing, style of parenting, past parent involvement, and parents' feelings towards school. Research indicated that lower SES parents care about their child's education. Research also showed that children achieve academically when their parents are involved in their education. The school and parents can work together through a

partnership of mutual respect and consistent effort on both sides to break down these

barriers so parents have a high level of comfort in their child's education.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

Problems and barriers associated with lower SES students related to their poor academic performance and lack of parent involvement have been documented (Bowers, 2010; Chowdry et al., 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Some research further indicated that many lower SES students feel disconnected, unsupported, and unmotivated in school because many teachers do not know how to engage lower SES parents and students to get them more involved (Bryan & Henry, 2011; Ferrara, 2009; Reilly, 2008). The number of children in poverty continues to increase every year and the educators continue to seek effective ways to motivate students and involve parents. Thus, lower SES students and parents need a partnership with the schools so students feel more connected with their teachers and the parents feel more comfortable getting involved in the schools (Epstein & VanVoohis, 2010; Jeynes, 2011). The investment of time by teachers with lower SES parents although not perfected, is seen as important. Setting parents at ease and letting them know that teachers want the same things they want for their children is well worth the time and energy it takes (Kersey & Masterson, 2009). Since parent involvement in school is essential and benefits students, families, and schools (Epstein, 2001), understanding more about parenting practices and involvement from the perspective of lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students would be very constructive. To gain this deeper understanding from lower SES parents, qualitative research was chosen.

Creswell (1998) recommended qualitative research as an effective means for examining a social problem whereby the researcher can build a complex, holistic view of a study because research informants participate in study that is their natural setting. Using a qualitative case study research approach, I summarized and analyzed the information gained from individual interviews. This information was thoroughly reviewed to determine the importance of parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of academically successful students. This information might contribute to the body of research that has data in support of finding optimal ways for working with other lower SES parents who have students who are not finding success academically. This information may allow schools to have meaningful conversations with lower SES parents of students not finding academic success. This study may also support research findings that help schools to have strategies for working with these families.

Qualitative Design

There are several purposes for using a qualitative case study approach. First, as a middle school principal, I have many daily opportunities to connect and have conversations with families and students from many different socioeconomic backgrounds. Since this study has involved direct contact with middle school parents, my comfortable level was extremely high. Because of my experience with working with middle school parents for over 15 years, I was able to create a safe and comfortable environment for the individual interviews. Second, I have a strong commitment to study this problem because it directly impacts me as an administrator and in working with my

entire faculty and staff. In my role, I work directly with lower SES parents and students. Additionally, I need to motivate, encourage, and inspire teachers who are working with lower SES parents and students to find the best ways to connect with the children and to involve the parents. Third, I am committed to the profession of education and am willing to spend as much time as it takes to collect extensive, quality data from the study participants to gain a deeper understanding of parenting practices (Creswell, 1998). A skilled interviewer, with the ability to ask quality questions and interpret the answers is essential for a choosing and conducting a quality case study design (Yin, 2009). Being a good listener, adaptive, and flexible within a focused interview is vital for building rapport and obtaining the highest quality data for the case study. These interviews can be seen as opportunities if the most appropriate questions are asked to support the research questions (Yin, 2009).

According to Creswell (1998), a qualitative study provides deeper insight into complex problems that are not best served by statistical data collected through quantitative research. My examination of the problem of lower SES students' not finding academic success and the lack of parental involvement for lower SES parents has been explored in research without providing solid suggestions for positive change. This study may help by providing qualitative data that offers an in-depth understanding of factors that positively affects students' academic performance. Additionally, many school administrators and teachers still do not know the most effective ways to motivate lower SES students and how to involve their parents in school (Johnson, 2013). To gain a

deeper understanding of how to help these lower SES parents and students, a detailed

view (Creswell, 1998) must be achieved by asking questions directly to the parents.

To understand the complexities of parenting practices and involvement and the

amount the diverse information that can be shared, I chose to use a case study research

approach. Creswell (2003) expressed that the uses of data collection for qualitative

research are interactive and humanistic and case study research is supportive of closely

examining human interactions. Further, "a case study indicates what is to be studied

within a case that has a finite quality about it in terms of time, space, or components

comprising the case" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 178). Using formal interviews

during this qualitative study allowed the parents the opportunity to get comfortable

talking with me and about the topic in the interviews. Qualitative interviews allow

researchers the opportunity to dig into personal issues (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the parenting practices

and involvement of lower SES parents of students who are achieving at the advanced

level in both reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania State Standardized

Assessments. According to Creswell (1998), a case study is an exploration of a bounded

system or a case over time through a detailed, in-depth data collection rich in context.

The bounded system and case for this study was lower SES parents having middle school

aged children who are performing at the advanced level in reading and mathematics on

the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment where according to most of the research

lower SES students are not achieving academic success. These lower SES parents have

exercised particular parenting practices and have been involved in their child's education. These parenting practices and methods of school involvement and how they have impacted achievement were the main focus of this study.

Through parent interviews, this deep personal information gained from these lower SES parents have demonstrated the values and beliefs behind their practices. Gaining a deeper understanding of identifying parenting practices that positively influence student achievement through narrative descriptions will allow educators the opportunities to address any negative student perceptions and barriers to parent involvement earlier in a student's educational career. A qualitative case study worked best for gaining large a volume of personal experiences from these parents. This methodology was chosen over a phenomenological study because of the need to develop an in-depth analysis of data in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of these lower SES parents (Creswell, 1998, 2003). The parents answered questions on the uniqueness of their parenting experiences and were asked to describe their opinions and insight about parenting (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2009). The data analysis took the cluster of meanings from the interview information and formulated it into a description of how and what was experienced by parents (Creswell, 1998; 2003). The use of these experiences will assist educators in making informed decisions on how to address the needs of lower SES parents and students that are not finding success.

The following three research questions were used for the study:

1. How do lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and involvement in their child's education?

2. What are parents' perceptions of their child's motivation, persistence, and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?

3. What are the lower SES parents parenting perceptions and involvement that can be used to assist faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?

The qualitative case study has inspired additional questions at the conclusion. Since both research questions are open-ended and thought provoking, a qualitative research design was a more appropriate choice than a quantitative study. Since lower SES parents were the focus of the study, understanding their inner thoughts about parenting practices and involvement was best accomplished through their personal detailed explanation of their thoughts and feelings. The parent participants were provided a safe, warm, comfortable interview environment to speak freely and honestly about their parenting practices and involving in their child's education. This valuable information was used to formulate a rich, detailed narrative that can provide information to assist educators at all levels and other lower SES parents.

Participant Selection

Ten lower SES parents were purposely selected, based on their child scoring in the advanced level in reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment (between a range of 1456-1497 or higher in reading and a range between

1446-1483 or higher in mathematics), qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program, students not being retained academically at any point in their educational career, being a biological or step-parent currently living with the child, and having a middle school student attending a traditional public middle school, grades 6 to 8. The suburban middle school has a student population of 850, grades 6 to 8. Roughly 30 % of the students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program at the middle school. The demographic and free and reduced information needed for this case study was obtained and handled by the middle school principal. I am not the principal of this middle school.

I have the daily experience of working directly with middle school parents. This experience has been over a 15 year period mostly as a building administrator in an academically successful middle school. My experience and understanding of the importance of sensitivity and patience when working with parents encouraged the superintendent of schools to be very supportive of this study. I first made an appointment with the assistant superintendent and discussed the importance of this research. The superintendent designated his assistant to assist me with the study. The goal of the meeting was for the assistant superintendent to understand the purpose of the study and to gain a comfort with me conducting this research in a professional and unbiased way. Even with the superintendent's preapproval, official approval from the Walden IRB needed to be granted. Upon approval of the IRB, an appointment was scheduled with the assistant superintendent. The nature and purpose of the study and role as a researcher in the process was explained. Additionally, my professional approach to the research and

clear understanding of changing hats from middle school principal to researcher was explained. I stressed my overall respect for my role as principal, the district, and the research process. Finally, documentation of confidentiality and the process of volunteering of parent participants were provided to the assistant superintendent. A written description was provided to the assistant superintendent on how parent volunteers were identified and contacted (See Appendix A and B). I reviewed this description with the assistant superintendent and adjusted this plan based on our discussion and his feedback. My 5 years of experience as a middle and high school counselor helped reassure the assistant superintendent of my overall commitment to confidentiality. Upon the approval of the superintendent, the middle school principal identified students that met the requirements for the study by reviewing the free and reduced list and comparing the names to the additional criteria (See Appendix B). After identifying the students that met the criteria, letters were mailed to the parents asking them to participate in the study (See Appendix C). A total of 10 parent participants were identified for this study based on the order of when I was contacted. The short letter included the purpose of the study and my contact information (See Appendix C). When I was contacted by letter, e-mail, or phone by the prospective participants, an explanation of their responsibilities as study participants were shared verbally or by e-mail. The prospective participants were encouraged after receiving the letter and receiving an explanation of their responsibilities to return the signed consent form (See Appendix D). The interview with the prospective participants was set up and the consent forms were explained and signed before the

formal interviews were conducted. Roughly a week after the letter was mailed, if I was not contacted, personal contact with prospective participants was made by phone. Additionally, once these parents agreed to participate verbally in the study, they were e-mailed an explanation of their responsibilities as study participants. The prospective participants were encouraged after receiving the letter and receiving an explanation of their responsibilities to return the signed consent form (See Appendix D). Once 10 parents agreed to participate, individual interview dates were set. These parents were purposefully selected based on their socioeconomic status, their child's standardized test scores, and their enrollment in the traditional middle school. Before the consent form was signed, the prospective participants received and had time to review an invitation letter from me. Additionally, the prospective participants had the opportunity to discuss any concerns by phone or e-mail before returning the signed consent form. The consent form included the approximate length of the interview, the purpose for using an audiotape during the interview process, and the procedures, including time for member checking where participants were able to review some of my preliminary analysis of their own data and process the interpretation to check for accuracy at a later date. The consent form needed to be signed before the interview would take place. The interview with the participant was arranged at a mutual time and place. On the day of the interview before it would officially begin, the study participants were given another opportunity to ask any questions. Additionally, they had the purpose, process, and need for the study explained again along with the rules of confidentiality and that it was a voluntary process. If the

participants were comfortable and had all of their questions answered, the consent form was signed and the interview was conducted. The interview was to be in a pre-determined private conference room at the local library, a predetermined private conference room away from the main office and classrooms where disruptions may occur at the school, or a local business location of their choice.

Participants' Rights

Before beginning the process of conducting this study, I submitted this proposal for approval to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. Upon receipt of IRB approval, I initiated this study's procedures for identifying research informants. In the informational letter to the parents, an explanation was given of the purpose of the study and the reasons they were selected for participation in the study.   Additionally, the parents were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from this process at any time (See Appendix D). Furthermore, it was expressed to the parents that the standards of integrity and professionalism of the school district and the researcher concerning respect and confidentiality was in effect throughout the process of conducting and completing the study. The process for confidentiality included maintaining all data in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office. During the data analysis process, all information related to the participants was categorized for each participant as a pseudonym and was maintained and organized on a secure, password protected computer in an anonymous folder on my home office computer. All data organized and saved on a back-up flash drive were also secured in a locked filing cabinet

in my private home office. Participants were told that their input and time invested in the

study was valuable to the success and validity of the study.

Ethical Protection of Participants

My assurance in the importance of the information gathered from the study was

used to assist and support all educators to more effectively work with struggling lower

SES families and students has established an ethically exchange. The informed consent

that was used for the study had a thorough explanation of the purpose of the study and

that participation is voluntary. Additionally, the informed consent informed them that

they can ask questions at any time throughout the process and have the option to dismiss

themselves from the process at any time. Finally, the form included the benefits to

participants and to other parents and students in the future based on their participation

(See Appendix D).

Each parent participant had the opportunity to read a summary of the research

study upon its completion. The names of the parent participants remained confidential

during the coding process and in the final completed copy of the case study. Each

participant received a letter of the alphabet as a pseudonym during the data collection and

analysis process to make sure that confidentiality was maintained. The letter designation

was known to the participant and me. The letter assigned to each participant was how the

information was saved and stored in a private folder on a password protected computer in

my private home office. The password was only known by me. Additionally, all records

regarding identity and data that are not on the computer are stored in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office.

All of the findings for this study were based on the information provided by the parent participants during the interviews. The Superintendent of the school district was informed of the study and provided permission for the middle school principal to use the free and reduced lunch list to identify potential study participants. All potential parent participants received a letter with a detailed explanation of the study before they agreed to participate (Appendix C). Many elementary and middle school teachers and administrators may find the results of this study valuable in working with lower SES families and students to get them more involved in the school culture and on a positive academic track .

Description of the Setting

This study took place in a suburban middle school in northeast Pennsylvania with a population of 850 students in grades 6 to 8. The study participants met for the interviews at a mutual time at one of the three possible settings. The participants were offered the option of an interview site. The conference room in the middle school was a private, comfortable room that was away from classrooms and any distractions from the main office. The private conference room at the local library was also a comfortable setting away from any distractions. The local business location offered a semi-private sitting area. All participants chose to interview at the middle school, and it was suggested to conduct the interviews after 3:30 p.m. It was suggested to conduct the

interviews after 3:30 p.m. because the student and the teacher day ends at 3:30 p.m. Having the interviews after 3:30 p.m. would help respect and protect the confidentiality of the study participants because most of the faculty and students would have left the building by that time. Some of the participants chose to interview after 3:30 p.m. and some wanted to interview earlier in the day. The study participants were provided bottled water and a note pad if they wanted to write down any thoughts or notes. The school conference room was equipped with a wooden conference style table with soft, comfortable chairs. The individual interviews were audiotaped and field notes were taken throughout the process by the researcher.

Role of the Researcher

I was a middle school principal in my fifth year in a grade five to eight middle school with a total of 1,100 students. This study did not occur at the middle school in which I was the principal. However, the local middle school where the study did take place has similar demographics and student setting to my school. Before this position, I worked for 15 years in education as an instructional aide, substitute teacher, school counselor in grades 7-12, dean of students, and assistant principal in three schools. My diverse work experience during these 15 years of working with children in different schools at different levels has led to the passion behind conducting a qualitative research study to gain a deeper understanding of lower SES parents of academically successful students.

My passion for middle level education, leadership, and student achievement has led my school to receive several acknowledgements. The middle school has received the "Schools to Watch" recognition in 2009 and in 2012 for best practices in middle level education. With these recognitions, the middle school has received a great deal of local and state news press. Parents have been invited to participate in the school-wide celebrations and have contributed feedback that allowed us to receive these prestigious recognitions.

Due to my diverse experience over the years of working in three different school districts in many different positions, it was essential for me to acknowledge my own personal biases to the parent participants. My personal biases included some past frustrating experiences working with lower SES families and students in the school setting. Additionally, I acknowledged my past limited success with helping lower SES families and students within a community counseling setting. Finally, I acknowledged my continued struggles with assisting lower SES families and students within a school environment. Hopefully, by acknowledging by biases and my deep passion and desire to learn and self-improve, parent participants were comfortable and willing to openly share information to assist in the success of the study. Additionally, I took field notes during each interview and reviewed and bracketed out my biases based upon data analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

An interview guide was created and used during the data collection process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; See Appendix E). This allowed for the same questions to be

asked during each of the 10 interviews. Extra space was provided in the guides after every question to allow for short written notes or to record any observations by me of the participants (Creswell, 1998). The interview questions for the individual interviews were open-ended. The predetermined interview questions were no more than 15 and were geared to answer the three main research questions. The individual interviews were clear from outside distractions due to the prearrangement of the conference room so the participants were comfortable and able to focus throughout the session. All 10 parent participants were interviewed individually.

The individual interviews were recorded using a hand-held audiotape recorder. The data collected was transcribed by an external transcriber. The field notes collected from the individual interviews by the researcher were also analyzed. After the field notes were analyzed, they were transcribed and placed in the appropriate section. The field notes and information from the interviews were placed in individual files labeled by letter and were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office. The hand-held audiotape was stored in a different locked filing cabinet in my home office. It remained in the locked cabinet unless it was being used for data collection or when the data was being transcribed. All information related to the participants was categorized by using the assigned letter pseudonym and was maintained and organized on a secure, password protected computer in an anonymous folder on my home office computer. This transcribed data was also saved to a flash drive as well and the drive was stored in the same locked filing cabinet as the audiotape recorder in my private home office.

Data Analysis

The first step before any deep analysis took place was to organize the transcribed notes from each individual parent interview into a separate working folder for each parent keeping their name confidential. It was indicated only by letter on the computer. During a thorough review of each individual parent interview notes, a general sense of the information emerged and reflection of meaning occurred (Creswell, 1998). Upon the completion of the thorough review of the data, the process of inductive analysis was conducted. With inductive analysis, a search for patterns of meaning occurred so that general statements about the phenomena under investigation could be made (Hatch, 2002). This process included looking for patterns across individual observations after an examination of the data (Hatch, 2002). This thorough process of reviewing the data occurred until the data was broken into analyzable parts. The next step was to create domains based off of these analyzable parts. These domains were developed by exploring relationship among these analyzable parts (Hatch, 2002). After the reflection of meaning, significant statements (Moustakas, 1994) began to be identified and then the process of coding would began. Coding is "the process of organizing the material into chunks before bringing meaning to the chunks" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 171). The coding process for this study began with a detailed analysis of the information gathered from each of the interview. Based on this detailed analysis, common themes, events and concepts were identified. The name of the theme, event or concepts was written on the information and placed under that category to keep the information organized. The

coding process continued by identifying common themes, events, and concepts (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The data continued to be analyzed and the categories were reduced based on refining and organizing the coded information. These themes appeared as the major findings and were supported by specific evidence (Creswell, 1998). At this point of the analysis, a master outline was created expressing relationships within and among domains (Hatch, 2002).

The connection to the conceptual framework of self-efficacy was apparent through the parents reporting of how their parent practices and involvement have influenced their child's perspective and beliefs on the importance of academics. Through these parent practices and experiences, the children of these parent participants have been exposed to different information and experiences and have developed expectations of personal efficacy. At least two of the four sources of influence: mastery, vicarious, physiological, and emotional experiences were apparent as a direct source of influence on the child as reported by the parent. These themes are found in the narrative of the study supported by various quotations and detailed information.

Within the narrative of the study, the discussion included multiple perspectives and experiences in which the parents value as the most important influences on their children, a detailed description of specific parenting practices or involvement, and how many of the themes interconnect with one another. Final analysis included suggestions from a parents' perspective on best practices in parenting and in getting involved in school or a list of possible recommendations for consideration for the school for parent

involvement. Some questions that still need to be answered conclude the study. The results of the study are presented in narrative form. The participants had the opportunity to review the results after the conclusion of the data analysis.

Reliability and Validity

Validity is seen as a strength of qualitative research, and it is used to determine whether the discoveries are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). One term, "trustworthiness" refers to this idea in qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Establishing trust was the focus of this study, beginning with the initial meeting with the parents. The trust resulted in making the parents feel comfortable and letting them know that the research obtained would be used to help other educational professionals assist struggling lower SES students and families. Furthermore, the parents were told that current research states that most students who come from lower socioeconomic families fail to perform academically well in school. However, their child was currently performing academically well and this success goes against what the research states. The parent learned that since their child was performing better than what the research stated, this was a deep area of interest. I wanted to understand their parenting practices and involvement so the results can assist other educational professionals to help struggling SES students and families. Additionally, during the formal interviews, the parents felt comfortable with me and felt that his or her privacy was a priority. It was explained to the parents that all of the information provided during the study was placed in a locked filing cabinet in

folders that were marked discretely without using their names. Additionally, it was explained to the parent participants that when their information was entered into the computer for review and analysis that it was stored into password protected folders without using parent names on my personal secure home computer. Finally, the parents were made aware of the confidential agreements that were signed with the external transcriber and all others that may be involved with any exposure to their private information (See Appendix F).

Member checking provided the basis for reliability, credibility, trustworthiness and validity of data from the formal interviews. In member checking, I completed my preliminary review of the analyzed data. After a thorough review of the analyzed data, the parent participants were contacted by phone. Each parent was offered the opportunity to meet in person to review my findings for their own data relative to the study themes. The parent participants only reviewed their analyzed data, not all of the data collected from other participants.

All of the participants chose to have my interpretations of their data shared with them over the phone to validate the results. This allowed for the parents to offer suggestions and bring additional clarification to their analyzed data so I clearly understood their perspective. Peer review also occurred through a discussion with a close school colleague about the process and findings of the study. This school colleague was a Masters level school administrator with 16 years of experience working with secondary public school children. My colleague signed a confidentiality agreement before the study

began. Furthermore, I acknowledged that my own personal bias may influence the study, including some past and present frustrating experiences working and counseling lower SES families and students. My personal biases were avoided through my discussions of the data with the peer reviewer (Yin, 2009). The data was reviewed for logical development of themes and results. This data provided rich, thick descriptions within the findings. These descriptions will allow the reader to understand the perspectives of the participants. Based on these themes, the detailed qualitative narrative was developed.

Expected Outcomes

The information gathered from this qualitative case study will provide the readers of this study with credible and practical real world examples, strategies, and safety nets that can be implemented immediately by educational professionals working with academically unsuccessful lower SES parents and students. Additionally, readers of this study should be able to determine which information, strategies, or safety nets would benefit lower SES parents and students within their current setting and situation.

Summary and Transition

Section 3 reviewed the methodology that examined parenting practices and involvement of lower socioeconomic status parents of high achieving middle school students. These students were achieving at the advanced level in both reading and mathematics. To examine how such high achievement occurred, I chose to implement qualitative case study research in order to gain a deep understanding of parenting practices that may have affected student achievement. When developing my study

proposal, I also considered a phenomenological approach. After a great deal of research, the case study method provided the approach which explored the need to understand the in-depth analysis of single case. This deeper humanistic approach allowed the parents to share their lived experiences which provided the best understanding from a reader's perspective. Additionally, the qualitative case study approach was used because this research may assist educators in future decision making based on the quality of the information provided from the study. The interviews were used to gather these lived experiences necessary to conduct this study. The narrative to follow will enable the reader to connect with the information and pull value from its deep content. According to Creswell (1998), audiences are receptive to qualitative research. Because most educators focus on taking a humanistic approach with children in their decisions when dealing with children, this approach seemed to be the perfect fit.

In the next section, I identified the themes, patterns and the research discoveries that support these themes. An expansion of these themes included examples from the data. The discoveries support the three research questions. Additionally, a discussion on the evidence of quality occurred to ensure accuracy of the data. Section 5 includes an interpretation of findings, conclusions that address all of the research questions, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further study. By answering research questions related to parenting practices and involvement, understanding the barriers to parent involvement, and learning how schools can help, this study provides a blueprint to assist all parents and the schools to understand the overall

importance of the partnership between the school and parents that can lead to student

academic success.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The parents chosen for this study had middle school children performing on the advanced level in both reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment. Individual interviews with the parents of these high achieving middle school students were used to gain the data for this case study. The data from these individual interviews were used to examine parent practices and involvement of lower SES parents in which they perceive to be most effective in their child's academic success. Additionally, data were used to identify parenting practices and involvement that could assist middle school faculty members when working in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students. Finally, the data were used to gain a deeper understanding of the parents' perceptions of their child's motivation and persistence in achieving success academically.

The following research questions were used to gather data from the interviews:

1. How do lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and involvement in their child's education?

2. What are parents' perceptions of their child's motivation, persistence, and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?

3. What are the lower SES parents' perceptions of practices and involvement that can be used to assist middle school faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?

Data Collection

The qualitative data collected from 10 parent interviews are described in this section. All of the lower SES parent participants were purposely chosen due to having a high achieving middle school student attending a traditional middle school. All parents were identified by the middle school principal as having a high achieving child based on their advanced performance in both reading and mathematics on the Pennsylvania Standardized State Assessment and were currently qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. All parents currently reside with their child and volunteered to participate in this study.

The participants were asked 14 open-ended questions in the individual interviews. The interviews were conducted at a place and time that was most convenient for them. All of the parents chose to be interviewed at the middle school in a private comfortable conference room. The parents were able to enter through a semiprivate area in the main office and enter the conference room with little interaction from others. The conference room was free of all distractions during the interview process. The parent participants were able to leave the interviews the same way that they came, which limited their interaction with others. The parent participants were randomly assigned a letter of the alphabet for confidentiality purposes. The purpose of the study was reviewed with each

of the participants and they were informed that participation was voluntary. Each

participant was given an opportunity to ask any questions before being presented with the

consent form. Each participant agreed to sign the consent form without any expressed

reservations before the interview began. The data were collected by audiotape and by

keeping handwritten notes. The transcribed data from the audiotaped session and the

hand written notes were reviewed, organized, and stored on my private home computer.

All of the participants expressed upon exiting the interview that they enjoyed the

experience and that they hoped that the information would help other parents.

Qualitative Interviews

After a consulting with the middle school principal about the criteria of the study

and reviewing the number of possible participants, 10 parent participants was the goal for

participation. Upon making initial contact with the potential participants, I was happily

surprised with their interest to participate in the individual interviews. All of the

potential parent participants were contacted by phone and a date, place, and time was set

up for each interview that was convenient for them. All 10 parent participants preferred

to be interviewed at the middle school in the main conference room. All 10 parent

participants made their scheduled interview appointments and were given an opportunity

to ask any questions that they may have had before signing the consent form. Each

participant shared his or her e-mail address and cell phone number so the process of

member checking would go smoothly. All of the participants chose to have my

interpretations of their data shared with them over the phone to validate the results. At

the conclusion of each individual interview, the participant was given a $25 dollar gift card to Dunkin Donuts. All of the parents accepted the gift card and appeared to be very appreciative of the gesture.

Out of the 10 total interviews, nine of them were with the mother of the child. The final interview, parent (s) 10 was the mother and the father. For this interview, both the mother and father of the middle school child participated. Both parents answered the interview questions or defer to one another to answer the questions. All 14 interview questions were asked to them together and they decided who would answer the questions. In many instances, they would both offer examples as it related to their child or their perceived role as a parent.

Participant Descriptions

Parent 1 was originally from Long Island, New York and moved from New York to Pennsylvania about 11 years ago. She was the mother of three children ages: 13, 9, and 4 years old. Her 13-year-old middle school son was the focus of her responses. She did not want to share very much about herself, but was very active in the discussion about her son and her parenting of him. She expressed that he has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and has struggled with being focused in school since kindergarten. She did not mention a father throughout the entire interview. Parent 1 expressed, "I am the biggest influence in my son's success. I know him best."

Parent 2 was a stay-at-home mother. She was married and has five boys. The boys' ages range from 3 to 13 years old. Her oldest boy was the focus of her responses.

The father was a truck driver for his own business. He was not home often so much of the parenting responsibility fell on the mother. Parent 2 worked when the children were younger in a laboratory. Currently, she works as a secretary for the husband's trucking company. She was very talkative, comfortable, and insightful throughout the interview process. Parent 2 was a college graduate and believes sharing some of her college experience will encourage her son to want to go to college. She believed that if you show your kids that you love learning, they will as well. Parent 2 stated, "It's important to take trips and tie it together so they can enjoy learning, connect the trip to real-life, connect the dots."

Parent 3 did not want to share much about herself and her extended family. Parent 3 was the parent of one middle school son and a younger child. She lived in the area for a while with her children. Parent 3 expressed that she was very proud of her son and believed that the daily routine within the home assists with his structure and academic success. She stated, "He knows that homework is the most important thing for him to complete, but he doesn't have to do it right away when he gets home. He must work on his homework for one hour each night." She also stated that parents are 75 % responsible for a child's education and the teachers are 25 % responsible.

Parent 4 had an older son who lived in the home and she had a middle school daughter. The older son and the daughter have different fathers. Parent 4 had moved in her boyfriend and his two children. Additionally, the grandparents of the children lived in the home. Parent 4 expressed that the home was a busy place, but everyone knows

their roles and that the adults are always available to help. Parent Four expressed that she has made a great deal of personal mistakes in her life and she has worked very hard not to make them again. She shared that, "[her] children are [her] redemption." She continued, "I will not let my daughter make the same mistakes I did. I will always be available for her."

Parent 5 was the only step-parent out of the 10 interviews. Parent 5 expressed that she has been married to the child's father for 9 years and felt that she has been directly involved in raising her step-daughter since she was very young. She stated that she has a very positive relationship with her step-daughter and it was based off of a mutual respect. Parent 5 expressed that, "[she] limits her TV time and the channels she can watch. [She is] strict about her access to the internet and who her friends are." She continued to share that school work was her daughter's job and it is the number one priority. As her step-parent, we communicate about what is going on at school and in her life. Parent 5 shared, "My daughter likes to talk about what she wants to be, I support that."

Parent 6 was married with four children and was home with the children while they were younger. Parent 6 went back to work when the children were school age. Parent 6 expressed that it was her responsibility as a parent to motivate her son to want to learn. She shared, "Keeping high standards for your children, pushing them to work hard, and encouraging them strongly helps them feel accomplished." Parent 6 stated that in addition to being a motivator you must follow through as a parent. She expressed, "It

is my responsibility to fill-in the loop holes, he needs to know that I care and am interested in his life."

Parent 7 was the parent of five children. Parent 7 has lived in Pennsylvania for 14 years after moving from New York. Three of her children were in college and her middle school daughter was the youngest of the five children. She was separated from her husband but that did not occur until the middle school daughter entered middle school. Parent 7 expressed that both she and her husband while raising the children together were supportive of the efforts of the children. The father does not live in the home. Parent 7 shared, "I have always told her that school is her job. It is her responsibility to do well and I will help you in any way I can." Parent 7 continued, "I point out to my daughter that people in this world even with an education do not have jobs." She expressed that she consistently tells her daughter that the world is competitive. Parent 7 shared her daughter must work hard to separate herself from the others so she can get a good job.

Parent 8 was the mother of two girls, ages 13 and 11. She was married for 15 years to her husband and the father of the girls. Both she and her husband worked full-time while raising their children. Parent 8 was a college graduate and expressed that she was responsible for maintaining the home and the home routine for the children. Parent 8 expressed that, "You have to work to get things done and your children need to see your efforts." Parent 8 shared that she felt that it is her responsibility to have an open line of communication with her daughter. She stated, "I ask her how her day went. What do you have for homework? Do you have any tests or quizzes tomorrow? What are you

studying for?" She expressed that her daughter's academic success was directly related to how involved she is as a parent.

Parent 9 was a mother of three children ages 16, 14, and 11. The 14-year-old son was the focus of her answers in the interview. Parent 9 was a stay at home mother until her last child entered kindergarten. Parent 9 described herself as an active parent in all aspects of their lives. She expressed that it was important to her to be involved in all of the activities of her children. Parent 9 shared that because she was so involved in his activities, the lines of communication are open with her son. She stated, "I have conversations with my son every day. Hopefully, through these conversations he understands the importance of school and gets good grades." Parent 9 also shared that checking the parent portal everyday together helps her to keep up with what he has to do and so she can support his hard work and efforts.

Parents 10 were a happily married couple with two children. The mother was a stay-at-home parent. The father was a business owner who works long hours but stated that his children are his priority. He shared that "[he] will always try to work [his] schedule around trying to be as available as possible for [his] children." The father was also a volunteer at the local fire department and was an active member of the community. Parents 10 expressed, "high expectations are the focus for [their] children." The father expressed, "I want her to get straight A's!" He continued to share, "If she is working hard and doesn't get it, we will help her." Parents 10 stated that their daughter wants to go to college and that she was very focused on her grades. The mother stated, "I think

she sees how hard her dad has to work for what we have and I think she wants a better life than we have. I think that is what motivates her to do well."

Qualitative Data Results

All of the qualitative data gathered from the 10 parent interviews were coded. These codes were used to organize the information into groupings. After a thorough analysis of the data, 40 to 45 initial codes were identified that were narrowed to seven to eight codes. The narrowed codes included the following: respect, type of parent involvement, rules, student goals, types of support, conversations, consistency, and daily schedules. These codes were used to develop the major themes to be used in the detailed description found in the narrative of the study. The following categorical themes emerged through the data analysis: (a) communication, (b) parent encouragement, (c) family routines, and (d) consistency of parent involvement.

Communication

The first theme addressed Research Question 1, 2 and 3 and focused on the type of communication directly related to parents and how they communicate with their children. Additionally, this theme addressed parent perceptions of communication between the parents and the school. All of the parents identified that having an open line of communication with their child was important to understand what was going on in their life both social and academically. Parent 4 stated, "Communication with my child is extremely important. As a parent, I can help with the learning process if I know what is going on. Teachers can only do so much to help." Parent 8 expressed, "I feel that I have

a strong role in her success. I am able to keep the conversation light and ask questions about school." Parent 5 stated, "It is important that I have one-on-one time with my child. My daughter shares with me how she is doing in school with her grades and what is going on with her friends." Parent 4 expressed:

> My daughter can come and talk to me about anything. I told her that my job is to always be there to listen and support you with school and anything. I believe that because I am available to talk to her every day, she is more open to tell me what is happening in her life.

Parents 10 stated:

> We talk together about the importance of school and how it is connected to her future. She knows that we don't have a lot of money and that she is going to need a scholarship to go to a college that she wants. We are truthful with her about finances. She talks about her goal of going to college. We will support her and continue to speak to her about what is available for her in her future.

Parent 1 shared, "I talk to my son about the importance of experiencing failure in life. I told him that failures are learning opportunities and not to be afraid of failure but learn from it." Parent 1 also stated that she really tries to focus on using open-ended questions when she is talking to her son. She believes it allows her son to share openly so she can learn as much information about what is going on in his life as possible. It was evident from interviews that all of the parents felt that they had a very positive relationship with

their child and that the daily communication was a major contributor to the positive relationship.

The theme of communication was also identified within the parent perceptions of communication between the parents and the school. The parent responses related to the role of the school communicating with the parents varied. All of the parents identified that communication between the school and parents was important, but the methods in how to communicate differed. Parent 1 stated that receiving progress reports and occasional phone calls are sufficient. Parent 2 expressed, "We have to encourage more independence for middle school kids. Kids need to be more responsible for their grades than the school." Parent 3 shared, "You shouldn't have to wait for a report card to see how your kid is doing. Parents need to be called early in the process so we can help before it is too late." Parent 5 expressed, "The parent portal is a great tool for parents to watch on a daily basis. Teachers are very busy. If I see a problem on the portal, I will call the teacher. It is not all on them." Parent 5 also shared that parents and teachers should connect early in the year and build goals together with the students. She felt that if the teacher, student, and parent were on the same page with the goals, there would be a greater chance of success. Parent 6 stated, "It is harder to communicate with teachers in middle school because they have more kids. If parents are aware of bigger projects, we can come to the school to help out in class."

Parents 7 and 8 expressed similar thoughts on the communication between the school and parents. Both Parents 7 and 8 shared that they spend more time with their

children so therefore they know more about what they enjoy and what they think is fun. They expressed that to make learning fun for kids, teachers need to know from their parents what they enjoy and deem as fun. They both expressed that if the teacher knew more information about their children, they can plan lessons that are more hands-on and fun. Both Parent 7 and 8 shared that parents should take the initiative to call the teachers to share things about their children. Parents 10 expressed:

> The parents and the students need to build goals for the school year and they need to be shared with the teacher and the school. These goals should be revisited during the year by the school with the student and parents together. If the school understands the goals of the parents and the students, the school can more actively offer programs and opportunities to students.

Parent 4 advocated strongly that having school counselors in the middle school is a wonderful resource. She felt that the school counselors can directly assist with the communication between the school and the home. Parent 4 expressed:

> The guidance counselors can share information from the parents to the teachers. They know how to help students and steer them in the right direction. There are so many things for students to do. If students know about the opportunities from the guidance counselors, they trust them, they would get involved.

Parent Encouragement

The second theme addressed Research Questions 1, 2 and 3. Parent Encouragement was a very strong theme that was identified by all parents at one time in

every interview. Participants often shared information about the importance of being supportive of their children's efforts academically and to encourage positive participation in extracurricular activities. Many of the participants expressed the importance of not yelling at your child when they do something wrong. The participants expressed that when a parent yells at a child, it can cause the child to shut down and not want to talk. If the child does not want to talk, a breakdown of communication may occur between a child and parent. When a breakdown of communication does occur between the child and the parent, the participants stated that this is where the lying can begin and the start of increased concern and frustration. Overall, the participants stated that encouraging their child was always the better choice even if they made a mistake or did something that the parent did not agree with. The parent participants expressed that even if they had to correct their child's behavior for whatever reason, if it was done in a positive way, the child was more open to talk throughout the process and be part of the solution.

Many of the parents expressed that they needed to be encouraging their children often to focus and set goals for the school year and their future. Parent 6 expressed, "I am constantly encouraging him to do things better. I try to ask my son questions that put the ownership back on him such as: do you think that your writing assignment is as good?" Parent 3 shared that she is constantly trying to connect what he is working on to real-life examples. She expressed, "If I try encouraging him to look at his future and the importance of working hard, he will make those connections." Parent 7 expressed the importance of encouraging independence and motivation. Parent 7 shared:

I encourage my child to go and get help from the teachers when she needs it. I

tell her to take advantage of the available time in the school day. Go and get help

from your teachers on a lunch break, during a study hall or after-school.

Parent 8 discussed the importance of being active in her daughter's' life. She stated that

if you're present in their daily lives, they are more willing to follow your encouragement.

Parent 8 shared:

My daughter was having a problem finding a quiet, comfortable place in the

house to study. I encouraged her to set up a study station in her room the way that

she wanted. Now, she is much more comfortable and is completing all of her

homework.

Parent 9 also felt it is very important as a parent to be actively present in their child life

and to offer encouraging suggestions about how to continue doing well in school. Parent

9 stated:

When my son is having some difficulty in school he can get frustrated and want to

shut down. I encourage him to seek out the resources available in the school

such as: after school tutoring, peer tutoring, or seeking out a school counselor or

teacher for help. When he gets the help, he always does better and feels good

about himself.

Many of the parents shared that they felt that participation in extracurricular

activities was connected to their child having a positive direction in their lives, both

socially and academically. Parent 1 shared that she always tries to encourage her son to

participate in activities that he may enjoy. She expressed that a child must experience

different things so they know what they want to do in the future. She also shared, "It is

my job to encourage him to try new things. If I am enthusiastic about the club or activity,

he can see that it is okay to try and take a chance." Parent 7 discussed the importance of

having her daughter in positive activities after school. She expressed that her daughter is

strongly encouraged to volunteer for local community events. Parent 7 expressed,

"Volunteering helps my daughter to see different aspects of the real world. Between the

girl scouts, clubs at school, and volunteering, I tell her that all of these activities are

pushing her to be ready for the challenges in the future." Parents 10 discussed that

keeping a very organized and busy schedule after school supports the importance of

being responsible and prepared for the future. Parents 10 shared that extracurricular

activities are in place only if she is succeeding academically on tests and quizzes. Parents

10 expressed that:

> She is in softball and girl scouts and loves them. She knows that if she is not
>
> keeping up in school that we will take them away from her. We encourage and
>
> support her and because of that, she is able to have it all.

Parent 2 shared that she is very supportive of his participation in extracurricular activities.

She expressed the focus of her encouragement with her son has to do with time

management. Parent Two shared:

> He is so busy at times with activities; he has to do his homework in the car in
>
> between activities. He knows that I will help him manage his time so he can get

everything done. Sometimes he stresses about his homework and everything he has to do, but we always get it done. I think he appreciates when I help him.

The theme of parent encouragement also was highlighted extensively in the interviews through ways the participants encourage their children's education from home. Parent 1 expressed that when her son comes home from school that she is constantly sharing encouraging words about his efforts in school. Parent 2 stated that she encourages her son by listening to his report on how the school day was and asking questions about what he did in school. Parent 2 expressed that when she is listening to her son's report on his school day, she is listening for information to connect with him about. She expressed that when her son mentions something in school that she remembers learning, she will say to him, "I remember learning that! It was so much fun! Do you think it was fun?" She shared that when her son sees that she is interested in what he is learning, it encourages him to share more information about his day. Parent 4 stated that she encourages her daughter to get her homework done when she gets home from school so they can spend time together. She expanded further by expressing that her daughter works harder and does a more complete job studying and completing her homework when I ask her questions about it and provide her positive feedback for her efforts. Parent 5 shared that she encourages her daughter by having frequent check-ins about her progress with her studying and homework. She expressed:

> When I go into my daughter's room and ask her about what she is doing and if she needs any help, I am able to read her body language and check to see if she is

stressed out. If she is stressed, I encourage her to tell me what is stressing her out

while we take a short break together. Most of the time she needs some advice and

encouragement and then is able to get back to work.

Parent 8 expressed that she encourages her daughter by sitting with her when she comes

home from school and helps her prioritize her assignments and work. She shared:

At times she gets very stressed out and doesn't know where to start. I feel it is

important to help her plan her approach to the homework so she can be more calm

about completed it. My hope is that my planning with her, she will develop the

confidence to be able to do it on her own in the near future.

Parent 8 also shared that she will encourage her daughter to e-mail the teacher in the

evening if she is working on an assignment for homework and doesn't understand it.

Parent 8 expressed that her daughter needs to be able to communicate effectively in the

future. She felt that encouraging and assisting her daughter to communicate now is great

practice for the future.

Family Routines

The third theme addressed Research Questions 1 and 3. Out of the 10 parent

interviews, six parents discussed the importance of their children having a schedule to

follow. All six parents expressed that maintaining a schedule assists their children with:

being able to manage their time more efficiently; supporting the rules of the home; and

allows for a balance of extracurricular activities, academic responsibilities, and family

time. The other four parents that did not mention having a set schedule in the home or a

family routine. However, they did express that daily communication with their child was the priority in their home.

Parent 3 highlighted the importance of having a schedule for her son at home. She shared that without having a set schedule she feels that her son would not be successful. She expressed:

Having a scheduled time for homework helps him to follow through on his work. My son knows that he has a scheduled bedtime and if he doesn't complete his homework before bedtime that he will face consequences. He has gotten much better as he has gotten older with managing his time.

Parent 7 expressed that having a routine in her home helps her as well as her daughter. She shared:

With life being so busy, it is important for us to have a schedule. We have set up a study hour every day. During this time, I will sit down with my daughter and be there if she needs my help. When this study hour is over, we can move on to do other things. It has really helped!

Parent 7 also stated that during the study hour, she maintains a positive approach while helping her daughter. She does this because she wants to be able to have positive interactions with her daughter after the study hour.

Parents 10 advocated strongly that maintaining a schedule is extremely important to the academic success of their daughter. The father shared that reading before bed is part of her daily routine and helps her to become calm and comfortable before going to

sleep at 9 p.m. Parents 10 shared, "She has to do her homework when she gets home from school. There are so many other things to do in the evening that we decided that we want her to do her homework when she gets home." The father also stated that later in the evening after dinner that his daughter can ask him any questions about the homework. He shared that he doesn't get stressed about her homework questions later in the evening because he knows that it is already completed.

Parent 8 began by discussing the routine in her home starting first thing in the morning. She expressed that her daughter gets up at the same time every school day to make sure that she leaves enough time to get ready. Parent 8 checks in with her about anything that she may need before heading out to school. Parent 8 continued by expressing, "The morning time is a great time to reinforce all of her academic efforts from the night before. The morning time also gives me the opportunity to send her off in a positive way." Parent 8 also stated that the evening routine is as important to her as the morning routine. Her daughter has a scheduled bedtime, so all homework needs to be done before bedtime. Parent 9 expressed that there are rules, expectations, and parameters in place in their home. Her son is expected to complete chores every day. He needs to keep his room clean and his backpack organized. She expressed that she tries to give him as much independence as possible, but if he goes off track, he is held accountable. Parent 9 shared, "Sleep is extremely important for my son. He must have all of his homework done early enough so he can get a good night sleep."

Parent 1 viewed having a routine as essential to the overall academic success of her son. Parent 1 shared that her son has ADHD and has a difficult time following instructions and staying organized. Parent 1 believed that keeping her son on a schedule helps with his organization and focus for the evening. She stated, "We sit down every night if possible and check the parent portal together. I help him figure out what to do first. We put his assignments in order of importance." Parent 1 continued by expressing that keeping to a schedule starts with getting him up in the morning and helping him get ready to take the bus. She shared that starting her son off on the right foot in the morning is the key for him to have a good day. She views her role as very active in helping him follow and maintain the schedule, both in the morning and evening.

Consistency of Parental Involvement

The fourth theme addressed Research Question 1, 2, and 3, and specifically focused on the consistency of being involved in their children's lives as a parent. Most parents agreed during the interviews that parent involvement evolves from elementary to middle school. Parents identified parent involvement in the elementary school as being a class room mother, attending field trips, acting as a homeroom helper, or being a member of the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA). Parent 1 mentioned that she was very involved in her son's education beginning in kindergarten. She shared that at times her son relied too heavily on her, but as he got older, she felt more comfortable backing off. Parent 2 expressed that she would get into the classroom enough when her son was younger. She stated that she felt it was important that she knew who his friends were and that his

friends knew her. Parent 2 shared, "I was consistent with going to the school. I would sign up to chaperone field trips. I think that he really enjoyed seeing me and that I could provide him praise in front of his friends." Parent 6 stated she was always involved in her son's school during the elementary years. She expressed that she attended school fairs, was involved in the PTA, would be a guest reader to the class, work at the book fair, and attend all parent/teacher conferences. Parent 6 shared, "When you attend your child's school, you get to see kids in a different light and you get to know your child in a whole new way!" She felt that this was the best way for her to understand who his friends are and what was going on in his life. Parent 9 felt that in elementary school that it was very important to chaperone her son's field trips as much as she could. She stated that attending school functions was important. Parent 9 expressed, "Her son liked to see her at school functions when he was younger, but as he has gotten older, not so much." Parents 10 shared that the mother has been involved in the PTA since kindergarten. The mother expressed that she has always attended as many school activities as possible and that her daughter enjoys having her at school. The father expressed that his wife took the responsibility of attended the school events when their daughter was younger. He shared:

> Now even though we don't get as involved in her school as we used to, I do everything I can to change my work schedule around to be there for events or conferences. I want my daughter to know that my involvement shows how important I think school is.

Participants shared their feelings about their role as parents of middle school children. Many of the parents shared that they stay very involved in their child's life and in academics, but in different ways then the elementary years. Many of the parents expressed that importance of asking daily questions to their children about their classes, assignments, and homework. Most of the parents stated that they use the school website to keep up on weekly and monthly school activities and events. Additionally, parents expressed that they use the web-based parent portal to check grades, attendance, and upcoming events. Furthermore, parents stated that they will look at the parent portal together with their children and use the grades and events as discussion pieces.

Parent 3 expressed that importance of their child understanding that their role as a student is to stay focused in school and to do the best they can. Parent 3 stated that her son's chore is to do his homework and her job is to enforce and monitor that it is getting done. She expressed, "If his homework is not being done I stay on him about it. If he is not handing in his work, teachers should call me. It is also my job to call them too." Parent 3 continued, "I ask him questions: what did you learn in school today? I am accountable as his parent to stay involved." Parent 5 stated that she daughter has accommodations in school due to some learning difficulties. She shared that the communication between the school is mostly through phone calls and e-mails. Parent 5 expressed that she uses the parent portal to look up her daughter's grades. Parent 6 shared that she uses the parent portal and the school website to keep up on her son's life. She expressed, "I try to be present every day in his life by being aware of what is going

on and by asking him questions that are relevant to his life." Parent 7 expressed that she

opens herself up when her daughter comes home from school to be there for her. She

shared that her daughter will come home from school and share with her what she has for

homework without asking. Parent 7 stated, "I am always checking in on her. I don't

depend on the school to help me. I focus on the relationship and the open communication

between me and my daughter." Parent 4 takes the same approach as Parent 7. Parent 4

stated that she has an open relationship with her daughter and relies on their

communication to keep her grades on track. Parent 4 expressed that her connection is

with her daughter and not with the school. Through her past experiences with her

schooling, she shared, "The only thing that you can do is be there for your kids and count

on your relationship." Parent 8 expressed that she stays involved by checking the website

at least 3 days a week to check on grades and upcoming assignments. Parent 8 expressed

that she asks her daughter questions about her day in school. If her daughter does not

share much about the day, she will pull up the parent portal together with her daughter

and discuss current assignments. She shared that her daughter will usually open up about

her grades because they are usually good and they discuss her plans for studying for the

following couple of days. Parents 10 shared that they use the parent portal as a

discussion forum with their daughter. They expressed that they review grades and

assignments to not only discuss current grades but to focus on future goals. The mother

shared, "Our daughter gets very excited about thinking about the future. I think that these

frequent conversations and how it connects to her future are really working. She works so hard and she knows we are very proud of her."

Overall, the participants in this study felt that they have a direct role in the responsibility in their child's academic success. In addition to asking their children questions about their day at school and checking the parent portal for grades and assignments, many of the parents felt it was their responsibility to make learning fun from a parents' perspective. Many of the parents expressed that when they are asking questions and getting involved, it is important to not put additional pressure on the children. They looked at their role as connecting school to real-life examples and making home learning fun. Parent 7 shared that the school works hard on trying to connect learning experiences in school to what is going on the world. She expressed that she believes that is her responsibility as well. Parent 8 shared that many of the activities in school are hand-on and not in textbooks. She expressed that she tries to find resources for her daughter that provide different but interesting information connected to what she is learning. Parent 5 stated that being a middle school student and getting good grades can be difficult. She expressed that she provides rewards to her child for positive grades in school. She believed that it excites her daughter to share her efforts from school when she gets home. She felt that this kept them connected and her daughter motivated to work harder in school. Parents 10 expressed that they try to tie together what is going on in school with extracurricular activities as a family in the evening or on the weekend. The father expressed:

If we can bring these additional experiences to our daughter, we are helping the schools efforts. The more fun and real we can make learning for our daughter the better chance she will have to know what she wants to do when she goes to college.

Even though some participants shared more than others, all of them expressed at the conclusion of the interviews that they enjoyed the experience and the opportunity to discuss their children and how they parent their child. All of them also expressed individually at the end of the interview that they hoped that the information that they shared about parenting practices and involvement would help other parents and schools. One of the parents expressed that it was so rewarding for her that her daughter was excelling in school. She continued to share that it felt great that even though she made many mistakes growing up that her daughter feels supported and loved. She stated, "I have made major changes in my life and I am proud that my parenting approach with my daughter is working."

Evidence of Quality

Before the beginning of each interview, the participant was reminded that the interview would be audiotaped to help ensure that the answers to the questions would be reflected accurately in the transcription (Appendix D). All participants agreed before moving forward with the interview. The interview room was a comfortable conference room in the back of the main office of the middle school where there were minimal distractions. The principal of the middle school assisted with maintaining the integrity of

the interview environment by limiting any traffic around the conference room. All

participants were provided a copy of the interview questions to reference during the

interview (Appendix E).

All of the interviews were completed over a two week time period. The

audiotaped interviews were transcribed within two days of the interview. Each of the

parent participants had an opportunity to review a summary of their interview once it was

transcribed. All of the participants chose to have my interpretations of their data shared

with them over the phone to validate the results. Upon completion of the data collection

and after a review of the analyzed data, peer debriefing occurred with an educational

colleague. The peer debriefing assisted with a review of my interpretations of the data

and of the development of themes that occurred through the comprehensive review of the

data. The peer debriefing took place in a private office area on several occasions as my

interpretations began to take shape. Brainstorming occurred during peer debriefing as

information was coded and themes were being considered. A confidentiality agreement

was signed and submitted to Walden IRB before any information was discussed

(Appendix F).

After the completion of the data transcription, the data was reviewed thoroughly

over several days and themes were identified. All of the data was coded and the data

with similar codes were grouped by themes. The following themes emerged based on the

10 individual parent interviews: (a) communication, (b) parent encouragement, (c) family

routines, and (d) consistency of parent involvement. An example of a coded interview

transcription may be found in Appendix G.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The study involved 10 individual interviews with the parents of these high achieving middle school students to gain data to determine parent practices and involvement of lower SES parents in which they perceive to be most effective in their child's academic success. Additionally, data were used to identify parenting practices and involvement that could assist middle school faculty members when working in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students. Finally, the data were used gain a deeper understanding of the parents' perceptions of their child's motivation and persistence in achieving success academically. The perspectives and voices of the parent participants were included in Section 4 of this study to allow for descriptive information about each participant (Creswell, 2003). Section 5 contains a summary of the study, research questions, findings, recommendations, recommendations for future research, and conclusions. Contributions for positive social change from this study will also be discussed.

The following research questions were used to gather data from the interviews:

1. How do lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and involvement in their child's education?

2. What are parents' perceptions of their child's motivation, persistence, and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?

3. What are the lower SES parents' perceptions of practices and involvement that can be used to assist middle school faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?

Summary of the Study

In this study, I have obtained information that will assist middle school faculty members when working with lower SES parents who have students who are not achieving academically. The results of this study, which involved an in-depth collection of information from multiple sources (lower SES parents), assisted me in the process of making informed conclusions (Creswell, 1998). Based on several research based examples in the Section 2 literature review, middle school teachers and administrators are still struggling to make connections with lower SES parents and students in an effort to assist parents with supporting their academically struggling child. Additionally, middle school teachers and administrators are struggling with how to motivate academically underperforming lower SES students and how to encourage more parent involvement. Therefore, elementary and middle school faculty members and their administrators can benefit tremendously from the conclusions developed from this study. The conclusions from this study can be discussed and processed with any elementary or middle school faculty who are in need of information and strategies on how to offer advice and support to lower SES parents and their academically struggling child. Furthermore, the

conclusions from this study can offer invaluable information to counseling and mental health professionals working with lower SES parents in need of parenting strategies related to assisting their child academically.

The permission to collect data was granted by the Walden University IRB. After approval for the IRB was granted, I was given permission by the Assistant Superintendent of the school district. After making initial contact with the potential parent participants, the 10 individual interviews were set up. Before the start of all of the interviews, the parent participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions before signing the parent consent forms. All of the individual interviews were conducted in a private, quiet comfortable conference room in the back of the main office of the middle school. The sample population for this study was focused on lower SES parents who have middle school students achieving at the advanced level in both reading and mathematics according to the Pennsylvania Standardized State Assessment. The free and reduced status of the child was used as the indicator for a student being considered as lower SES. Based on the small percentage of qualified free and reduced students identified as advanced on the Pennsylvania Standardized State Assessment in both reading and mathematics, 10 lower SES parents were included in the study.

Building a relationship with the parents by letting them know how much I genuinely appreciated their participation allowed them to feel comfortable and open up throughout the interview process. I showed the parent participants respect by asking questions at a pace that was comfortable for them and asking them how they were doing

during the process (Hatch, 2002). The information gained from the interview process was purposeful and relevant to answer the main research questions. All 10 parent participants had their interview information deeply analyzed and included in several themes within the narrative portion of Section 4. The participants were asked 14 open-ended predetermined questions in the individual interviews. Each of the interviews was audiotaped. All of the audiotaped interviews were transcribed in roughly a week and the data was coded according to identified similarities.

Summary of the Findings

At the conclusion of the data analysis for the study, the following themes emerged: (a) communication, (b) parent encouragement, (c) family routines, and (d) consistency of parent involvement. In the first theme, communication, participants expressed that their relationship with their middle school child is vitally important. To maintain this relationship, communication with each other about what is going on in school, who their friends are, and what is going on socially in their lives is considered by the participants as essential for maintaining a positive and healthy relationship with their children. Many of the participants stated that they focus most of their attention in the evening on school nights to check in with their child on their homework and academic progress. The participants expressed the importance of asking open-ended and nonthreatening questions to their children which assists them with a free flowing dialogue that is rich in details and thoughts from the child.

In relation to the parent perception of communication between the parent and the school, most of the parents stated that they did not expect the school to always make phone calls or send letters. Most of the participants expressed that the use of technology that is offered through the parent portal is an excellent communication tool for parents to be able to keep up on homework, assignments, grades, and attendance. The participants also stated that because of the availability of the parent portal, if a parent has a particular concern or question, it is the responsibility of the parent to call the school to seek out a teacher. Overall, the participants reported being satisfied with the communication between the school and the parents.

In regards to the second theme, parent encouragement, all of the participants valued the importance of positively encouraging their child. All of the participants mentioned the essential role of supporting and encouraging their children's efforts academically and to encourage positive participation in extracurricular activities. Participants expressed yelling at the child does not help a situation and in many ways can negatively impact a parent/child relationship. Participants stated that listening to their issues, concerns, and problems and encouraging them to make positive choices is much more effective than yelling. Many of the participants listened closely to information from their child and assisted them in prioritizing their school work and social events. The participants expressed the importance of encouraging their children by sitting and talking with them. Many participants stated that the follow-up encouragement through conversation the day after an initial conversation was essential for helping their children.

It allowed them the opportunity to process the information with a parent an additional time that may help them to make positive decisions.

In the third theme, family routines, most of the participants expressed strongly the importance of middle school children having a set schedule to follow and a routine before and after school to help their child stay focused. Participants shared that having a schedule for the evening allows children the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, complete homework and study, have family time, and get to bed at a reasonable hour. Many of the participants stated the importance of getting up early on school days and having a healthy breakfast before going to school. Participants felt strongly that it was their responsibility as a parent to help maintain and follow a schedule along with their children. Overall, the participants expressed that having a schedule provided a balance for the child so they could be involved in multiple activities and still be an academically successful student.

Finally, in regards to the fourth theme, consistency of parent involvement, most parents admitted that their involvement in the school decreased from elementary to middle school in regards to entering the school building as a homeroom mother or classroom helper. Many participants expressed that they are very involved in their child's life but just in different ways then when they were in the elementary school. Participants expressed asking many questions to their children about their day and being available at any time to offer support or advice. According to the participants the questions are geared toward learning more about how they are doing in their classes and

with completing homework and assignments. Additionally, the participants expressed

that checking the school website and parent portal as very effective tools for keeping up

on school activities and events. Participants have identified the school website and parent

portal as a tool to guide conversation between the parent and the child.

<p style="text-align:center">**Interpretation of Findings**</p>

Research Question 1

The first question asked the following: "How do lower SES parents of

academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and

involvement in their child's education?" In this question I wanted to accomplish two

goals. The first goal was to dig deeply into the thought process of parents to better

understand which parenting practices they thought made the most positive impact on their

children. Secondly, I wanted to gain information on what type and how much parent

involvement they felt would work to positively influence their child's academic success.

The interview questions designed to help answer Research Question 1 assisted with

empowering the participants to express information about their parenting practices and

involvement. Five of the interview questions were constructed to gain information for

the first research question. The participants shared information freely and proudly about

their parenting practices and how they felt these practices positively influence their

child's academic performance.

According to Young, Austin, and Growe (2013), parental involvement boosts a

child's perceived level of competence and autonomy, offers a sense of security and

connectedness, and helps to internalize the value of an education and performance. As the participants shared information related to their parenting practices and involvement, most of them felt that it was acceptable that as a parent that they did not enter the school as much as they did in the elementary school. Bower and Griffin (2011) stated that schools continue to struggle with increasing parental involvement with students of low SES. Most of the participants expressed that they felt that they did not need to come into the school as much because their children were much more independent, self-sufficient, and confident. Additionally, the parents expressed that even though they did not enter the building as much as before, they felt well connected to the school and to the progress of their child by being able to check the school website and parent portal. They valued the information from the parent portal. Participants stated that the information from the parent portal helped to guide the conversation about grades with their child. This verbal persuasion is a positive source of personal efficacy for these children. The combination of viewing their own accomplishments of high grades on the parent portal and having positive conversations with their parents is evidence of student's positive self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Pearson, 2008). Parent 8 expressed, "My child is much less likely to lie to me about a test score because he knows that I check the parent portal every day before he gets home from school."

According to Young et al. (2013), parental influence can have a considerable impact from kindergarten up to the high school levels. The participants felt as if they are as good of parents as they were in elementary school, but they just have to gain the

information and be involved in different ways. Many of the participants stated that

through their consistent involvement in the elementary schools, they felt that their

children understand that they are good parents and are following along with their school

work even though it is not through being in the building. Many of participants also

shared that their children would not want them in the building due to them being

embarrassed around their friends. Most of the parents felt that it was important for them

to foster independence as their children got older. They shared they are proud that their

children are becoming more self-sufficient and understand that their role as they get older

is to support their efforts and encourage positive choices.

As stated from Freeman (2010), families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds

expend considerable effort, including more informal conversations with their children. In

addressing parenting practices and involvement, the participants openly discussed that

having open lines of communication as essential to maintaining a positive relationship

with your child. According to Bowers and Griffin (2011), home-based parent

involvement is difficult to measure and often overlooked by schools, and families are not

recognized for their efforts. The participants stated that even if they are upset with their

child, yelling at them in the end will not produce open communication and may lead to a

dysfunctional relationship between the parent and the child. As stated in Keijsers and

Poulin (2013), in the parent-child relationship in adolescence, parents and children are

continuously required to find a way of communicating with one another that facilitates

and acknowledges adolescent needs for autonomy and independence while enhancing

connectedness with one another. Many of the parents identified talking to their child and asking open-ended questions that fostered inquiry and a genuine exchange of thoughts and ideas as an ideal relationship. According to Weissbourd (2011), a large number of parents underestimated what a relief it would be to their children and how much it would support their children's maturity and secure their respect and trust if they had more honest conversations.

As the communication between the parent and child is positive and transparent, it was stated from the participants the importance of positive encouragement. Many of the participants expressed that when your children are trying to tell you something about school or their friends, ultimately they are looking for advice and approval from their parent. According to the parents, when this conversation occurs, it is an opportunity for the parents to positively encourage and support their child. If this opportunity is squandered by the parent by being overly judgmental or accusatory toward their child, the child may choose to not share as much information causing the parent to press for information which may strain the relationship.

According to Bowers and Griffin (2011), parenting practices for low income populations should include components of relationship building, advocacy, and parental efficacy. Many of the parents expressed that they work very hard to maintain a positive relationship with their child by setting time aside every day to have a conversation with them about grades and their school life. Two of the participants went as far as sharing that as soon as their children get home for school, they dedicate all of their attention to

their needs. They expressed they complete all of their work and any personal chores by the time their child comes home from school. Both of these participants expressed that when they attend to the needs of their children, they do better academically in school.

Research Question 2

The second question was the following: "What are parents' perceptions of their child's persistence and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?" The purpose of this research question was to identify academic, personal, and social behaviors or experiences that have influenced their children to have success academically. This research question was designed for parents to give their perspective based on their interactions with their children over the years. There were three specific interview questions designed to answer this question. The participants overwhelmingly described their children as self-motivated and have an overall interest in learning. Furthermore, the participants stated that their children actively seek out new opportunities for learning and have a motivation to pursue their interests and goals. Many of the participants expressed that it was very important for them as parents to understand their child's interests and goals to be able to offer them advice and suggestions. According to Sin-Sze Cheung and Pomerantz (2012), since parent involvement may foster an understanding between students and parents, students may be willing to make the effort of engaging in school to the best of their ability due to the positive relationship with their parents. The participants responded that their children see the connection between their involvement and interest as a parent and they work harder in school because of it.

Participants indicated that while their children are working hard and pursuing their goals that their role in praising their efforts and supporting their children's interests was essential in maintaining a positive relationship. For example, a child of one of the participants would come home from school and show her the test she took the day before and art work that was recently given back. Both the test and the art work were deemed as excellent work by the teacher. The child was so excited to come home and show her mother the positive art assignment and test that she didn't even take her coat off. The participant shared that she took the time to review the test and art work thoroughly and offered positive feedback and praise to her daughter. The participant in this example expressed that her praise generates motivation in her daughter to continue working to receive good grades in school. According to Monti, Pomerantz, and Roisman (2014), parents insensitivity to the needs of their children can negatively impact their academic functioning. Additionally, Monti et al. (2014) expressed children that do not perceive their parents as responsive and attentive to their needs may inhibit self-motivation and a positive school experience. Further, when parents were uninvolved in their children's education or didn't offer support or praise for their efforts, deficits in classroom performance was evident along with lower standardized test scores (Monti et al.). Many of the participants expressed that they believe that the middle school faculty fosters positive relationships with their children and offer them an equal balance of constructive feedback and praise. According to Jensen (2013), the primary factor in student motivation and achievement is not the home environment; it is the belief system from the

school and the classroom teachers. The participants expressed that the middle school faculty provides their children with high expectations and positive praise. Two of the participants expressed that between the school being positive and the positive approach we provide our children at home, our children are given every opportunity to feel successful and comfortable.

Participants expressed that since their children respond positively to praise that they consider them extremely persistent as students. Many of the participants stated that their children want to live up to the high standards and meet the goals that they have set for themselves. Many of the participants shared that their children will actively seek help from others (teachers, classmates, friends) if they do not understand an assignment or information for a test. They expressed that they were surprised about this because they were not the best students when they were growing up due to negative school experiences and considered themselves as not persistent. According to Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), schools should not dismiss parents with negative schooling experiences. The schools should focus on extending invitations to parents and showing them the positive experiences that their children are experiencing. The participants shared that the middle school teachers extended themselves to them as parents and welcomed them into the school. These positive experiences have assisted with breaking down any negative perceptions that the participants may have had from their own school experiences. The participants stated that since they are aware of the positive environment and resources, they actively encourage their children to seek out help and assistance when

they are in need. Overall, the participants consider the positive connection with the

school as a direct correlation to their child's motivation and persistency.

Bandura (1994) discussed the importance of students being able to create a strong

sense self-efficacy through many different sources of influence. The participants

identified the school is a direct contributor to the child's success. According to Bandura

(1994), self-efficacy can influence a student's cognitive and motivational process. By the

school influencing a positive belief system in their own capabilities, students not only

think they can achieve good grades in school; they are motivated to work hard to receive

those grades.   The participants identified that it is the responsibility of the school and the

parents to give their children experiences that contribute to their motivation to learn and

how the learning connects to life. The participants shared that if the school does not

connect their learning to multiple things that are connected to the real world and

employment, the students might not see the purpose of learning it. The participants stated

that it is also their responsibility to connect outside learning opportunities to their

children. Many of the participants expressed the importance of their children

participating in volunteering. They offered suggestions of a local church, soup kitchen,

or hospital. The participants shared that the school should offer more opportunities of

volunteering to the students. They shared it will help them appreciate the importance of

receiving an education and to gain experience that will help them be more prepared for

their future. Several of the participants expressed that think that the school should

require student volunteering and that the students should have to come back to the school and report on their experiences.

Research Question 3

The third question asked the following: "What are the lower SES parents' perceptions of practices and involvement that can be used to assist middle school faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?" Based on the participants' responses, there was a strong connection to the importance of parents knowing what is going on in their child's school. Most of the participants indicated that understanding their child's school world by talking to their children, checking in on them with their assignments and their homework and following along with school activities and events are essential parenting practices to help support their child's academic and personal success. The participants responses were broken down into two main areas related to parenting practices and involvement: the communication with their child and the daily efforts made to understand what is going on in school and using this information to encourage their children.

The participants expressed that their main responsibility was to have open communication with their child about school and how it is impacting them. Many of the participants shared that it was their responsibility to communicate with their child about school. They stated that they do not wait around for the school to communicate with them about good or bad things going on in school. Many of the participants believed that this daily communication with their child makes a difference in the success of their

relationship. The overall method that the participants deemed as successful was consistency in asking inquiry questions about their homework, assignments, and upcoming projects, tests, and quizzes. The participants expressed that during their consistent check-ins and daily conversations, they were able to blend in encouraging advice and things to remember while their child was studying or adding detail to a project. The participants stated by understanding the details of the assignments and homework, they can offer reminders that are non-threatening and supportive in nature. According to Hutchins (2013), although many parents struggle with how to help middle school students with their homework, parents could assist with homework by engaging in a positive conversation about the school day. Hutchins (2013) expressed further that having simple conversations helps students see that their parents value the importance of school and homework. Even though some of the participants admitted that they do not understand their child's homework or even know how to help them, they expressed that they are still very committed to listening and helping them with problem solving.

While having positive supportive conversations with their children, the participants expressed that it was also very important that they are aware and understand all of the resources that are available to help their children. Many of the participants stated that this is an area in which the school can offer parents further assistance. According to Hill and Tyson (2009), parent involvement can change in significance due to the middle school structure and scheduling design. Several of the participants stated that they do not receive daily letters home like they did in elementary school and that

many of them still do not have internet access. The participants that do not have internet access expressed that they are embarrassed to admit to the school that they do not have the extra money for a computer. Furthermore, these same participants do not have a cell phone that can access the internet or can receive updates from social media or e-mails. These participants expressed that if the school offered an option to receive paper mail about updates and resources that they would accept these services.

Many of the participants expressed that if the school inquired with parents about the best mode of communication, then it may improve communication between the parents and the school. Two of the participants stated that the school should send out a survey related to parent satisfaction in reference to parent communication. These participants shared that they would offer suggestions in a survey, but not in person or by phone. The participants that do have internet access expressed that they use the parent portal several times a week if not daily to check on their child's grades and homework assignments. Many of them expressed that the parent portal provides them as parents all of the information they need to keep up with the needs of their children. The participants stated that the school district has a calling service that contacts the home with district and sporting event updates. The participants that do not have access to the internet shared that if the district called with information that assisted their children with resources to support their academics, such as: free after school tutoring that they would much rather prefer that more than receiving sporting information.

Participants expressed an outgoing desire and persistence to stay aware of what is going on in their child's school. They also expressed that the school can take more opportunities to learn about the families and their backgrounds. Participants shared that if the teachers and administrators knew more information about their family, they might be more willing to make a phone call or reach out more with useful information. Further, the participants expressed that if the teachers had a more comprehensive background through the information from the parents that student interests would be encouraged more in class or through supportive academic programs. With this information from parents, teachers can incorporate culturally appropriate information into lessons that help more students feel that the school cares about them and their family.

In gaining more information from the families, several of the participants shared that the school and the parents working together should be able to sit down with every child in the beginning of the school year and establish goals and expectations for the school year. To support this suggestion, Johnson (2013) shared that a positive avenue to educate children in poverty is to establish high expectations and creative culturally responsive lessons that are interactive and hands-on. Inviting parents in the school to set academic goals with their child's teacher and the child could assist with students seeing the importance of education and on them as a person. These goals can be discussed, adjusted, and monitored throughout the school year, not only by the class room teacher, but in collaboration with a school counselor and an administrator.

Finally, many of the participants shared that due to many of the academic changes in education since they were a student that they are not up to date on all of the new trends. They expressed that if they were offered workshops in reading and mathematics that they would attend in an effort to be able to help their children with their homework. Three of the participants indicated that it is embarrassing at times when as an adult; they cannot help with 6th or 7th grade mathematics. Offering parent workshops related to the middle school curriculum at several different times during the school year could improve any parents' confidence in learning and understanding more about their child's curriculum. Additionally, having transportation available to bring parents to these workshops could also assistance with increased attendance.

Bandura (1994) expressed that the school is where children develop the cognitive competencies, knowledge, and problem solving skills for finding success in society. Bandura (1994) continued that the development of these cognitive skills relies strongly on the teaching skills and the self-efficacy of teachers. This can be a very difficult task for teachers if they struggle with how to involve lower SES parents and to understand the complexities of children that come from low socioeconomic homes. If students are working with teachers that are struggling with how to connect with them and their families, there can be a greater likelihood that a student's self-efficacy will not be maximized which can result in poorer academic grades. It is essential that middle school faculty members to receive training on the challenges and stressors that lower socioeconomic families face on a regular basis. According to Jensen (2013), building

strong relationships with families helps the schools better understand the level of needs within the family. If the school is aware of the needs of a lower socioeconomic family whether it is health, safety, or financial issues, the school can develop a comprehensive plan to support the family and the student. The involvement of the school can assist with the student focusing their attention on themselves and their school work, which can translate to improved self-efficacy and better grades. If the teachers are aware of the stressors of lower SES parents and students, the teachers can be more sensitive to their needs as a family and help to foster open communication and the importance of maintaining their relationship. This does not mean lowering the academic standards for lower SES students. The academic standards should remain high with an understanding of the close relationship between the school and the family can foster positive self-efficacy in a student.

The training of middle school faculty members on the struggles and stressors of lower SES families is essential for building long-term relationships with the parents. With this information, teachers are given the challenge of providing a safe, supportive and nurturing school environment for their students. The connection between understanding the home environment and providing a positive school environment is also an important training for teachers. According to Jensen (2013), economic hardship makes it more difficult for parents to create the trusting home that helps children feel secure. Additionally, lower SES students may display acting out behaviors in school that can be challenging for a teacher (Jensen, 2013). The teacher providing the appropriate

school environment for lower SES students that offers a challenging academic environment with high standard for academics and behavior combined with a safe classroom for students to take academic chances without fear of ridicule is ideal for lower SES students. Bandura (1994) shared that adolescents can expand and strengthen their sense of self-efficacy by learning how to deal with potentially difficult academic and behavioral challenges in a safe environment. Training for middle school faculty members on the importance of high academic standards and a positive school environment for lower SES students, can lead to high student academic self-efficacy and increased parental involvement.

Even though many participants expressed that it is their responsibility to get involved in their child's education, many of them expressed that the communication between the school and the parents could be better especially for the parents without access to a computer. The school district should make a commitment especially in middle school where there is a documented decline in parent involvement to develop a comprehensive plan for parent involvement. The middle school faculty can educate parents about the impact their involvement has on the academic and personal development of children (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). The administration can offer parent nights and parent discussion groups to help bring attention to the overall importance of parent involvement. Parents are more likely to participate if they are welcomed and feel valued (Larocque et al., 2011). These parent discussion groups may provide the safe environment for lower SES parents to share insight into the resources they need to

successful assist their child. The administration, along with the parents, teachers, and students can develop individual student plans that can be put in place to help set academic goals and have a document to assist with the transfer of information. This plan help keep all participants involved in the process. Furthermore, it directly connects lower SES families with the school in a caring and support way. This type of plan can offer a lower SES student the additional emotional support needed to assist them with a more positive self-efficacy.

Implications for Social Change

Lower SES students are more likely to struggle with engagement in school possibility leading to lower academic performance. Teachers, school counselors, and administrators can assist blocking the negative impact that can accompany a lower SES student and their family (Jensen, 2013). However, school districts continue to struggle with how to assist lower SES students that are underperforming academically. Our middle schools must be better prepared to meet the challenges of effectively teaching lower SES students. Additionally, middle schools need to better understand the family dynamics of lower SES students and how to work with their families. For effective change to occur, meeting the unique needs of lower SES students and their families, school districts must be prepared to dedicate significant resources. Some of these resources include training faculty and staff on how to develop a school and classroom culture that is geared and sensitive to the needs of lower SES students. This training needs to include how teachers, counselors, and administrators can comfortably address

lower SES students that have developed negative perceptions on their academic capabilities. These perceptions can directly impact a students' self-efficacy and their academic performance. Further, the school district needs to develop a comprehensive outreach program that is inviting for all parents, especially lower SES parents, in an effort to increase sustained parent involvement. Schools that are inviting to lower SES parents and students and create an environment that fosters collaboration between the school and the family open the opportunity to present challenging, but attainable academic goals for students and their families. Furthermore, lower SES parents will feel part of the solution and not part of the problem. With a safe, supportive school and classroom environment, lower SES parents can feel more comfortable to ask questions to the teachers and actively work with their child and the school in a collaborative manner.

The participants in this study were supportive of the school district and middle school faculty and staff despite many of them expressing a disconnect with communication from the school to the parents due to not having home access to a computer or the internet. The participants spoke proudly about the academic success of their children and the role their parenting practices and involvement have in their success. The unique part of the results was that many of the participants take much of the responsibility for communicating with the school and getting involved in their child's education. This perspective would be very interesting for a school district in the process of trying to develop a plan for assisting and empowering lower SES parents and students to feel more comfortable to get more involved in their child's school. These proud

participants shared insightful information that was truthful and comprehensive. The readers of this study will benefit tremendously from the strategies and recommendations. Realistic action plans can be developed from the recommendations.

The exploration of parent involvement and practices from the perspective of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students has highlighted that parent involvement changes from elementary school to middle school. The participants have identified the changes in parent involvement from the elementary school to the middle school as moving from fewer visits to the classrooms and the school to using different modes of technology and communicating directly with their child to stay connected to their child's school and school events. I learned that even though parent involvement has changed from elementary to middle school that lower SES parents greatly value the importance of being involved in their child's educational experiences. To support this change in involvement, Hill and Tyson (2009) stated as parent involvement becomes more indirect and middle school students increase their autonomy, strategies for parent involvement need to adjust with the needs of the child. Many participants describe the importance of daily communication with their child about their school work and assignments. These participants discuss their different approaches and techniques and how this communication has effectively assisted them with being involved with their child. This information obtained from this study indicated many of the changes that the parents have made in their parenting practices and involvement since their child has transitioned to the middle school. Finally, many of the participants want the school to

reach out to them on how they would like to receive information and how they can be more involved.

The results of this study will provide the necessary desired parenting practices and involvement that will assist educational professionals (principals, counselors, and teachers) especially at the elementary and middle school levels to work effectively with lower SES students and parents. Further, the results will help educational professionals to identify and address academic perceptions that students bring to school with them. Addressing the academic perceptions of lower SES students and parents will assist in the positive collaboration between the school and the parents. Additionally, by addressing the academic perceptions gives the educational professionals the information necessary to gage the self-efficacy of a lower SES student. Readers of this study will clearly be able to identify to importance of parental involvement and its positive impact on a lower SES student and their self-efficacy. I believe that the readers will be more aware of the positive impact of parent involvement regardless of socioeconomic status and the strategies middle school parents use to successfully be involved in their child's education. Since students of poverty are enrolled in every public school in the United States, the results of this study can be positively impactful for faculty and staff members seeking to improve their school and classroom environment. Finally, faculty and staff members can obtain effective strategies for parent involvement that are practical and transferable.

Recommendations for Action

In this qualitative case study, the focus was on lower SES parents whose public

middle school children (grades 6 to 8) were considered high achieving based on the

criteria of scoring advanced on the Pennsylvania Standardized State Assessments in both

reading and mathematics. Ten individual interviews were used to provide the parent

participants with the opportunity to share how their perceived their parenting practices

and involvement over the years may have impacted on the academic success of their

children. Additionally, the participants provided suggestions and strategies on how

middle school faculty and staff members can provide support with academic struggling

lower SES students and families. The recommendations in this study are relevant for

school administrators, teachers, and staff members at both the elementary and middle

school level who desire to provide a more caring and nurturing school and classroom

environment for lower SES students and parents. Further, these recommendations are

relevant for school districts or individual elementary or middle schools seeking a more

desirable plan for involving parents in the school culture. These recommendations can

have an immediate positive impact on faculty and staff members looking to collaborate

on the issue of assisting lower SES students and parents. The information provided in

this study will be made available to educational professionals online. My goal is to share

the finding of my study with my own faculty and staff, but also to other local school

districts looking to provide better services for lower SES students and parents. The

following recommendations will assist elementary and middle school faculty and staff

members who struggle providing support for lower SES students and parents. The

recommendations will also provide faculty and staff members with effective strategies

that they suggest to lower SES parents concerning parent involvement.

Recommended Action #1: Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Parental Involvement

My study has found the parent involvement changes from the elementary to

middle school and parents are put into a position where they have to figure out for the

most part on their own on how to be involved in their child's school. The information

from this study suggestion that because the participants were very persistent they were

able to find productive ways to positively get involvement in their child's education. If

the school district develops a comprehensive plan for parent involvement that include

strategies for parents as their child transitions from elementary to middle school, it would

assist with parents having the information to make an informed decision on how and it

what ways they can be involved in their child's education. The school district should

develop this plan with a many diverse members to serve on a large committee. The

committee members should include: teachers, school administrators, staff members,

members of the central office administration, members of the school boards, community

members, and parents. It would be the responsibility of the school district to make

certain that the recommendations and suggestions that come out of this committee are

highlighted and shared publicly. Much of the information from this study can assist with

subtopics for discussion purposes within this committee. Some of these subtopics may

include: communication between the school and the parents, the development of a survey

about the communication within the district, the role of free transportation, developing individual student plans starting in kindergarten where academic and behavior goals are developed between the parents and the school, a parent discussion group that focuses on how to talk to your child and to be actively involved in their life, and the role of technology and how it can be more helpful.

Recommendation Action #2: Training for the Faculty and Staff on the Challenges and Stressors of Lower SES Students and Parents

Many of the participants credit their persistent approach to parenting in addition to having a persistent child as contributing to their academic success. Two of the participants expressed that several times throughout their child's academic career they felt that they needed to go into the school and advocate to the teachers about some of the home struggles they were having so the teachers would have a better understanding of their situation. Some of the other participants expressed that even though their child was doing well in school that they felt uncomfortable to contact the school with questions due to not knowing who to talk to or how to communicate clearly about the issue. Providing training to the faculty and staff on the challenges of lower SES students and families can provide the information and the sensitivity necessary to provide teachers with tools that they need to be successful (Jensen, 2013). This training should also include the best practices and strategies for working with lower SES students and parents. The information from this study can be used for some the subtopics for this training. Some of these subtopics include: designing your classroom and pedagogical approach, strategies

for developing your school culture, best ways to communicate with lower SES students and parents to find optimal success, the benefits of gaining background information from parents about their family and their child, inviting parents into the school to share experiences related to a topic or within the curriculum, and the importance of maintaining high academic expectations for lower SES students.

Recommended Action #3: Offer Free Parenting Courses at the School or Online

It was indicated from the study participants that they are finding success in parenting their child. The study participants contributed this success to the healthy relationship and that have with their child built on open and daily communication and encouragement. Many lower SES parents experience chronic stress due to dealing with the pressures of daily living expenses (Jensen, 2013). Due to these pressures and chronic stress, many times lower SES parents will react negatively to their children who can have long-term effects that can impact their relationship with their parents and their own motivation (Blair & Raver, 2012). These participants have identified that open communication and positive encouragement of their children have assisted in their relationship with their child. However, many lower SES parents are struggling to build a positive relationship with their child. Further, many of the lower SES students are still underperforming in school and are at risk of dropping out in the future. These study participants have provided important information related to parenting practices that could be very helpful for the struggling parent. From the information obtained from this study, the school district can commit to provide a series of parenting courses at the middle

school designed to provide helpful information, suggestions, skills, and strategies that are user friendly for struggling parents. The courses can be taught by qualified school district employee. The school district can also commit to providing transportation to assist the likelihood that parents will attend. The school district can also provide this course online that is free to all parents. Based on the information from the study participants, the following parenting information should be included in the course: communicating effectively with your child, fostering encouragement through daily conversation, how to seek resources and learning opportunities outside of school, how to be a responsive parent, how to develop a consistent, healthy routine with your child focusing on homework, nutrition, studying, and bedtime.

Recommended Action #4: Parent Workshops on the Curriculum

Since there has been an intensified focus over the last couple of years with the implementation of the PA common core standards, education and the type of curriculum offered to children has changed (PA Dept. of Ed., 2013). Many of the participants in the study expressed that they don't remember learning the way that their children do currently and many times they find themselves unable to help them because of not understanding the material themselves. Due to all of the changes in education over the last couple of years and from the information received from the participants that have a desire to learn more about their child's education, I believe the school district should provide after school parent workshops on the current curriculum being used in the school (Epstein & VanVoohis, 2010; Jeynes, 2011). Not only can these parent workshops be

useful for learning the material, additional resources can be demonstrated at these workshops so parents can offer assistance from home. For example, many mathematics book publishers offer an online step by step tutorial for the students. If their child gets stuck on a mathematics problem and the parent does not know how to help, the parent to watch the online tutorial with their child. Further, the school district should consider providing transportation to the workshops. For parents that cannot attend the workshops, the district should provide online video demonstrations of the current curriculum along with the available resources.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study took a qualitative research approach to gain inquiry information from lower SES parents about their perceived parenting and involvement practices in regards to their middle school child. When thinking about recommendations for further study, I have identified four recommendations. First, since most of the information from the study participants on parenting practices began with their discussion on how that parented their child before entering school and in elementary school, I would suggest a study on parenting practices and involvement to include lower SES parents with high achieving elementary school children. I would be very interested on the similarities and differences between elementary and middle school parenting practices and involvement. Second, I suggest a multiple middle school qualitative study on lower SES parenting practices and involvement of high achieving middle school students. The second middle school for the study should be from an urban area. I believe that involving two schools with parents

from different areas would provide additional rich information and different perspectives on effective parenting practices. Third, I suggest that a similar qualitative study should be conducted to include an interview with the child. I would be very interested to see if the perceptions from the parent were similar to the reality of the experiences of the child. Finally, I suggest a similar study should be conducted with one change in the criteria. The high achieving middle school student resides with a grandparent or relative. It would be interesting to compare the information from this study against my study to validate the effectiveness of parenting practices regardless of who raises the child.

Reflection

When reviewing the results of my study, the most interesting part for me was that even though the participants identified a change in how they were involved in the child's education from elementary to middle school, they strongly felt that they were still very effective parents. When the participants further explained their parenting practices during the interviews and the reasons behind the changes, I initially believed that it was because they were too busy, overwhelmed by other matters, or not willing to put in the time as I previously experienced in working with lower SES parents. That did not turn out to be the case. In fact, the adjustments in parenting practices and involvement were related to allowing their children to gain autonomy. Further, the participants felt that they have built a trusting relationship where they openly communicate with their child on a daily basis about school. I was also very surprised by how each participant valued their relationship with their child and how highly they valued education and the entire

educational system. Before conducting the interviews, I thought that the participants would make excuses about their financial situation or be negative toward the school district. With both thoughts, I was incorrect. The participants did not use their financial situation as a crutch at all. In fact, they placed value on what they had and their relationships within their family not on what they did not have. Additionally, the participants were very complimentary of the school district and the middle school faculty and staff. They believe that their children are receiving the best education that is available to them. I was very pleased that all of the participants expressed that they comfortable during the interviews. The participants expressed that they felt honored that they were invited to talk about their parenting practices and their child. They also expressed that they were excited and pleased that the information provided would be used to help and assist other parents and educational professionals. I think that they reviewed me as an honest hardworking researcher that valued and truly respected their thoughts and opinions.

Conclusion

This qualitative research case study has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the perceived parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The results of this study demonstrate the overall relevance and importance of daily communication with your child as a significant strategy for being involved as a parent. The results of this study also highlight that parent involvement at the middle school level does not mean entering the school building.

Parent usage of technology such as: using the parent portal to check grades, assignments, homework or attendance or checking the website for up to date school events and activities offers a viable option as an alternative to entering the school building. I understand that the participants' children are attending a middle school where they are finding academic success and many of the parents feel welcomed and supported. However, for sustaining long-term success as a faculty and staff, it is necessary and essential for yearly professional development on the challenges and stressors that face lower SES students and parents and best practices for teaching lower SES students and supporting their families.

Through my extensive research efforts over the years on the effects on lower SES students and families and the having the privilege of conducting extensive individual interviews, I am much more knowledgeable about the impact of poverty and on parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents. My goal of this research and this study was to become more knowledgeable on these topics and to be able to share this important information with other public school leaders and educational professionals. This is essential because faculty and staff members are struggling with how to assist and support lower SES students and their family. By instituting the recommendations and suggestions from this study, school district employees, especially teachers and administrators, will have the tools necessary to help academically struggling students. As important, the parents will gain skills and strategies through parent discussion groups and

workshops along with suggestions from school employees that they can implement at home to collaborate with the efforts of the school.

The challenges and stressors within families of poverty are real and can be debilitating. Lower SES students and parents need as much help as possible from the school district to work together to meet the higher academic standards. For students of poverty, it is essential that they are academically challenged and supported. This gives them the best opportunity for education past high school (Colwell et al., 2008). Working together in a collaborative fashion with lower SES students and parents gives both the school and the student the best chance to find sustainable long-term academic success.

References

Amatea, S.E., & West-Olatunja, A.C. (2007). Joining the conversation about educating our poorest children: Emerging leadership roles for counselors in high-poverty schools. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(2)*, 81-89. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-11.81

American Psychological Association. (2012). Facing the school dropout dilemma. Washington DC: Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/school-dropout-prevention.aspx

Baer, C. J., Kim, M., & Wilkenfeld, B. (2012). Is it generalized anxiety disorder or poverty? An examination of poor mothers and their children. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, *29*, 345-355. doi:10.1007/s10560-012-0263-3

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215. doi:10.1037/0033-295x.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In VS Ramachaudran (Ed.) Encyclopedia of human behavior (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81).

Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development, 67*, 1206-1222. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01791.x

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development, 72*, 187-206. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00273

Barber, B. K., & Harmon, E. L. (2002). Violating the self: Parental psychological control of children and adolescents. In B. K.Barber, (Ed.), *Intrusive parenting: How psychological control affects children and adolescents*. (pp.15-52). American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *26*, 39-62. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2003.11.002

Barnyak, C. N., & McNelly, A. T. (2009). An urban school district's parent involvement: A study of teachers' and administrators' beliefs and practices. *School Community Journal, 19*(1), 33-58.

Baroody, K. (2011). Turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools: Five steps districts can take to improve their chances of success. *Center for American Progress*.

Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographers*, 43-88.

Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monographers*. *4*, 1-103. doi:10.1037/h0030372

Baumrind, D. (1978). Parental disciplinary patterns and social competence in children. *Youth & Society*. *9*(3), 239-276.

Baumrind, D. (1989). Rearing competent children. In W. Damon, (Ed.). *Child development today and tomorrow* (pp.249-278). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Baumrind, D. (1991). Parenting styles and adolescent development. In J. Brooks-Gunn, R. Lerner, & A.C. Peterson (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 746-758) Garland, NY.

Berkule-Silberman, B. S., Dreyer, P. B., Huberman, S. H., Klass, E. P., & Mendelsohn, L. A. (2010). Sources of parenting information in low SES mothers. *Clinical Pediatrics, 49*(6), 560-568. doi:10.1177/0009922809351092

Berliner, C. D. (2009). Are teachers responsible for low achievement by poor students? *Educational Digest, 75*(7), 4-8. doi:10.1080/00228958.2009.10516685

Bishop, P., & Pflaum, S. (2005). Middle school students' perceptions of social dimensions as influencers of academic engagement. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 29*(2), 4-14. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.

Blair, C., & Raver, C. C. (2012). Child development in the context of adversity. *American Psychology, 67*(4), 309-318. doi:10.1037/a0027493

Booth, Z. M., & Sheehan, C. H. (2008). Perceptions of people and place: Young adolescents' interpretation of their schools in the United States and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23*(6), 722-744. doi:10.1177/0743558408322145

Bowers, A. H., & Griffin, D. (2011). Can the Epstein model of parental involvement work in a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school? A case study. *Professional School Counseling, 15*(2), 77-87. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2011-15.77

Bowers, J. A. (2010). Grades and graduation: A longitudinal risk perspective to identify student dropouts. *Journal of Educational Research, 103*, 191-207. doi:10.10/00220670903382970

Bramefeld, D. K., Carrick, C. A., Lessmeiser, L. S., Nicoloff, N. A., Keiser, E. M., & Metter, A. S. (2013). Parental involvement in a childcare center: Assessing predictors of school-based involvement. *Journal of Psychological Research, 18*(3), 103-115.

Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises. Retrieved from http://www.ignitelearning.com/pdf/The SilentEpidemic3-06FINAL.pdf

Bronstein, P., Ginsburg, S. G., & Herrera, S. I. (2005). Parental predictors of motivational orientation in early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34*(6)*, 559-575. doi:10.1007/s10964-005-8946-0

Chapman, R. P. (2002). Parenting characteristics in predicting adolescent smoking and drinking expectancies and intentions. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *62*.

Cheung, S. C., & Pomerantz, M. E. (2012). Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(3), 820-832. doi:10.1037/a0027183

Cho, Y., Hsieh, P., Liu, M., & Schallert, L. D. (2008). Middle school focus: Examining the interplay between middle school students achievement goals and self-efficacy in a technology-enhanced learning environment. *American Secondary Education, 36*(3), 33-50.

Chowdry, H., Crawford, C., Dearden, L., Joyce, R., Sibieta, L., Sylva, K.,… Washbrook, E. (2010). Poorer children's educational attainment: How important are attitudes and behavior? *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, 1-72.

CLASP (2013). Child poverty in the U. S.: What new census data tell us about our youngest Children. Retrieved from www.clasp.org

Conger, R. D., & Simons, R. L. (1997). Life-course contingencies in the development of Adolescent antisocial behavior: A matching law approach. In T. P. Thornberry (Ed.), *Developmental theories of crime and delinquency: Advances in Criminological Theory*. (Vol. 7, pp. 55-99), New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Constantine, M.G., Erickson, C.D., Banks, R.W., & Timberlake, T.L. (1998). Challenges to the career development of urban racial and ethnic minority youth: Implications for vocational intervention. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 26*(2), 82-94. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.1998.tb00189

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(3), 124-130. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Cripps. K., & Zyromski, B. (2009). Adolescents' psychological well-being and
 perceived parental involvement: Implications for parental involvement in middle
 school. *Research in Middle Level Education, 33*(4), 1-13.

Danielsen, G.A., Hetland, J., Samdal, O., & Wold, B. (2009). School-related social
 support and students' perceived life satisfaction. *Journal of Educational
 Research, 102*(4), 303-318. doi:10.3200/JOER.102.4.303-320

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss (2006). Family involvement in school
 and low-income children's literacy: Longitudinal associations between and
 within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *98*, 653-664.
 doi:10.1037/0022-0663.98.4.653

Deming, D. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development:
 Evidence from Head Start. *American Economic Journal*: *Applied Economics*,
 111-134. doi:10.1257/app.1.3.111

Dogan, J. S., Conger, D. R., Kim, J. K., & Masyn, E. K. (2007). Cognitive and parenting
 pathways in the transmission of antisocial behavior from parents to adolescents.
 Child Development, 78(1)*,* 335-349. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01001.x

Duncan, G. J., Ziol-Guest, K. M., & Kalil, A. (2010). Early-childhood poverty and adult
 attainment, behavior and health. *Child Development, 81*, 306-325.
 doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01396

El Nokali, E. N., Bachman, J.H., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010). Parent involvement and
 children's academic and social development in elementary school. *Child
 Development, 81*(3), 988-1005. doi:10.1111/j.1467.8624.2010.01447

Epstein, L. J., Salinas, C. K., Coates, L., & Sanders, G. M. (1997). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, L. J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Epstein, L. J. (2005). School-initiated family and community partnerships. In T. Erb (Ed.), *This we believe in action: Implementing successful middle level schools* (pp. 77-96). Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Epstein, L. J., & Sanders, M. G. (2002). Family, school, and community partnerships. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (2nd ed., Vol. 5, pp. 407-437). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Epstein, L. J., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, community, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, L. J., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2010). School counselors' roles in developing partnerships with families and communities for student success. *Professional School Counseling, 14*, 1-14.

Fan, W., Williams, M. C., & Wolters, A. C. (2012). Parental involvement in predicting school motivation: Similar and differential effects across ethnic groups. *Journal of Educational Research, 105*, 21-35. doi:10.1080/00220671.2010.515625

Ferrara, M. M. (2009). Boarding the myopic vision of parent involvement. *School Community Journal, 19*(2), 123-142.

Freeman, M. (2010). 'Knowledge is acting': Working-class parents' intentional acts of positioning within the discursive practice of involvement. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 23*, 181-198. doi:10.1080/0951839093081629

Friedel, M.J., Cortina, S.K., Midgley, C., & Turner, C. J. (2010). Changes in efficacy beliefs in mathematics across the tradition to middle school: Examining the effects of perceived teacher and parent goal emphases. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(1), 102-114.

Gordon, F. M., & Louis, S. K. (2009). Linking parent and community involvement with student achievement: Comparing principal and teacher perceptions of stakeholder influence. *American Journal of Education, 116*, 1-31. doi:10.1086/605098

Gorski, C. P. (2008). The myth of the culture of poverty. *Educational Leadership, 65*(7), 32-36.

Gorski, C. P. (2012). Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling: Deconstructing the class stereotypes that mis-shape education practice and policy. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(2), 302-319. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.666934

Gould, J. (2010). Does it really take a village to raise a child (or just a parent?): An examination of the relationship between the members of the residence of a middle-school student and the student's satisfaction with school. *Education, 132*(1), 28-38.

Grogan-Kaylor, A. & Woolley, E. M. (2006). Protective family factors in the context of *neighborhood*: Promoting positive school outcomes. *Family Relations*

55, 95-106. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2006.00359

Grusec, J. E. (1997). A history of research on parenting strategies and children's internalization of values. In J. E. Grusec, and L. Kuczynski (Eds.), *Parenting and children's Internalization of Values: A Handbook of Contemporary Theory* (pp. 3-22), Wiley, NY.

Harris, N. D. (2007). High-flying schools, student disadvantage and the logic of NCLB. *American Journal of Education, 113,* 367-394. doi:10.1086/512737

Harris, N.D. & Herrington, D.C. (2006). Accountability, standards, and the growing achievement gap: Lessons from the past half-century. *American Journal of Education*, *112*(2), 209-238. doi:10.1086/498995

Hatch, A. J. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. State University of New York: SUNY Press.

Hawley, D. W. & Nieto, S. (2010). Another inconvenient truth: Race and ethnicity. *Educational Leadership*, *68*(3), 66-71.

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical for student achievement*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hernandez, J. D. (2012). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. *The Annie E. Casey Foundation*, 1-22.

Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., & Pettit, G. S. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. *Child Development*, *75*, 1491-1509. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00753

Hill, E. N., & Tyson, F. D. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3), 740-763. doi:10.1037/a0015362

Hoang, N.T., (2007). The relations between parenting and adolescent motivation. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 3(2).

Hoffman, M.L. (1970). Moral development. In P.H. Mussen, (Ed.), *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology* (pp. 261-360), Vol. 2, Wiley, NY.

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Battiato, A. C., Walker, J. M. T., Reed, R. P., DeJong, J. M., & Jones, K. P. (2001). Parental involvement in homework. *Educational Psychologist, 36*, 195-210. doi:10.1207/S15326985EP3603_5

Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement: An explanatory model. *Educational Review, 63*(1), 37-52. doi:10.1080/00131911.2010.488049

Hutchins, J. D. (2013). Improving collaboration: Strong family-school collaboration can help all students succeed. *Association for Middle Level Education*, *1*(2), 10-14.

Huston, C. A. (2010). Children in poverty: Can public policy alleviate the consequences. AIFS conference keynote address. (PMCIP:PMC3287293)

Jarmuz-Smith, S. (2011). Student Connections: Parent Involvement in Education. *National Association of School Psychologists*, 1-2.

Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it.* Alexandia, VA: ASCD.

Jensen, E. (2010). Why teach differently to those from poverty? Retrieved from http://www.jensenlearning.com/news/why-teach-differently-to-those-from-poverty

Jensen, E. (2013). How poverty affects classroom engagement. *Educational Leadership, 70*(8), 24-30.

Jeynes, H. W. (2011). Parental involvement research: Moving to the next level. *School Community Journal, 21*(1), 9-18.

Johnson, C. (2013). Leading learning for children from poverty. *Association for Middle Level Education, 1*(4), 14-16.

Jordan, J. L., Kostandini, G., & Mykerezi, E. (2012). Rural and urban high school dropout rates: Are they different? *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 27*(12), 1-21. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/27-12/pdf

Kao, G., & Turney, K. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *Journal of Educational Research*, *102*(4), 257-271. doi:10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271

Keijsers, L. & Poulin, F. (2013). Developmental changes in parent-child communication throughout adolescence. *American Psychological Association, 49*(12), 2301-2308. doi:10.1037/a0032217

Kenny, M.E., Blustein, D.L., Hasse, R.F., Jackson, J., & Perry, J.C. (2006). Setting the stage: Career development and the student engagement process. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(2), 272-279. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.53.2.272

Kersey, C. K., & Masterson, L. M. (2009). Teachers connecting with families: In the best interest of children. *Young Children*, 34-38. Retrieved from www.naeyc.org/yc/permissions

Kinney, P., & Tomlin, D. (2013). Middle level leadership and all that jazz. *Association for Middle Level Education*, *1*(2), 16-19.

Krasner, D. (1992). *Risk and protective factors and achievement of children at risk*.

　　Los Angeles, CA: Graduate School of Education, University of California.

　　(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 349363).

Ladson-Billings, G. (2011). Is meeting the diverse needs of all students possible?

　　Kappa Delta PI Record, 13-15. doi:10.1080/00228958.2011.10516716

Larocque, M., Kleiman, I., & Darling, M. S. (2011). Parental involvement: The missing

　　link in school achievement. *Preventing School Failure, 55*(3), 115-122.

　　doi:10.1080/10459880903472876

Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (1988). Unraveling families and delinquency: A

　　reanalysis of the Gluecks' data. *Criminology*, *26*, 355-380. doi:10.1111/j.1745-

　　9125.1988.tb00846

Lindholm, J.A. (2006). Deciding to forgo college: Non-college attendees' reflections on

　　family, school, and self. *Teachers College Record, 108*(4), 577-603.

Lui, X., & Lu, K. (2008). Student performance and family socioeconomic status.

　　Chinese Education and Society, 41(5)*,* 70-83. doi:10.2753/CED1061-

　　1932410505

Ma'ayan, D. H. (2010). Erika's stories: Literacy solutions for a failing middle school

　　student. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53*(8), 646-654.

　　doi:10.1598/JAAL.53.8.3

Maccoby, E.E. & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family:

　　Parent-child Interaction. In P.H. Mussen & E.H. Heatherington, (Eds.),

　　Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 4, Socialization, Personality, and Social

　　Development, Wiley, NY.

Malecki, K.C. & Demaray, K.M. (2006). Social support as a buffer in the relationship
between socioeconomic status and academic performance. *School Psychology
Quarterly, 21*(4)*,* 375-395. doi:10.1037/h0084129

McCoach, B. D., Goldstein, J., Behuniak, P., Reis, M. S., Black, C. A., Sullivan, E. E.,
& Rambo, K. (2010). Examining the unexpected: Outlier analysis of factors
affecting student achievement. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 21*(3), 426-468.
doi:10.1177/1932202X1002100304

McMahon, D. S., Felix, D., & Nagarajan, T. (2011). Social support and neighborhood
stressors among African American youth: Networks and relations to self-worth.
Journal of Child & Family Studies, *20*, 255-262. doi:10.1007/S10826-010-9386-
3

Menzies, L. (2013). Educational aspirations: How English schools can work with
parents to keep them on track. *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*, 1-12.

Merriam, S. B., & Associates (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for
discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Monti, D. J., Pomerantz, M. E., & Roisman, I. G. (2014). Can parents'involvement in
children's education offset the effects of early insensitivity on academic
functioning? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*(20), 859-869.
doi:10.1037/a0035906

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage
Publications.

Mucherah, W. & Yoder, A. (2008). Motivation for reading and middle school students' performance on standardized testing in reading. *Reading Psychology, 29*, 214-235. doi:10.1080/02702710801982159

Mulligan, G. M., Hastedt, S., & McCarroll, J. C. (2012). *First-Time Kindergarteners in 2010-11: First Findings From the Kindergarten Rounds of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011) (NCES 2012-049)*. U.S. Department of Education. Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Murray, W. K., Haynie, L. D., Howard, E. D., Cheng, L. T., Simons-Morton, B. (2010). Perceptions of parenting practices as predictors of aggression in a low-income urban, predominately African American middle school sample. *Journal of School Violence*, *9*, 174-193. doi:10.1080/15388220903585853

National Center for Education Statistics (2001). *User's manual for the ECLS-K base year public-use data files and electronic codebook* (NCES 2001-029 Revised). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Niditch, A. L., & Varela, E. R. (2012). *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *41*, 21-35. doi: 10.1007/s10566-011-9150-x

Nieto, S. (2008). Go beyond niceness: Think critically about what it means to "care" for students of color. In Mica Pollock (Ed.) *Everyday Antiracism: Concrete Ways to Successfully Navigate the Relevance of Race in School*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Nord, C.W., Brimhall, D. A., & West, J. (1997). *Fathers' involvement in their children's schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational research and improvement.

Oakes, J., Joseph, R., & Muir, K. (2004). "Access to achievement in mathematics and science: Inequalities that endure and change." In J.A Banks & C.A.M. Banks (Eds.), *In Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Oakes, J. (2005). Keeping track: How schools structure inequality (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Olsen, G., & Fuller, L. M. (2006). Type 1 parent involvement: Basic Responsibilities of families. Received from http://www.education.com/print/parent-involvement-basic-responsibilities-of-families

Olsen, L. (2007). Linking learning to earning. *Education Week*, 26 (17), 66-68.

Pajares, F. (2004). Albert Bandura: Biographical sketch. Retrieved from http://des.emory.edu/mfp/bandurabio,html.

Pajares, F. (2005). Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents. In F. Pajares & Urdan, T. (Eds), *Self-Efficacy during childhood and adolescence* (pp. 339-367). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Pajares, F., & Usher, L. E. (2006). Inviting confidence in school: Invitations as critical source of the academic self-efficacy beliefs of entering middle school students. *Journal of Invitational Theory & Practice, 12,* 7-16.

Pajares, F. (2007). Empirical properties of a scale to assess writing self-efficacy in

school contexts. *Measurements and Evaluation in Counseling and*

Development, 39, 239-249.

Pate, P. E., & Andrews, P. G. (2006). Research summary: Parent involvement.

Retrieved from http://www,nmsa.org/Research

Summaries/Parentinvolvement/tabid/274/Defailt.aspx

Patel, N., & Steven, S. (2010). Parent-teacher-student discrepancies in academic ability

beliefs: Influences on parent involvement. *School Community Journal, 20*(2),

115-136.

Patterson, G. R., & Capaldi, D. M. (1991). Antisocial parents: Unskilled and vulnerable.

In P. A. Cowan & M. Hetherington (Eds.), *Family transitions* (pp.195-218).

Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Pearson, M. M. (2008). Voices of hope. *Education and Urban Society, 41*(1)*,* 80-103.

doi:10.1177/0013124508316743

Pennsylvania Department of Education (2013). Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Retrieved from www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/Pennsylvania

Phillips. R. (2009). Why is parental involvement important in children's education?

Retrieved from http://www.edarticle.com

Pintrich, P.R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). Motivation in education: Theory, research, and

applications. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Pogrow, S. (2009). Accelerate the learning of 4th and 5th graders born into poverty.

Phi Delta Kappan, 408-412. Retrieved from http://www.pdkintl.org/search.htm

Powell, D., Higgins, H. J., Aran, R. & Freed, A. (2009). Impact of No Child Left

    Behind on curriculum and instruction in rural schools. *The Rural Educator,*

    31(1), 19-28.

Ramdass, D., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2008). Effects of self-correction strategy training on

    middle school students' self-efficacy, self-evaluation, and mathematics division

    learning. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *20*, 18-41. doi:10.4219/jaa-2008-869

Reilly, E. (2008). Parental involvement through better communication. *Middle School*

    Journal. 40-47.

Risko, J. V., & Walker-Dalhouse, D. (2009). Parents and teachers: Talking with or past

    one another or not talking at all. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(5), 442-444.

    doi:10.1598/RT.62.5.7

Roopnarine, J. L., Krishnakumar, A., Metindogan, A., Evans, M. (2006). Links between

    parenting styles, parent-child academic interaction, parent-school interaction,

    and early academic skills and social behavior in young children of English-

    speaking Caribbean immigrants. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *21*, 238-

    252. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.04.007

Rossman, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (1998). *Learning in the Field: An introduction to*

    qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rubin, J. H., & Rubin, S. I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*

    (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rumberger, R. W. (2011). *Dropping out: Why students drop out of high school and*

    what can be done about it. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Scanlon, D. & Mellard, D. F. (2002). Academic and participation profiles of school-age

dropouts with and without disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 68*(2), 239-258.

doi:10.1177/001440290206800206

Scanlon, D., Saxon, K., Perez-Gualdron, L., Colwell, M., Jernigan, M., & Kenny, E.M.

(2008). Urban adolescents' postschool aspirations & awareness. *Remedial &*

Special Education, 29, 161-174. doi:10.1177/0741932508315952

Schunk, H.D. (1995). Self-efficacy and education and instruction. In J. E. Maddux

(Ed.), *Self-efficacy, adaptation, and adjustment: Theory, research, and*

applications (pp.281-303). New York, NY: Plenum.

Schunk, H. D., & Miller, S. D. (2002). Self-efficacy and adolescents' motivation. In F.

Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Academic motivation of adolescents* (pp. 29-52).

Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Schunk, H. D., & Pajares, F. (2002). Competence perceptions and academic

functioning. *Handbook of Competence and Motivation* (pp. 85-103). New York,

NY: The Guilford Press.

Schunk, H. D. & Meece, L. J. (2005). Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents. In F.

Pajares & Urdan, T. (Eds.), *Self-Efficacy development in adolescences* (pp. 71-

96). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Sears, R. R., Macoby, E., & Levin, H. (1957). *Patterns of Child Rearing*, Row,

Peterson, Evanston, IL.

Sharp, H.E., Caldwell, L.L., Graham, W.J., & Ridenour, A.T. (2006). Individual

motivation and parental influence on adolescents experiences of interest in free

time. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(3)*,* 359-372. doi:10.1007/S10964-006-9045-6

Sherman, A., Trisi, D., & Parrott, S. (2013). Various supports for low-income families reduce poverty and have long-term positive effects on families and children. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 1-19. Retrieved from www.cbpp.org

Shumow, L. & Miller, D.J. (2001). Parents' at-home and at-school academic involvement with young adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, *21*(1), 68-91. doi:10.1177/0272431601021001004

Sin-Sze Cheung, C., & Pomerantz, M. E. (2012). Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(3), 820-832. doi:10.1037/a0027183

Sirin, S.R., Diemer, M.A., Jackson, L.R., Gonsalves, L., & Howell, A. (2004). Future aspirations of urban adolescents: A person-in-context model. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(3), 437-459. doi:10.1080/0951839042000204607

Smith, C. A., & Stern, S. B. (1997). Delinquency and antisocial behavior: A review of family processes and intervention research. *Social Service Review, 71*, 382-420. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/30012625

Smith, P.K., Cowie, H., & Blades, M. (1998). *Understanding children's development* (3rd Ed.). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Spera, C. (2005). A review of the relationship among parenting practices, parenting styles, and adolescent school achievement. *Educational Psychological Review, 17*(2), 125-126. doi:10.1007/s10648-005-3950-1

Staples, E. K., & Diliberto, A. J. (2010). Guidelines for successful parent involvement: Working with parents of students with disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 42*(6), 58-63.

Steinberg, L., Brown, B.B., & Dornbusch, S.M. (1996). *Beyond the classroom*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Steinberg, L. (2011). Demystifying the adolescent brain. *Educational Leadership*, *68*(7), 41-46. Retrieved from www.ascd.org

Stephenson, A. L., Henry, C. S., & Robinson, L. C. (1996). Family characteristics and adolescent substance use. *Adolescence*, *31*(121), 59-77.

Szente, J. (2007). Empowering young children for success in school and in life. *Early Childhood Educational Journal, 34*(6), 449-453. doi:10.1007/s10643-007-0162y

U.S. Department of Commerce (2002). U.S. Census. Washington D.C.

U.S. Department of Education (2002). 1999-2000 schools and staffing survey analysis. Washington D.C.

U.S. Department of Education (2013). Student achievement and school accountability programs. Washington D.C.

Veronneau, H.M., Vitaro, F., Pedersen, S., & Tremblay, E.R. (2008). Do peers contribute to the likelihood of secondary school graduation among disadvantaged boys? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(2), 429-442. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.100.2.429

Walker, J. M., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Whetsel, D. R., & Green, C. L. (2004). Parental involvement in homework: A review of current research and its implications for

teachers, after school program staff, and parent leaders. Cambridge, MA:

Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from www.hfrp.org

Weissbound, R. (2011). The overpressured student. *Educational Leadership, 68*(8), 22-27.

Weiss, H.B., Mayer, E., Kreider, H., Vaughan, M., Dearin, E., & Hencke, R. (2003). Making it work: Low-income working mothers' involvement in their children's education. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*, 879-901. doi:10.3102/00028312040004879

Wigfield, A., Eccles, J., & Pintrich, P.R. (1996). Development between ages 11 and 25. In D. Berliner & R. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 148-185). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Yin, K. R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yoshikawa, H., Aber, L. J., & Beardslee, R. W. (2012). The effects of poverty on the mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children and youth. *American Psychologist, 67*(4), 272-284. doi:10.1037/a0028015

Young, Y. C., Austin, M. S., & Growe, R. (2013). Defining parental involvement: Perception of school administrators. *Education, 133*(3), 291-297. Retrieved from www.ingentaconnect.com

Zimmerman, J. B. & Cleary, J. T. (2006). Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents. *Adolescents' Development of Personal Agency* (pp. 45-69). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Appendix A: Letter to the Superintendent

Dear Superintendent,

The purpose of this letter is to secure permission to conduct the final phase of my research with the help of your middle school principal. The principal in your school district's middle school has been identified as the contact person for my study because of my need to work with and review confidential information (demographic data, standardized test scores and free and reduced lunch status). Your principal can help provide me with only the necessary information that is directly needed for the criteria of the study.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students. The total sample for this qualitative case study will consist of 10 parents from 10 different families who currently having a child who is age appropriate for middle school (age 10-14). A qualitative case study will be conducted and data will be gathered through individual interviews. The following criteria will be used for the parent sampling: their child scoring in advanced level in reading and mathematics on Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessments, qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program, students not being retained academically at any point in their educational career, being a parent or step-parent currently living with the child, and having a middle school student attending a traditional public middle school.

In a collaborative fashion with the principal, a list of parents will be identified that meet the study criteria. These parents will receive a letter about the purpose of the study, how they have been identified for the study, the amount of time necessary to participate in the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and that all information obtained will be kept confidential. Additionally, I will include my contact information in the letter.

Individuals are free to decide not to participate in this study, or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting their relationship with the researcher or their district. If individuals choose to no longer participate, they may withdraw at any time by notifying the researcher. Upon the request to withdraw, all information pertaining to the individual will be destroyed. If individuals choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. All information in this study will be kept confidential.

If you permit your district to participate in this study, please complete the Permission to Participate form. Please return the participation form in the self-addressed, stamped envelope that has been provided for you. Thank you for your time, consideration, and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Elia
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Appendix B: Permission Form to Conduct Parent Interviews
Permission Form to Conduct Parent Interviews
In the School District

Your school district is in agreement allow me to work with your middle school principal to identify parents to take part in a research study of practicing practices and involvement of Lower Socioeconomic Status parents of high achieving middle school students. Your school district was chosen for this study because of your demographic information identifies your district as: having middle school building, grades 6-8, having students of lower socioeconomic status and students performing on the advanced level in both the reading and mathematics according to the Pennsylvania State School Assessment. This is a permission form to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Michael Elia, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the influence of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents on self-actualization of high achieving middle school students. A deeper understanding of parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students can: assist school administrators and teachers in developing effective skills and strategies that encourage academic success among lower SES middle school children. This study will also identify resources shared by lower SES parents that may bolster academic success in lower SES students. Additionally, this case study will provide information that helps middle school educators bridge any communication gap between the school, parents, and students from lower SES families. Finally, the study will help heighten educator awareness of values, perspectives, and world views that affect students' achievement in schools.

Procedures:
If your school district agrees to participate in this study, parents will be asked to:
- Participate in one 45-60 minute interview conducted by the researcher
- Allow permission to audiotape the interview
- Participate in member checking. Member checking will provide the basis for reliability, credibility, trustworthiness and validity of data from the formal interviews. In member checking, I will complete my preliminary review of the analyzed data. After a thorough review of the analyzed data, you agree to be contacted by phone. You will be offered the opportunity to meet in person to review your own data relative to the themes in the study.
- If you are unable to meet in person, my interpretations of your data will be shared with you over the phone to validate the results. This will allow for you to offer suggestions and bring additional clarification to your data so I clearly understand your perspective.

Here are some sample questions:
1. How do you feel your parenting practices and involvement have influenced your child's perspectives and beliefs on the importance of their academics? Please explain? Please provide some examples?
2. How do you view your role in your child's academic success or failure?
3. What behaviors do you model for your child that represent academic success?
4. How can parents and middle school faculty members work together to keep students motivated about their education?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study.

Payment:
A $25 dollar thank you gift card will be given to each parent at the conclusion of the study. This gift card will be to a local community restaurant.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in a private password protected home computer. The audiotaped information and all notes all will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via e-mail or via telephone. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-07-14-0046814** and it expires on **October 6, 2015.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

School District's name_____

Address_____

Superintendent_____

Assistant Superintendent_____

Date_____

Appendix C: Parent Letter to Participate
Invitation to Participate in the Parent Interview

Dear Parent,

My name is Michael Elia, a PA certified educator and a doctoral student at Walden University. I am currently working on my dissertation. My field of interest is parenting practices and involvement. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study by agreeing to a 45-60 minute interview so I can learn more about your parenting practices and involvement related to your middle school child. Permission form to participate in this study from the superintendent has been obtained and attached to this invitation.

I am seeking out your participation because your middle school child qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program and has performed exceptionally well by achieving advanced scores on both the reading and mathematics Pennsylvania Standardized State Assessments. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting practices and involvement of parents of high achieving middle school students.

Obtaining your knowledge of parenting practices and school involvement can contribute to the most current research on parenting practices. Additionally, gaining a deeper understanding of parenting practices and involvement of parents of high achieving middle school students can: assist school administrators and teachers in developing effective skills and strategies that encourage academic success among lower SES middle school children. This study will also identify resources shared by parents that may bolster academic success in lower SES students. Additionally, this case study will provide information that helps middle school educators bridge any communication gap between the school, parents, and students from lower SES families. Finally, the study will help heighten educator awareness of values, perspectives, and world views that affect students' achievement in schools.

If you agree to participation in this study, the data that is collected will remain secure and confidential. You will be assigned a letter instead of using your personal identity to make sure that all information strictly confidential. The information obtained in this study may be used for professional publication and/or presented at professional conferences with all data related to personal identity to be kept confidential. All records related to personal identity will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office for at least 7 years.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There no consequences for choosing not to participate. You may with withdraw from the study without any consequences at any time.

If you would like to participate in this study, please e-mail me or call me at or return the consent form included in the self-addressed envelope provided for you. Once I receive confirmation from you, I will contact you by e-mail or phone to give you an opportunity to ask questions and set up a time and place for the interview. The interview will occur at a convenient time for you at either the middle school, local library, or a local business of your choice. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Elia

Walden University Doctoral Student

Appendix D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of practicing practices and involvement of Lower Socioeconomic Status parents of high achieving middle school students. You were chosen for this study because of your socioeconomic status and your middle school child is in the advanced level in both the reading and mathematics standard exams according to the Pennsylvania State School Assessment. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Michael Elia, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. My role of employment in my district is separate from my role as a researcher in this study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the influence of the parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents on self-actualization of high achieving middle school students. A deeper understanding of parenting practices and involvement of lower SES parents of high achieving middle school students can: assist school administrators and teachers in developing effective skills and strategies that encourage academic success among lower SES middle school children. This study will also identify resources shared by lower SES parents that may bolster academic success in lower SES students. Additionally, this case study will provide information that helps middle school educators bridge any communication gap between the school, parents, and students from lower SES families. Finally, the study will help heighten educator awareness of values, perspectives, and world views that affect students' achievement in schools.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in one 45-60 minute interview conducted by the researcher
- Allow permission to audiotape the interview
- Participate in member checking. Member checking will provide the basis for reliability, credibility, trustworthiness and validity of data from the formal interviews. In member checking, I will complete my preliminary review of the analyzed data. After a thorough review of the analyzed data, you agree to be contacted by phone. You will be offered the opportunity to meet in person to review your own data relative to the themes in the study.
- If you are unable to meet in person, my interpretations of your data will be shared with you over the phone to validate the results. This will allow for you to offer suggestions and bring additional clarification to your data so I clearly understand your perspective.

- Here are some sample questions:
    1. How do you feel your parenting practices and involvement have influenced your child's perspectives and beliefs on the importance of their academics? Please explain? Please provide some examples?
    2. How do you view your role in your child's academic success or failure?
    3. What behaviors do you model for your child that represent academic success?
    4. How can parents and middle school faculty members work together to keep students motivated about their education?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at North Pocono School District will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study.   If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Risks: Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as stress or becoming upset.   Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

Benefits: This study can assist educational professionals to address student academic struggles by learning about the family's situation through the perceptions of the parents.

- An educator can better understand and challenge a student's negative belief system about education. With this understanding educational professionals can meet the needs of the parents and provide support to parents.
- The identification of any perceptions can allow educational professionals, in partnership with the parents, to challenge the negative perceptions throughout the student's schooling.
- Gaining the information of parenting practices and involvement from SES parents of academically successful students, educational professionals can share successful skills and strategies with struggling SES parents.
- The research should help in developing a formula for school districts and parents to work effectively in the best interest of lower SES students.

Payment:

A $25 dollar thank you gift card will be given to each parent at the conclusion of the study. This gift card will be to a local community restaurant.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure in a private password protected home computer. The audiotaped information and all notes all will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my

private home office. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via e-mail or telephone. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-07-14-0046814** and it expires on **October 6, 2015.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Research Project: Parenting Practices and Involvement of Lower Socioeconomic Status Parents of High Achieving Middle School Students.

- Time of interview:
- Date:
- Place:
- Interviewer:
- Interviewee:

Research Questions

1. How do lower SES parents of academically successful middle school students perceive their parenting practices and involvement in their child's education?

2. What are parents' perceptions of their child's motivation, persistence, and vicarious experiences in achieving success in their academic learning?

3. What are the lower SES parents' perceptions of practices and involvement that can be used to assist middle school faculty members in providing support to lower SES parents of academically struggling students?

Introduction

In order to establish conversation and a relaxed environment, I will begin by explaining the topic of my research and my passion behind the topic.

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. How do you feel your parenting practices and involvement have influenced your child's perspectives and beliefs on the importance of their academics? Please explain? Please provide some examples?
3. Tell me what motivates your child to learn?
4. How do you view your role in your child's academic success or failure?
5. Please describe what your parent involvement is in your child's school?
6. If your child is not successful in his/her learning, how persistent is he/she to overcome this failure? What kinds of things does he/she do to achieve academic success?
7. What can the school do to provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in their child's education?
8. What parenting practices would you offer to the school to help assist them in working with lower SES parents who have a student struggling academically?
9. What behaviors do you model for your child that represent academic success?
10. How can parents and middle school faculty members work together to keep students motivated about their education?
11. What experiences do you believe are important to provide for your child to enhance his/her academic success?
12. Can you discuss educational opportunities that you feel are important for the school to provide for your child?

13. What ways do your support your child's education from home?
14. Is there anything I should have asked but didn't?

Thank you for participating in the interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and the possibility of future interviews. Member checking will provide the basis for reliability, credibility, trustworthiness and validity of data from the formal interviews. In member checking, I will complete my preliminary review of the analyzed data. After a thorough review of the analyzed data, you agree to be contacted by phone. You will be offered the opportunity to meet in person to review your own data relative to the themes in the study. If you are unable to meet in person, my interpretations of your data will be shared with you over the phone to validate the results. This will allow for you to offer suggestions and bring additional clarification to your data so I clearly understand your perspective.

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "Parenting Practices and Involvement of Lower Socioeconomic Status Parents of High Achieving Students".   I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:
1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix G: Theme Data Summary Tables

Theme of Communication

Participants 1-2	Participants 3-4	Participants 5-6	Participants 7-8	Participants 9-10
1-I talk to my son about experiencing failure.	4-Communication is extremely important	5-one-on-one time, talk about her day	7-I spend time talking to my children about school.	10- We talk everyday about the importance of school
1-I focus on asking my son open-ended questions	4-My daughter can talk to me about anything. We talk every day.	5- Parental portal is a great tool for keeping up on what is going on with your kids.	8- I have a strong role in her success. Conversation light-ask questions	10- Parents need to build goals with their kids and share with the school.
1-I received phone calls and progress report from the school.	3- Parents need to be called early in the process.	5-Parents and teachers should talk early in the year about goals for their kids.	8-Make learning fun for the kids.	10- We are truthful to our daughter about out finances.
2-Kids need to be more responsible. That is my speech.	4- School counselor can help to share information between the school and the family.	6-If I know about big project, I will come in to help.	7-Teachers need to know more information about the families	
1-Open ended question help my son to open up about school.	4-I can help as a parent if I know what is going on	5- If I see a problem, I call the teacher.	8-Teachers need to know more information about the families	
2- Kids need to be more responsible about grades	4- It is my job is listen to you and support your efforts.		7/8- Parent should call the school	

Theme of Parent Encouragement

Participants 1-2	Participants 3-4	Participants 5-6	Participants 7-8	Participants 9-10
1-I encourage my son to get involved in extracurricular activities	3-I am trying to constantly connect things to real-life examples	6-I am constantly encouraging him to do better.	7- I encourage motivation and independence. I encourage him to get help when he needs it.	9- I am very active in my son's life. I offer suggestions on how to continue to do well in school
1-He must try different things to know what he likes.	3-I encourage him all the time about his future.	6-I ask my son questions. I put the ownership back on him	7-I encourage him to get help on breaks in school.	9-He get frustrated sometimes in school and can shut down.
1-It is my job to encourage him.	4-I encourage my daughter to get her homework done.	5-I frequently check on her work.	8- I am active in my daughter life. I am present.	9- I encourage supports in school
1-I offer encouraging words about school and his efforts.	4-My daughter works harder when I encourage and support her.	5-I check in multiple times to see if she needs help with homework.	8- I listen to her problems and try to help her through them.	10-We encourage her to stay on a schedule and to be responsible.
2-I support my son to go into extracurricular activities.	4-I provide her feedback.		7-I encourage my daughter to be in positive activities in school.	10-We encourage her to be in extracurricular activities
2-I encourage him to keep to a schedule so he can enjoy other things.			7- I encourage my daughter to volunteer.	
2-I listen to what my son talks about when he gets home.			8-I sit with my daughter to help with homework.	

Theme of Family Routines

Participants 1-2	Participants 3-4	Participants 5-6	Participants 7-8	Participants 9-10
1-The routine is important to his over success.	3-There is a schedule in our home		7-A schedule helps her daughter stay on task.	10-Extremely important to have and follow a schedule
1-The schedule keeps my son on task and focused. He has issues with staying organized.	3-Schedule time for homework and bedtime.		7-Life is busy. We need a schedule.	10- Reading before bed and sleep at 9 pm.
1-We sit every night to review the parent portal.			7-Study hour everyday	9- Rules and expectations are in place in the home.
1-The schedule starts by getting on the bus on time.			8-Schedule starts first thing in the morning.	9-He needs to clean his backpack and do chores every day.
1-My job is to help maintain his schedule.			8-I reinforce everything that needs to be done during the day in the morning	9- He is held accountable for his actions
			8-Evening schedule is as important as the morning one.	9- Sleep on time is very important.

Theme of Consistency of Parental Involvement

Participants 1-2	Participants 3-4	Participants 5-6	Participants 7-8	Participants 9-10
1-Very involved since Kindergarten	3- I enforce and monitor that the work gets done.	6-I was always involved in elementary school	7- I open myself up when she gets home from school.	9-I chaperoned his trips when he was in elementary school.
1-I have backed off on involvement since he has gotten older	3- I stay on him until the work is done.	6-I attended fairs and was in the PTA. You know your child in a new way.	7- I ask about school and what she has for homework. I don't depend on the school.	9-He doesn't like me to go to school now that he is older.
2-I got into the classroom a lot when he was younger.	3- I ask questions about school so he knows that I am interested.	6-Going to school helped me to learn about his friends	8- I check the website and the portal.	10-Parent was involved in PTA. Always attended functions
2-I was consistent when he was younger. He enjoyed that I went.	4- I communicate with my daughter. I don't depend on the school.	5-I monitor my daughter's accommodations through a 504.	8- I question my daughter about school. We use the portal to have conversation.	10-Father tried to get involved as much as possible. My daughter knows I care.
2- I gave praise in front of his friends.	4- I talk and connect with my daughter every day.	5- I communicate with the school through e-mail and calls.	7- I work to connect the learning to the world.	10- We use the parent portal to discuss grades with our daughter.
		5-I use the portal	8- I find extra resources for my daughter.	10- When we look at grades, we discuss goals and hard work.
		6- I use the parent portal and website.		10- Try to tie extracurricular activities to real life.