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## A Family Perspective on Family Involvement Strategies in a Local Urban Elementary School

Barbara Ann Smith  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Barbara Ann Smith

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.

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

A Family Perspective on Family Involvement Strategies  
in a Local Urban Elementary School

by

Barbara Ann Smith

EDS, Troy State University, 2004

MA, Fort Valley State University, 2002

BS, Fort Valley State University, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2023

## Abstract

The active engagement of parents in the educational experiences of their children has been suggested to support high academic achievement for the children. In the project setting, an urban elementary school, educators were struggling to find effective strategies to promote family involvement in their children's education. The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at the project setting and to determine new effective strategies to help them become more involved in their children's education. The conceptual framework for the project is Epstein's (2009) framework for parental involvement which explains how schools can work with families and communities to help families stay informed and involved in their child's education. The study sample was identified using the purposeful sampling technique and comprised 18 family members—parents and /or guardians—of children in grade levels K-5. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found the key barriers to family involvement to be ineffective family-school communication, language barriers, poverty, low level of parental education, and low opportunities for parental participation in decision-making and volunteering within and for the school. Strategies for addressing these barriers and improving family involvement were identified based on Epstein's (2009) typology of family involvement. The study's findings have implications for addressing the barriers to family involvement and creating a change in attitude and practice among teachers so that families feel respected and can participate more in school activities. The findings will also contribute to the empirical literature on family involvement in children's education.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to: To My Heavenly Father, I thank you for all the blessings in my life and for being my refuge and strength during this doctoral journey of mine. Thank you for stirring up my God-given gifts and talents, and for continuing to use and empower me for your glory. In memory of my grandmother, Margie Ross, as you smile from the heavens above—and feel proud of my doctoral accomplishment. I love you dearly! Grandmother, it was the lack of opportunity for your academic accomplishments, which provided so much inspiration necessary for me to continue pursuing my doctoral journey to the end. To my Pastor and companion, Superintendent Robert L. Smith, and the entire House of Prayer COGIC Family, it is the powerful prayers of the righteous that propelled me to this triumphant place. Thank you from the depths of my heart for believing in me! I love you all to infinity and beyond.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

Educators at a local urban elementary school struggle to find effective strategies to promote family involvement in school events. The Parent Engagement Coordinator at the school organized and conducted a minimum of seven family involvement events for families throughout the school year. Data from the events suggests that less than 10% of families participated in each event. Family Attendance logs for student conferences revealed 10% family participation while school activities and workshops log showed 25% family participation. Data from School Improvement Plan also suggests 20% family participation compared to the goal of 60% participation. Despite the reminders that families received about school activities and events via phone calls, emails, flyers, and class dojo, the participation of families remained low.

There are a number of barriers that prevent or limit family participation in school events, especially within the more conventional and obvious forms of family inclusion such as volunteering at school and going to parent–teacher conferences each nine-week grading period (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Factors such as economic constraints, time constraints, parental work schedule, and unclear channels of communication between school personnel and parents, among others, have been identified in the literature as examples of such barriers to family involvement (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022). Despite years of research suggesting the importance of family involvement in

student success, the issue remains on the margin of educational policy and reform efforts in federal and state government (Weyer, 2018).

Family involvement as a key component for academic success is recognized in federal policy via Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2019). Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that Title I schools develop policies involving parents and “school-family compacts,” outlining how educators and families will work together to ensure academic success (GADOE, 2019). The most recent subsequent amendment to ESEA is the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) which extended more flexibility to States, expectations of transparency for parents and for communities, and parental empowerment through information to support decision-making regarding their children’s education (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

The foundation for this project study was the declaration that students benefit greatly when their families support their education to the best of their ability (Chen, 2020). From a developmental perspective, parents are the first teachers that children encounter. Thus, their continued involvement in their children’s education would support learning and improved educational outcomes (Oranga et al., 2022). Family involvement, positive reinforcement, and encouragement are linked to a strong feeling of self-worth, fewer behavioral problems, positive social relations, and high academic competence for children (Oranga et al., 2022). Studies suggests that children whose families are involved in school activities such as parent-teacher organizations, volunteering, and parent-teacher

conferences, perform better in school compared to children whose family are less involved or uninvolved (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Katenga 2017). Studies also suggest that family involvement facilitates good relationships between families and teachers and contributes to a more positive school environment that favors learning (Epstein, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022). Epstein's (2018) research revealed that family involvement should be present throughout the duration of a child's education. Family involvement is a process and student success should drive involvement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2019).

### **Rationale**

The rationale for this project study is evident that there is a clear connection between families being involved and students being successful. At this local urban elementary school, teachers and administrators are finding it difficult to get families involved in their child's educational endeavors and events. The family attendance logs for student conferences show 10% participation, school events and workshops logs show 25% of family participation. Data from School Improvement Plan shows 20% of family participation, in which the goal was 60% participation. Throughout the school year, the Parent Engagement Coordinator at the local urban elementary school organizes and conducts a minimum of seven family involvement events for families to attend and data shows that less than 10% of families attended each event. Despite the reminders that families receive about school events via phone calls, emails, flyers, and class dojo, the participation of families remains low. Research findings suggest schools that reach out to

families, community, and built strong family-school relationships, were found to have a positive impact on student engagement and achievement (Wood & Bauman, 2017).

Family involvement is a concern of the U.S. federal government as it pertains to education (Robinson, 2017). Although educators and families have a major role in the educational success of students, families still face multiple barriers when it comes to involvement in school activities (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Many research findings show that family involvement have been perceived as families being physically present in the schools for conferences and events, where teachers and administrators tell families how they can be involved (Epstein, 2018; Lavoie, 2021; Newman et al., 2019). Other Research suggests that family involvement is when educators and administrators listen to families and ask for their suggestions on improving students' academic performance and behavior (Newman et al., 2019). According to Young et al. (2017), family involvement has an impact on a child's level of competence and independence, offers a sense of security, and helps to reinforce the importance of educational achievement.

When families provide support by participating in school events, and are in constant communication with teachers, there is an increase in children's positive attitude about school and overall progress (Lavoie, 2021). According to research, low-income or minority families are least likely to be involved in their children's education than their high-income families (Chen, 2020). This is a problem for many educators, including me, who struggle to find strategies to encourage family involvement. Furthermore, Willemse et al. (2018) suggested that even though there is evidence of positive influences of family

involvement in schools, still there is a large number of schools lacking involvement and major barriers to family involvement exists in public schools. A study conducted by Echeverria-Castro et al. (2020) revealed that even though families play a pivotal role in their children's education and in the regulation of their behavior, studies report low family involvement in supporting school events, assisting with homework assignments, and maintaining communication with child's teacher. The intent of this project study may contribute to the body of expertise needed to address the perspectives of families in relation to family involvement strategies. Also, findings from this study will assist educators and administrators in formulating new effective strategies to increase family involvement.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Academic Achievement:* This term refers to the achievement of the various skills and knowledge by the child within the classroom or at the school site, as defined within an academic curriculum (Moore, 2019).

*Active Participation:* This term refers to the involvement and participation of parents and/or or families in various school and school-related activities including supporting children at home with homework assignments, providing community tutorial sessions for children, or attending extracurricular activities such as sports, band on, and off school campus (Avnet et al., 2019).

*Barriers:* Factors, conditions, and situations that prevent or decrease family involvement in school activities (De La Cruz, 2020).

*Family involvement:* This term refers to family engagement and participation in activities within the school to support the educational progress of children. Examples of such activities include attending parent/teacher conferences, volunteering in the school, and attending events organized by the school (Parra et al., 2017). Family involvement and Parental Involvement are used interchangeably in the study.

*Language barrier:* This barrier factor exists where it is difficult for two or more people to understand each other during verbal communication due to language difference (Friedman, 2018).

*School improvement plan:* This refers to goals developed by a school regarding progress indicators such as student performance. For example, the State of Georgia requires that every public school in the state to create an improvement plan based on state-mandated assessments of students' performance and inputs from all stakeholders (GADOE, 2019).

*Socioeconomic status (SES):* A social measure determined by factors such as parental income, occupation, and educational level (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.).

*Stakeholder:* This term refers to anyone who is affected by or who is an actor within the phenomenon of the study under investigation. For this study, the stakeholders are students, teachers, paraprofessionals, families, and administrators (Pizmony-Levy et al., 2018).

*Urban elementary school*: The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) considers urban schools as city schools. The NCES places urban schools into four categories based on their location in relation to a city, size, and population density (NCES, n.d.).

### **Significance of the Study**

This project study is significant because the local urban elementary school is lacking in family involvement strategies that are engaging families and or making families want to become involved. There is much research stating how family involvement impacts student success (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Epstein, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022; Wood & Bauman, 2017). In order for the local urban elementary school in this study to develop effective strategies to increase family involvement, the perspectives of families on barriers to involvement and solutions must be obtained. It is important for teachers to listen and gain trusting relationships with their students' families. By providing families with a way to express their feelings, ideas and give suggestions, also provides a buy-in and or ownership of the way the school includes families. By investigating family perspectives on family involvement strategies, the results may better assist educators and administrators in formulating new effective strategies to increase family involvement at the local urban elementary school.

Research has indicated that excellent schools have high quality partnerships with households (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022; Wood & Bauman, 2017); therefore, school, family, and neighborhood partnerships are vital elements in instructing



students. Family involvement affords an important possibility for schools to enrich current school events via bringing parents into the educational process. Increased family involvement has proven to result in elevated pupil success, enhanced family, and teacher satisfaction, and improved educational environment.

### **Research Question**

This qualitative project study is guided by three overarching questions. The answer to these questions will provide insight into families' perspectives regarding new strategies to get more involvement in school events. Naturally, families, teachers, and administrators want to do what is best for children. It is vital that the family's perspective be understood by teachers and administrators. This understanding can be used to build a more reciprocal relationship to create new effective strategies to promote family involvement in school activities. The following questions will be posed to investigate family's perspective on family involvement strategies and potential barriers in a local urban elementary school.

RQ 1: What are family perspectives regarding current strategies to get them involved in their child's school events?

RQ 2: What are the barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities at the local urban elementary school?

RQ 3: What new and effective strategies can the local urban school implement to improve family involvement in supporting school activities?

## **Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative project study is to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved. Family involvement in education has a positive impact on student's performance in school (Fernandez Alonzo et al., 2017). Although there is an abundance of literature regarding family involvement and student's performance, the purpose for this study is to gather literature that is significant to family involvement, potential barriers, and strategies. Some seminal works of literature were published earlier than this time period and will contribute to the framework and discussion.

Presently, there has been an extensive amount of literature on family involvement, including several theories and research on the importance and effects of family involvement. The databases used to search for literature included ERIC, Education Research Complete, Walden University Library, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Georgia Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Thoreau: Search Multiple Databases, Journals, and the Internet. The impact of family involvement on education has been studied, and while there are differences among some researchers, most conclude that family involvement plays a pivotal role in the education of students. The literature review covers the following areas: Conceptual framework, family involvement, barriers to family involvement, and strategies for getting families involved.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The foundation for this study will be based on the framework of parent involvement developed by Epstein in 2009. Epstein's (2009) framework is founded on six types of involvement to engage parents and families in their children's education. These six types of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Newman et al., 2019). This project study will utilize Epstein's (2009) model to gauge perspectives of families concerning family involvement strategies as it relates to participation at the urban elementary school site. This study will solely focus on the perspectives of families. Below is a brief description of Epstein's (2009) six types of parental involvement.

The first type is Parenting, which includes child-rearing abilities and all activities that families engage in to help kids at every age and grade level. Unlike teachers, whose impact on a child is incredibly limited, families maintain life-long commitment to their children. Activities that support this kind of involvement give information to families around their child's development, wellbeing, security, and domestic prerequisites that can help student learning. Some of the activities consists of a variety of courses, training and coaching for families and programs to help with health, nutrition, and home visits at transition points to elementary, middle, and high school (Newman et al., 2019).

The second type is Communication—communication between families and schools can occur in various ways. Schools communicate with families by means of notes and flyers about various school functions and activities. Families give teachers important

information about their child's health and developmental issues. A school web page is an extra mode of discourse with families. Other modes of verbal exchange consist of conferences with families, language translators to aid families as needed, memos, cellphone calls, newsletters, and other communications. The intention of communication is to ensure that families are informed about what is happening at school, encourage participation in programs, and keep them abreast on their child's educational development (Epstein, 2018).

The third type is Volunteering, which applies to enlisting and organizing support from families for school programs and activities. There are three fundamental approaches that families can volunteer for in their child's school. To begin with, they can volunteer within the school or classroom by supporting teachers and administrators as mentors or collaborators. Second, they may volunteer for the school—for example, gathering pledges for or advancing a school event. Finally, they can volunteer as a part of a gathering of people, going to school programs or exhibitions. Volunteer activities may also include school/classroom volunteer software to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. Also, help teachers as chaperones on school field trips, volunteer work at school family center, meetings, and sources for families, participates in survey to become aware of all talents, times, and locations of family volunteers (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Newman et al, 2019).

The fourth type is Learning at home. This relates to giving suggestions, ideas, and data to families about how they can help their children with homework and academic

choices. Families assisting their children with homework or taking them to neighborhood activities, are examples of this type of involvement. These activities create a school-oriented family and empower families to associate with the school educational programs. Activities to encourage learning at home give families information on what children are doing within the classroom and how to help them with homework. Examples of things to do include data for families on competencies required for students in all grades and subject areas, information on homework instructions, how to show and examine schoolwork at home, and family interest in setting student objectives every 12 months and arranging for college or work (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Newman et al, 2019).

The fifth type is Decision making. This alludes to including families within the school decision-making process and to create family leaders and agents. Families take part in school decision-making when they participate in school administration committees such as the parent/teacher association. Other decision-making activities include taking on leadership roles that involves disseminating information to other families, advisory councils, petition unbiased advocacy businesses to lobby for school reform and improvements, and networks to link all families with representatives (Newman et al, 2019).

The sixth type is Collaborating with the community. This refers to the process of identifying and integrating community services and assets to help and support schools, students, and their families. Such collaboration may involve integrating activities for students and community well-being, cultural, recreational, social support, and distinctive

programs/ services, measurements on community activities that connect to mastering abilities and talents, in conjunction with summer programs for students. These components can lead to different results for students, teaching practices, and the overall school climate (Newman et al, 2019).

In addition, every element includes many unique strategies of partnership. Finally, each component poses challenges to include all families, and families should endeavor to meet those challenges. Epstein and Sheldon (2019) considered it extensive for each school to pick out elements applicable in supporting the school in reaching its dreams for educational success and creating an atmosphere of alliance between home and school.

### **Family Involvement**

Family involvement has been described in various ways with some researchers focusing on its key factors. For example, Li & Fischer (2017) define the key factors of family involvement as parenting, communicating with the student, teachers, and the administration, volunteering in activities around the school, guiding the students as they learn at home, playing a role in decision-making, and collaborating with the community on educational matters. Many families view family involvement as transporting their child to and from school and keeping their child safe, but administrators and teachers view family involvement as families periodically visiting the school (Epstein, 2018; Newman et al, 2019). Ntekane (2018) provides a conceptualization of parental involvement as a process in which parents are directly involved in the education of their children; parents are involved by teachers and the school in their children's learning

process and also provide learning assistance to the children as much as they possibly can. Family involvement does not just refer to parents being informed or inquiring about the performance of children at school, it involves them taking an active role to communicate with children about learning and providing genuine encouragement, mentoring, leading and inspiration for learning for the children (Ntekane, 2018).

There are two prongs to family involvement. Families are expected to take part in their child's education both at school and at home. School-based involvement is when parents are volunteering during school hours, attending school meetings, participating in school events, and communicating with teachers (Newman et al, 2019). Home-based involvement is when parents play a part in their child's education at home by assisting with homework, communicating with their child about their day at school, and responding to their child's academic performance.

Research on the impact of family involvement on children's academic achievement is said to have its foundations on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and the associated developmental-ecological perspective of child development. Bronfenbrenner's theory describes five environments in which each child experiences interactions with differing levels of intimacy: the microsystem (an environment in which the child has daily experiences with high levels of intimacy), the mesosystem (a group of interacting microsystems), and the macrosystem (the furthest group influencing the child). In the context of education, the microsystem comprises factors such as family characteristics, and student characteristics, and is the context in which family

involvement is situated. Family support helps the child to develop and complete academic tasks. The microsystem interacts with the macrosystem (which comprises the school, community norms, and cultural beliefs) and the mesosystem (teachers and social groups). By increasing family involvement, schools are making connections to the child's microsystem in order to support learning and academic achievement (Avnet et al., 2019).

The benefits of family involvement for academic achievement begin with development during infancy. Based on the premise that children's earliest experiences can impact their future success, Liu et al. (2020) explored the role of family involvement in development during infancy by reviewing relevant studies. The researchers found that family involvement in young children's education can promote the social-emotional development of the infant, promote better grades, school attendance, test scores, and school behavior. Family involvement was also found to promote students' motivation and performance, increase family interaction with children's emotional, intellectual, and social developmental needs, and promote mutual respect among families and teachers. Based on these findings, the researcher's recommended that family involvement should be considered as a useful tool for promoting academic achievement as it provides information about infants' needs and helps teachers of infants to improve their instructional skills.

Family involvement is also crucial for child's learning and development in contexts where the child has some type of developmental challenge or impairment. Erbas et al. (2019) conducted a study on family involvement in the care of children with hearing



loss. The qualitative study focused on elementary school aged children, ages six to nine. The overarching theme obtained from interviews on the nature of family involvement for these children were: (1) families working behind the scenes; (2) families have their children's language development in mind; (3) families serve as "case managers"; (4) families conduct advocacy for children with hearing loss; and (5) families serve in their core roles as parents. In the context of this study, it can be extrapolated that family involvement will similarly promote attention to the academic needs and development of their children.

Studies have established that family involvement is a positive factor in student performance in urban schools, both at an elementary level and a high school level (Nunez et al., 2017). The extent and quality of family involvement was directly proportional to better school performance (Lowe & Dotterer, 2018). Erol and Turhan (2018) examined the relationship between family involvement and engagement to the school, the Family Involvement Scale and Engagement to School Scale was utilized to 1488 students in Elazığ province. Family involvement, the perceptions of the students who participated in the study, and their appreciation of engagement to the school had been very high. Also, it was found that there used to be a great and tremendous relationship between the family involvement scale and the engagement to school scale. Sixteen percent of the variance related to the ratings of the engagement to school scale derive from the family involvement scale. The researchers showed that in order to expand students' engagement

to school, the involvement of families in the educational processes must be increased and families must be inspired to become involved (Erol & Turhan, 2018).

A review by Boonk et al. (2018) on the correlation between family involvement and students' achievement based on 75 studies conducted between 2003 and 2017 found that the family-involvement variables that correlate with academic achievement are as follows: (a) family support and encouragement learning; (b) reading at home; (c) families expectations for their children's academic achievement (high aspirations); and (d) communication between families and their children regarding academics.

In a primary research completed by Anicama et al. (2018) on family involvement in elementary education in an urban setting, the focus was on a sample group of the first-generation Chinese American families. The focus was the perception of family involvement by the families as compared to that of the teachers. To assess this, the researchers asked families if they have been involved in their children's education then sought the same information from the respective teachers. The results of the study showed that only family involvement from the perspective of the teacher made a difference in the student's English proficiency. For students whose families said they were involved while the teacher said they were not involved, the student's outcome vindicated the teacher's assessment.

Muller (2018) found that children whose families have high levels of involvement tend to have the best results on both grades and achievement test scores. Additionally, Muller (2018) found that the students with the highest levels of family involvement had

mothers who were either stay-at-home parents or only worked part time, suggesting a strong relationship between families work commitments and their engagement with the child's schooling.

An investigation completed by Park et al. (2017) on the relationship between family involvement and performance in low-SES urban neighborhoods revealed that there was a clear correlation between family participation and involvement. In communities where more families were involved in school activities, the students tended to perform better and vice versa (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019). Further, when parents got involved in more school activities, such as fund-raising and volunteering, the tendency for student success was higher. Notably, most urban schools are low-SES, meaning schools that cater to children from low-socioeconomic status (SES) households (Verjans-Janssen et al., 2018). The study revealed that different components of family involvement such as PTA attendance, volunteering, fundraising, and attending meetings are significant factors on student performance (Park et al., 2017).

### **Barriers to Family Involvement**

While family participation is regarded as vital in the educational preparation of children (Avnet et al., 2019; Park et al., 2017; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019), achieving optimal levels of family participation remains a challenge for schools (Antony-Newman, 2019; De La Cruz, 2020). The potential for family involvement to impact student achievement is still largely ignored in some schools, teachers do not encourage family involvement in a systematic manner, and families do not always participate in school

activities even when they are invited and encouraged to do so (Avnet et al., 2019; Willemse et al., 2018). In order to understand the perspectives of families concerning involvement, a brief view must be given to research regarding barriers of involvement.

Researchers Li et al. (2020) applied Epstein's (2009) typology on family involvement in the education of their children to test for efficacy based on socioeconomic status. Based on Epstein's (2009) typology, family involvement is multidimensional including basic components such as providing basic needs for the child and time-related components such as assisting in schoolwork. The researchers sought to evaluate if the contribution of economically secure families was congruent to that of poor families. The results of the study showed that due to financial limitations, poor families are unable to provide some of the components. The families lack the time to participate in some activities such as assisting their children with schoolwork. To make up for the limitations, poor families will overcome some areas of family involvement such as discipline. This imbalanced family involvement is detrimental to the children of poor families. Therefore, encouraging involvement for poor families without measures to mitigate their economic status may be counterproductive.

Another barrier identified in an ethnographical study reported by researchers Allen and White-Smith (2018) evaluated family involvement of low-income African American mothers in the elementary education of their children. The researchers focused on four male African American elementary school students and evaluated the level of involvement that their mothers had in their education, the barriers the mothers faced, and

how to mitigate them. The results of the ethnographic study showed that black mothers had a desire and passion for participating in their children's education, but they faced barriers. The primary barrier was exclusion from their children's schools due to intersectional discrimination. The mothers in the study faced multi-discrimination because they were black, women, and poor. The barriers created by the discrimination limited their ability to participate in their son's education at school. The suggested solution for this barrier was social justice and inclusivity in schools in order to give these minority mothers a voice and opportunity to participate in their children's education. If schools become more culturally intelligent and accommodating of minorities, more families would become involved in their children's elementary education.

Results on a grounded-theory primary research study conducted by Wheeler (2019) on why parents in urban elementary schools fail to participate in school activities revealed that adversities in the lives of the parents such as unemployment, poverty, and crime were among the key factors that hindered involvement (Wheeler, 2019). The second factor was the shortage of staff on the part of the school, which limited parental interaction with the representatives of the school. The third factor was the effects of local culture on school-community relationships. Part of this culture was consistent complaining and snitching at each other, which prohibited cooperation within the community.

De La Cruz (2020) conducted a focused review of available literature on the barriers to family involvement in urban elementary education. The research showed

culture and cultural differences between the parents and the schools to be significant influences. When the culture of school differed exponentially from that of families, they were less likely to become involved in their children's education. However, when schools made an effort to assimilate family culture in school activities, family involvement would increase.

Communication between teachers and families was another factor with the prevalence and effectiveness of communication bearing on family involvement. Since immigrant parents are a key demographic in urban elementary schools, Anthony-Newman (2019) investigated why immigrant parents are reluctant in getting involved in the activities of the schools of their children. The scholar argued that one of the primary barriers is language, as they may not have mastered English enough to gain confidence. Secondly, some immigrant parents do not understand the school systems of the U.S.A. and may not even be aware of their supposed involvement (Boonk et al., 2017). Finally, the researchers established that a system that relies on family involvement would propagate academic inequality when families are unable to participate effectively (Cabus & Ariës, 2017).

Due to the financial plight of many first-generation immigrants, they are more likely to educate their children in urban schools (Park & Holloway, 2018). Li (2018) selected five refugee families that differed demographically and assessed their fate as they interacted with the urban public school system. According to the results of the study, despite the social and demographic differences of the families, their narratives about

interacting with the school system were congruent. Each of them faced a form of discrimination and prejudice from the schools' respective administrations or their representatives. Calzada et al. (2018) similarly examined family involvement among Afro-Latin immigrant families from the Caribbean and found a strong negative correlation between socio-economic status and family involvement, once again suggesting that the main underlying reason for a lack of family involvement is that the parents are working long hours and/or multiple jobs in order to provide for the family.

A study conducted by Oranga et al. (2022) indicated that some barriers for families being involved in their child's education are low level of parental education, economic constraints, family size, absence of frameworks on family involvement, and unclear channels of communication between the school and families. The language spoken at home, SES, ethnicity, gender of parents and child's performance have also been identified as barriers to family involvement (Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2022). When families are not able to communicate with teachers, it may cause families to withdraw their participation due to feelings of intimidation by the professional language used in schools.

Hornby & Blackwell (2018) conducted a study on the barriers to family involvement in education. The small-scale study was conducted using 11 primary schools in the U.K. The study identified four types of barriers to effective family involvement in education as child factors, parent and family barriers, parent-teacher factors, and societal factors. The study further found that families were facing limiting pressures due to

declining support from external agencies and services, potentially affecting family involvement. In response, schools were also developing broader roles to support families suggesting the emergence of a more optimistic approach to family involvement in education.

Based on the premise that immigrant families are a growing but under-researched group, Antony-Newman (2019) conducted a meta-synthesis of 40 qualitative and quantitative studies on immigrant families in Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia. The study showed that immigrant families face barriers to involvement such as language barriers and unfamiliarity with the host country's educational system. Such families also face increased pressure to demonstrate more responsibility for their children's educational performance in ways that further expand educational inequalities.

Allen and White-Smith (2017) conducted a qualitative study to explore black mothers' family involvement looking at family involvement practices, the school experiences of working-class mothers, and cultural wealth. Using cultural wealth frameworks and critical race theory, the researchers also explored the mothers' approaches to providing educational support to their sons. The study found that there were experiences of exclusion among the children which in turn limited their mothers' involvement. Black mothers also faced economic barriers (poverty, limited access to affordable childcare, and time constraints due to work schedules), and school barriers to involvement (such as not being heard when they critique school failures, or being made to feel unwelcome).



Research suggests that teacher competence on issues such as cultural intelligence and avoidance of bias were critical bearing factors for the quantity and quality of family involvement (Allen et al., 2018). A study by Herman and Reinke (2017) found that where teachers had ample training that improved their perception of family involvement, the families were more involved, and their involvement had better results. The researcher reported on an investigation of the family-to-school components of Epstein typology of family involvement in urban elementary education sought to establish if policy-based flaws may have contributed to the failures in family involvement for poor and minority families. The results of the research reflected a flaw in the policy approach to the solution in solving the impasse in urban family involvement.

Two competing narratives of parental involvement emerged in the study of Luet (2017), who explores the possibilities for and limitations to family involvement in a small, city school district. Families describe their reluctance to have interaction formally in a district that constantly fails their children. On the other hand, stakeholders argue that schools will no longer improve until families emerge and become involved.

Representing another lens from which to look at the issue of family involvement, Avnet et al. (2019) explored the impact of diagnosis of disability, existence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and parental involvement on student achievement among students in grades K–5. The premise for the study was that a better understanding of the factors that influence student achievement would enable schools to make changes to school practices in order to impact student performance. The study sought to focus on

factors that were outside the students' control. Nation-wide survey data on elementary students were analyzed in relationship to these three variables. The results indicated that students, both typically developing and students with ASD, had lower family involvement where they are successful in school (Avnet et al., 2019). This finding seems to suggest that families do not consider it necessary to be more involved in their child's education if the child is doing well in school.

### **Strategies to Increase Family Involvement**

Numerous strategies for increasing family involvement are discussed in the literature. Although there are significant overlaps and interactions between diverse strategies, for the purposes of clarity, the strategies are discussed singly in this section.

#### **Teachers' Attitudes**

Teachers' attitudes regarding family involvement would be influential to efforts to improve family involvement. Teachers should be aware that families know their children best and can provide valuable information to support teaching and learning. Thus, family involvement should be encouraged and valued (Liu et al., 2020). Teachers should also maintain a positive attitude towards families—respectful, inviting attitudes that are free of bias irrespective of family socioeconomic or diversity status. Such positive attitudes will encourage family to become more active in school events and in their children's education (Allen et al., 2018; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Luet, 2017).

### **Parental Improvement Activities**

Schools should design a variety of activities to improve family participation in schools. For example, educators can design lectures on topics related to family involvement; teachers can hold regular family–teacher meetings or share weekly parent-teacher journals via email. Teachers can invite families to share concerns about their children through individual conversations or meetings. Family-teacher meetings are another useful tool for facilitating communication between teachers and families. Based on the information exchanged during such meetings, families can gain a better understanding of school and teachers can gain a better understanding of the student’s background and needs (Liu et al., 2020).

### **Parents’ Attitudes and Parenting Styles**

Parental attitude to their role in the child’s education is also influential for their behavior. Parents who are not engaged in their children’s education may just drop off and pick up their children from school. However, where parents understand their roles to be important for their children’s education, they may engage with school activities and teachers in a more intentional and committed manner (Liu et al., 2020). Positive parenting styles are also linked to parental attitudes and also play an important role in promoting student’s educational achievement (Gabielli & Impicciatore, 2022). Studies have found that positive parental expectations, aspirations, and support translate into attitudes that are prerequisites to children’s educational success, such as parental

involvement and participation in children's formal education (Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2022).

### **Understanding the Role of Home-based vs School-Based Involvement**

Both home-based and school-based parental involvement are critical to children's development and learning. However, the type of involvement that is most strongly associated with student achievement varies across elementary and middle schools as children's needs are different in the various age groups. The type of parental involvement that is most strongly associated with achievement in middle school is academic socialization. This type of involvement involves parents communication of achievement expectations, communication of parental value of education, and fostering of aspirations in academics and future career. Academic socialization is a higher level of involvement that requires critical thinking and is not developmentally appropriate for students at the elementary level. For elementary school students, school-based and home-based parental involvement are more appropriate, and both have been shown to have positive impact on student achievement (Avnet et al., 2019).

### **Clear Communication Pathways Between Parents and Schools**

Considerable research indicates that family involvement is influential in regard to student achievement (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Avnet et al., 2019; Epstein, 2018; Newman et al, 2019; Ntekane, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022; Part et al., 2019; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019; Wood & Bauman, 2017). Throughout the literature, communication is consistently evident as an important strategy that impacts family involvement in the

school setting. It is also important to get to know the families of students to better understand their needs and perspective. As observed by Oranga et al. (2022), clear communication pathways between school personnel and parents are vital towards promoting positive relationships and increased collaboration between teachers and parents.

### **Selecting Appropriate Approach to Parental Involvement**

The nature of the involvement, whether supportive or domineering, is a significant factor in student outcomes (Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2022). Alonso et al. (2017) compared the impact of distal or indirect involvement strategies as compared with more controlling and dominating strategies. The primary research took place in a publicly funded elementary school in Spain. For a start, the results of the research study showed that family support was a positive bearing factor on student performance. Further, when families exhibited distal involvement, the students performed better than when families seemed domineering and dominating. Therefore, the researchers proposed a more indirect and supporting approach, to prevent the students from feeling undue pressure, which is detrimental. This relevancy of the research study contributes to the development of actual strategies for improving the impact of family involvement in elementary school education. The study provides evidence that the nature of the involvement is a significant factor in student outcomes. Using this information, schools can enlighten and guide parents towards the more effective indirect involvement as opposed to the detrimental domineering approach.

### **Parental Training**

Research evidence suggests that increasing parental skill through strategies such as training programs increased their involvement in their children's education. A review of the literature conducted by De la Cruz (2020) found cultural intelligence, effective communication, and parental training to be effective strategies for improving parental involvement (De la Cruz, 2020).

### **Governmental Support**

The issue of family involvement from the perspective of government policies and their impact on the problem was investigated by Hamlin and Flessa (2018). The researchers based their investigation on the Canadian Province of Quebec that has a targeted policy for family involvement. The policy provides money to schools for family involvement encouragement and facilitation programs in low-income areas. The researchers sought to establish how the policy affected parental involvement based on Epstein's (2019) typology. The results of the study show that the monies provided by the policy were used to target specific areas that limit parental involvement. Such areas include providing better nutrition, mitigating mental health issues for parents, and technology-related assistance such as training and acquisition of gadgets. These areas of mitigation improved family participation and by extension resulted in better student performance. A government policy that specifically provides money for family involvement programs in urban elementary schools can make a substantial difference in these schools. On the one hand, parents decline to get involved due to secondary issues

while on the other, their involvement is limited by a lack of strategies for absorbing their social capital (Hamilton et al., 2018). Therefore, a policy to improve on the same should both compel parents to get involved and provide modalities for their involvement.

Extrapolating this finding to the US, it can be inferred that a government policy that provides parental support such as better nutrition, parental mental health services, and technology-related assistance, would make a substantial impact in mitigating economic stress among parents, freeing them up to become more engaged with their children's education.

### **Positive School Environment**

Studies suggest that a school environment that promotes social justice and equity may be supportive of higher parental involvement (Guo et al., 2018). Flores and Kyere (2020) argued that there is an erosion of social justice in urban centers and the same extends to education. Such scenarios may make parents consider schools and their administrators as part of the system that oppresses vulnerable communities such as low - income families (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The results of the research showed that principals who undertook social justice projects such as reforming school policy for the benefit of vulnerable children elicited more family involvement in elementary schools (Guo et al, 2018).

### **Teacher Training on Issues Related to Parental Involvement**

Better outcomes in parental involvement are expected where teachers have the skills to communicate effectively with parents, interact effectively with parents from

diverse backgrounds, and are able to design and implement effective parental involvement strategies (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Ho and Cherng (2018) investigated on the impact of teacher's perceptions of families and how that perception affects the prevalence and impact of family involvement. The study was based on the hypothesis that how teachers perceive families affects how the teachers interact with both family and students. The study found that, first, the interaction will affect the school-related aspects of family involvement based on Epstein's typology. Secondly, the interaction will affect the students' opinion of their families and by extension the impact of family involvement on their performance. The research and analysis also found a racial component in teacher perception of families. Teachers had a most positive perception of native white families and the most negative perception of first-generation colored immigrants. These perceptions bore on family involvement in education and by extension, student performance. The researchers recommended cultural intelligence training of teachers to improve their perception towards minority families as a means of improving family involvement and its impact on student performance.

The article provides invaluable information for strategies for solving the racial components of the research problem. Racial-minority families, including first-generation immigrant families, are common in urban elementary schools. Educating teachers on how to overcome racial bias will improve family involvement and its benefits to students. With better-trained teachers, parents will find it easier to get involved and their involvement will be beneficial to students.



### **Implications**

Research indicates a positive correlation between family involvement and a child's success in school (Liu et al., 2020). Almost all improvement strategies involve trying to reach out to the minority or poor urban families. This focus on diversity characteristics and low socioeconomic status stems from the hypothesis that failures in family participation stem from failures due to the economic states of poor and minority families. However, careful evaluation of the situation reveals that the poor and minority families may be willing to participate in their children's education but have been hampered by a failed system. Therefore, it is suggested that instead of focusing all efforts on trying to improve the family commitment and availability, educators should place some focus on improving their policies to make schools more accessible to parents. The solution will include seeking to change policies and make schools more accommodating and accessible to low-income and minority families.

The purpose of this qualitative study project is to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved. Based on the findings, this study could include a project that provides new and effective strategies that can be implemented to positively impact the local urban school community by increasing family involvement.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study project is to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved. Listening to the perspective of families on ways they can become more involved and identifying potential barriers may assist school leaders in formulating new and effective strategies. It is also critical that the school routinely continue to review the effectiveness of its family-involvement plan as the needs of the school may change. Streamlining of parental-involvement programs based on parental perceptions will allow for both optimal levels of family participation, maximum impact on student achievement, and the achievement of school goals. Through the close observation and analysis of a specific school site, this project study will offer suggestions for how such improved participation of families can be accomplished.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

The purpose of this qualitative project study is to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved. Boonk et al. (2018) stated that family involvement is viewed as an important influence in children's educational achievement at home and in the school. Other researchers support that when families are involved in their children's education, they are more responsive and sensitive to their child's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs at home and in the school (Mata et al., 2018). Research from the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education shows that students with family involvement, despite their economic status and ethnic backgrounds, are more likely to have regular class attendance, increase in grades and test scores, better social skills, improved behavior and adapts well to the overall school environment (Brooks, 2019). This project study is guided by Epstein's (2009) framework, which consists of parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Newman et al, 2019). Epstein's (2009) model explains how schools can work with families and communities to help families stay informed and involved in their children's education. This section will explain the selected research design, research method, selection of participants and the research instrument, the data collection and analysis, limitations, delimitations, and ethical assurances of the study.

Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach to research that is used in exploring social phenomena in the natural setting in which they occur (Allan, 2020; Kuckartz, 2019). Unlike quantitative research that uses measurable data to measure cause-and-effect relationships in a research subject, qualitative studies seek to generate better understanding of the phenomena and use qualitative data such as words, pictures, and emotions to obtain detailed insight into the research phenomenon of interest (Kuckartz, 2019). The qualitative research approach is, therefore, suitable for this study as the objective is to explore family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved.

Selecting an appropriate qualitative research design is essential for achieving research goals. There are several types of qualitative research designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Ethnography's purpose is to investigate shared cultural occurrences of a group of people for an extended time (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher did not choose ethnography for this study because it would not provide the specific information needed to improve or resolve the research problem for this project study. The phenomenological approach is defined by Gronmo (2019) as a research approach that seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their lives and their encounters. The researcher also rejected the narrative approach, which investigates the participant personal stories and retells it. Using this approach, the researcher may not answer specific questions in regard to the topic. The

grounded approach was also excluded because it seeks to understand something and develop a theory about the phenomenon being studied (Gronmo, 2019). The basic qualitative research design was chosen for this study. The basic qualitative design will allow the researcher to gain first-hand experiences and establish a comprehensive explanation based on the perspectives of families on family involvement strategies and potential barriers that hinders families from becoming involved. Viewing family involvement strategies through the perspectives of families will allow for informed recommendations that can be implemented at the local urban elementary school. Pertinent data addressed through investigative research will augment the plausible solutions that can be used to solve the problem.

This qualitative project study will be guided by three overarching questions. The answer to these questions will provide insight into families' perspectives regarding new strategies to get more involvement in school events. Naturally, families, teachers, and administrators want to do what is best for children. It is vital that the family's perspective be understood by teachers and administrators.

RQ 1: What are family perspectives regarding current strategies to get them involved in their child's school events?

RQ 2: What are the barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities at the local urban elementary school?

RQ 3: What new and effective strategies can the local urban school implement to improve family involvement in supporting school activities?

## **Selection of Participants**

### **Sample**

This study was conducted using a sample population of families from only one school. The sample for the study were elementary families (parents or guardians) from grades Kindergarten through Fifth, which have at least one student in attendance at the local urban elementary school. In order to be able to conduct an in-depth analysis, I selected a small number of participants, because the value to a researcher in giving an in-depth analysis diminishes for each additional person (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A sample size of 18 parents or guardians of local urban elementary school students was chosen for the study. A larger sample size would have been too bulky and difficult to manage.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The sampling procedure used was the purposive sampling technique. In purposeful sampling, the researcher identifies and selects individuals or groups of individuals that have experienced or who can best help one to understand the central phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling was conducted based on the criteria that selected elementary families from grades Kindergarten through Fifth have at least one student in attendance at the local urban elementary school. The Parent Engagement Coordinator (PEC) at the local urban elementary school selected the participants from Infinite Campus, which is the parental attendance program. The PEC selected the sample for the study as she had access to the contact information of parents

and was better placed to contact them on behalf of the researcher as well as assure the parents regarding the purpose of the study, which was for educational purposes only.

Sample size consisted of three parents or guardians of students from each grade level (K–5) at the local urban elementary school, which totals 18.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through interviews, attendance logs of family participation in teacher conferences and school activities provided by the parent engagement coordinator at the local urban elementary school, and data from the school. The data were scrutinized for trends in parental participation at school activities at the research setting, to provide a confirmation of the low participation of parents in school activities. This confirmation was necessary to assure that the findings of the study would truly represent a context where there is low parental involvement and that the findings would also address the problem truthfully.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from parents and guardians of elementary school students. This interview format allows researchers to collect data on a specific topic or area using the format of open-ended questions (Johnson, 2020). Interview questions were developed based on the findings from the literature regarding the concept of parental involvement, its benefits, barriers, and strategies that can be used to improve involvement. The interviews were conducted via Zoom or phone conference due to COVID-19 guidelines with elementary (grades K–5) families. The interviews were recorded automatically using the Zoom software with the permission of each participant,

in addition to notetaking by the researcher. Due to the busy schedule of families, the researcher was available to interview families at their convenience, including requests for after duty hours and weekends. Data received from the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim into a word document.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, described as a method of identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Although some scholars hold this data analysis technique to be particularly suitable for ethnographic or phenomenological studies, thematic analysis is flexible and can be used within a range of epistemological frameworks and paradigmatic orientation. As a result, this method of analysis can be applied to a wide variety of study designs, purposes, research questions, and sample sizes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). For this study, the six-step thematic analysis framework prescribed by Kiger and Varpio (2020) was applied.

#### **Step 1: Familiarization With the Data**

This step involves becoming familiar with the data set through repeated and active reading of all data collected in the study (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). For this project, I actively read through the interview transcripts and took notes during the interviews to gain familiarity with the data. The process of transcription of data from audio to written formats also helped me become familiar with the data.



**Step 2: Generation of Initial Codes**

Codes are defined as basic segments of information that can be assessed from the raw data way regarding the phenomenon (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Codes are created by identifying and organizing data items of interest, units of information, and other preliminary ideas within the data. Where a coding framework or template has been developed for the study, the codes should fit logically within that framework. The coding framework can be deductive (guided by the theoretical framework for the study), or inductive (based on pertinent issues identified in the data) (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). For this project, once coding is completed across the entire data set, the data will be collated by codes to prepare for identification of themes. The coding process will be done manually. Coding will also be done using a deductive process that will be anchored on Epstein's six types of parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) as a theoretical framework.

**Step 3: Searching for Themes**

The third step involves examining the collated data extracts or categories to look for potential themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Themes are defined as patterns of data that occur within the codes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Theme identification is an active and interpretive process in which themes are constructed by analyzing, comparing, combining, and mapping how the categories of codes relate to one another. Similar to the coding process, theming can be inductive where themes are expressly derived from the

coded data or deductive where themes are based on predefined theoretical frameworks (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). For this project, theming was done deductively based on Epstein's six types of parental involvement as a framework for analysis. Theming was done manually; the themes and patterns will be color coded by common words or ideas to determine in which of Epstein's six areas of family involvement the information would be best categorized. The total of each category was tallied to determine the number of comments for each area. The themes provided the data to produce the position paper report. A thematic map was developed to demonstrate the cross-connections between the concepts, main themes, and sub-themes (See Fig. 2).

#### **Step 4: Review of Themes**

Reviewing themes is described as a two-level analytical process. At the first level, a review is done to assure that coded data placed within each theme is a proper fit. Level two of the review involves evaluating the themes in relation to the entire data set to ensure that individual themes fit within the data set meaningfully and that the thematic map (where used) accurately represents the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

#### **Step 5: Definition and Naming of Themes**

This step involves creating a narrative description of respective themes, including why the themes are important to the research questions. The narrative covers how the codes converge with each to provide unique insights and also identifies sub-themes, which are smaller patterns or even hierarchies of data within the main themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

### **Step 6: Developing the Report/Manuscript**

The final step in the analytic framework involves writing up the analysis and a description of findings. The report is a narrative account of how the research was executed including selection of themes and interpretation of findings. The report is presented using both representative data facets (direct quotes from the raw data), and narrative descriptions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Data collection was begun after the researcher had applied for and received approval for the study from the Institutional Review Board at the researcher's institution. The researcher then applied and obtained permission for the research study from the local school district to conduct the study in the district. Next, the researcher sought permission from the local urban elementary school to be studied. Upon receiving school-level permission, the researcher sent out letters of request for participation to the school's administration for distribution to selected families with a detailed explanation concerning the nature of the study.

Ethical principles in research involve respecting the rights of participants and protecting all participants from harm. These principles were upheld in this study. Each participant received a detailed information sheet and consent form before being enrolled in the study. The information sheet contained details about the project such as requirements, benefits, risks, and rights of participants. No risks were anticipated in the study. The participants were informed that their involvement in the study was fully

voluntary and that they could leave the study at any time and for any reason whatsoever. Only participants who signed the voluntary consent form were enrolled in the study.

Participants rights to privacy and confidentiality were maintained as stated in the consent form. Their names were held confidential, no personal identifying information was used in any document, their responses were also kept anonymous. To protect confidentiality in the research, the researcher used pseudonyms instead of personal identifying information and all collected information were secured in a locked cabinet. The information was discarded after the study based on the policy of the researcher's institution.

### **Procedures to Assure Evidence of Quality**

The researcher implemented a series of procedure to assure the trustworthiness of the study. Four criteria were applied to establish trustworthiness - credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Gronmo, 2019).

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is the extent to which outputs from the study align with the real-life situation (Coleman, 2022; Madondo, 2021). Credibility for this study was established through peer review of the interview data. The peer review process is when a colleague is knowledgeable about the research topic and is qualified to review the study (Gronmo, 2019). I asked an independent person to review all interview data for accuracy and consistency. Also, this peer debriefer reviewed all data interpretations at the conclusion of the project study.

**Dependability**

Dependability is a quality criterion that corresponds to the construct of reliability; this criterion can be established by using structured and validated processes and tools (Madondo, 2021). For this study, structured qualitative techniques were applied—a basic qualitative design, purposeful sampling, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis of data.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the outputs can be applied to similar contexts or the extent to which the study can be replicated in similar contexts (Madondo, 2021). This quality can be established by providing a rich description of the context to allow readers or other researchers apply the study to their own contexts (Rose & Johnson, 2020). For this study, a rich contextual background is provided in the literature review.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability aligns with the quality of objectivity and indicates the extent to which bias was controlled in the study (Madondo, 2021). As an employee at the urban elementary school, there is a possibility that I have met some of the families. This could result in the development of personal bias. Therefore, several processes were used to control bias in this study. First, bias was controlled through peer review of the interview data. Bias was also controlled through member checking of the interview transcripts (Gronmo, 2019). Member checking is a process whereby participants are asked to examine the result of the interviews performed by the researcher (Gronmo, 2019).

Researcher reflexivity was also used to minimize researcher bias. Reflexivity is defined by Ngozwana (2018) as the examination of one's personal commitments and views to see how influence all aspects of the study—selecting a research approach, framing the problem, data collection, and data interpretations. I kept detailed notes regarding my thought processes and how I made decisions across the entire coding and theming process, including how themes were selected, adjusted, or even removed, in a reflexive journal. Also, a validity check was performed by using triangulation. Triangulation is a technique in which multiple data sources are used to develop comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Gronmo, 2019). Triangulation was done using data from the literature review, records collected from the school on family involvement, and notes taken during the study to complement the interview findings. The data collected in the study were also subjected to scrutiny for discrepancies. Deviant data were subjected to additional scrutiny in order to understand them. Such data were noted and included in the report.

### **Limitations**

Limitation of this study may include population size. In addition, the Project Study interviews were only conducted in English language format; thus, none or limited English-speaking individuals may be underrepresented in the sample population. Another possible limitation of this study is that only one school was used, and families were all from the local urban elementary school. The findings do not represent all local urban elementary schools in the district, therefore, cannot be generalized to larger populations.

## **Data Analysis Results**

This section is divided into six sub-sections: Data generation, building of findings, findings, discrepant cases, evidence of quality, summary of outcomes, and project deliverable.

### **Data Generation**

#### **Participant Recruitment Outcomes**

Primary data were collected from parents and guardians of students from grades Kindergarten through Fifth grade at the local urban elementary school. The participants were selected from Infinite Campus, the school's parental attendance program, by the Parent Engagement Coordinator (PEC). The PEC selected had access to the contact information of parents and contacted them on behalf of the researcher. Recruitment of candidates occurred over a period of two weeks, before the interviews were conducted. The initial sample size for the study was 18—three participants (parents) from each grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade. The final sample size was 16, as two participants – one parent from Grade 4 and Grade 5 - decided to drop out of the study due to unexpected family emergencies. Replacements could not be made for the dropouts as the incident occurred within 2 and 4 hours of their scheduled interviews. Table 1 presents a description of the participants.

**Table 1***Description of Interviewees*

<i>S/N. P=Participant/Parent</i>	<i>Gender M=Male F=Female</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Socioeconomic Background/Income H/M=High/Middle L=Low</i>	<i>Class Level of Student PK-5</i>
P1	F	26	L	Kindergarten
P2	F	30	L	Kindergarten
P3	F	Not Identified	L	Kindergarten
P4	F	Not Identified	L	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade
P5	M	32	H/M	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade
P6	F	26	L	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade
P7	F	28	L	Grade 2
P8	M	40	H/M	Grade 2
P9	F	21	L	Grade 2
P10	F	25	Not identified	Grade 3
P11	F	30	L	Grade 3
P12	F	23	L	Grade 3
P13	M	35	Not identified	Grade 4
P14	F	40	L	Grade 4
P15	F	39	Not identified	Grade 5
P16	M	Not Identified	Not identified	Grade 5

**School/Student Profile**

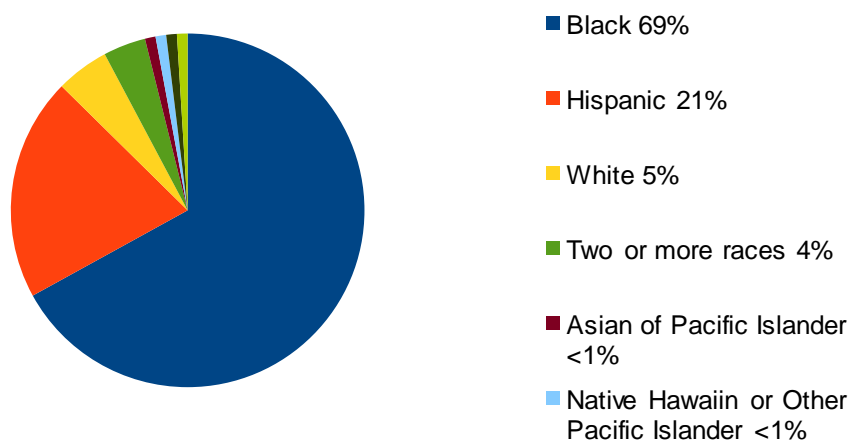
Information about the project setting is deemed important for this study as it provides added context to the description of participants and their experiences regarding school involvement. Some student demographic patterns will most likely align with family demographic profiles. The student population at the research site is 237 and the school serves PK–5. There are 24 equivalent full-time teachers and 1 full-time school counselor. Twenty-two percent (22%) of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 17% scored at or above that level for reading. The school’s minority



student enrollment is 96%. The school enrolls 81% economically disadvantaged students. The student population is made up of 49% female students and 51% male students. A visual representation of additional students' demographic profile at the project site is presented in Figures 1-3.

### Figure 1

#### *Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity*



The highest proportion of students in the school are black (69%), followed by Hispanic (21%) and White at (5%). Students from other groups such as Native American, Asian Pacific, Hawaiian, or mixed races accounted for the remaining proportion of students. From the researcher's experience as well, the racial profile of parents and guardians resembles the pattern illustrated in this visual.

**Figure 2**

*Student Demographics: Native English Speakers vs. English Learners*



Majority of the students are native English speakers. Representation of parents and guardians who are non-native versus native English speakers resembles this pattern as well.

**Figure 3**

*Student Demographics: Socioeconomic Background*



Majority of the students and their parents are from low-income backgrounds. The socioeconomic pattern for parents in the school will resemble the above visual as well.

## **Data Gathering**

The data for this study were gathered using semi-structured interviews conducted with parents of children at the local urban elementary school. The interviews were conducted over a period of 8 days, two interviews per day. Each interview lasted for one hour. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom recording function. The recordings were then transcribed into a Word document in preparation for analysis. The data were analyzed using the thematic analytic technique based on Kiger and Varpio's (2020) six-step analytical framework.

## **Building of Findings**

### **Research Problem**

Studies suggest that children whose families are involved in school activities perform better in school compared to children whose family are less involved or uninvolved (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Katenga 2017). Family involvement and encouragement are linked to benefits such as a strong feeling of self-worth, fewer behavioral problems, and high academic competence for children (Oranga et al., 2022). Family involvement as a key component for academic success is recognized in federal policy (GADOE, 2019). However, educators at the research setting, a local urban elementary school, struggle to find effective strategies to promote family involvement in school events. Data from school events reveal low parental participation and involvement in the school. For example, the family attendance logs for student conferences show 10% participation, school events and workshops logs show 25% of family participation. Data from School

Improvement Plan shows 20% family participation whereas the goal is 60% participation. Accordingly, this study sought to investigate family's perspective on family involvement strategies and potential barriers in a local urban elementary school, with a view to improving parental involvement in the school.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by three research questions: (1) What are family perspectives regarding current strategies to get them involved in their child's school events?; (2) What are the barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities at the local urban elementary school?; and (3) What new and effective strategies can the local urban school implement to improve family involvement in supporting school activities?

### **Alignment of Interview and Research Questions**

Interviews were used as the primary form of data collection for this study. In order to help streamline the study, interview questions were streamlined with the research questions, assuring that the interview questions would align with the research questions (Table 2). The interview questions were developed to specifically address the research questions. Epstein's framework (Newman et al, 2019) was used as a guide to support the construction of the interview protocol. The framework identified six areas for parents to become involved: (1) parenting; (2) communication; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision making; and (6) collaborating with the community.

**Table 2****Alignment Trail for Interview and Research Questions**

<i>Research Questions (RQ)</i>		<i>Interview Questions (IQ)</i>	
RQ1	What are family perspectives regarding current strategies to get them involved in their child's school events?	IQ1	Please describe your experience of being involved in your child's classroom and school. How often are you involved during the school year?
		IQ2	What classroom or school functions have you been invited to attend? When you do attend, please describe your experience. Can you give an example?
		IQ3	How welcomed do the school staff and classroom teachers make you feel when you visit the local urban elementary school? Is there an example of a time when you felt specifically welcomed or unwelcomed?
		IQ4	How have you participated in your child's educational journey? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What types of support do you offer him/her at home?</li> <li>b. Do you feel prepared to help your child with their academic studies?</li> <li>c. Has the local urban elementary school, or your child's classroom teacher provided any tips, training, or materials to support you in helping your child?</li> </ul>
RQ2	What are the barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities at the local urban elementary school?	IQ5	In your experience what needs to be changed for families to become more actively involved at their child's school?
		IQ6	During your experience communicating with the local urban school, how well does the school staff listen to parents? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are they respectful of the families' cultures, language, goals, or financial condition?</li> </ul>
RQ3	What new and effective strategies can the local urban school implement to improve family involvement in supporting school activities?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. What changes need to occur to increase family and staff interactions? Among the ideas you have shared, which one is most important?</li> <li>c. What would you tell the principal is a priority to get families involved?</li> <li>d. What other priorities you believe the school must take?</li> </ul>
		IQ7	In your experience with the local urban elementary school, is there anything the school can do, change, or implement to encourage families to be actively involved at the local urban elementary school? How can the school start to include families?
		IQ8	Do you have any other comments you would like to add regarding your experience with family involvement in the local urban elementary school? Is there anything you want to add to our conversation that I haven't asked you and you feel is important for me to know?

## **Collection, Organization, and Analysis of Data**

### **Collection of Data**

All interviews were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 guidelines. The interviews were conducted over a period of 8 days, two interviews were scheduled daily. Each participant received a numerical code for use during the interview. The transcript for each interview was developed immediately after each interview as the audio transcription software was used for the interviews. I also reviewed documents pertaining to family involvement in school-based activities - attendance logs of family participation in teacher conferences and school activities provided by the parent engagement coordinator at the local urban elementary school. Previous review of the documents had revealed the trends in parental participation and confirmed low participation of parents in school activities. Additional review of the documents as part of the data analysis process did not reveal data on barriers to parental involvement or perceptions regarding parental involvement. However, it provided data on trends in parental participation within respective school activities to which parents were invited. Responses to interview questions and prompts during the Zoom interview process and a review of documents were used to highlight the perspective of the participants regarding parental involvement at the research site.

### **Organization/Preparation for Analysis**

Data organization and preparation for analysis began immediately after conducting the first interview and continued until completion of scheduled interviews. In

preparation for analysis, the transcript for the studies were printed and re-read twice in real-time comparison to the audio recording. This process allowed the researcher to assure accuracy in the transcribed data.

### **Data Analysis**

Two levels of analysis were conducted on the data. On completion of all the interviews, the first level of analysis, thematic analysis, was done. This involved analysis of the data to identify parental perceptions regarding the factors that facilitate their involvement in the school and the factors that served as barriers to their involvement. Codes that represented facilitators and barriers to parental involvement were developed. Other useful information regarding parental perceptions on the research topic was coded separately. The codes were scrutinized for patterns of meaning or themes that aligned with answers to the research questions. Raw data to support each of them was also identified from the transcripts.

The second level of analysis involved organizing the data from the transcripts (codes and emergent themes) under Epstein's six types of parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) constructs. This analysis was done using a recording form that was designed with Epstein's six types of parental involvement. The analysis allowed sub-themes to emerge that represent Epstein's six types of parental involvement.

The entire data analysis process was conducted in a systematic manner. The interview transcripts were analyzed one by one – thematic analysis and analysis based on

Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement. When all the transcripts had been analyzed individually, a comparative review was then done across all the forms to derive the final results from the analysis. Since coding of data and analysis had been done using Excel software, comparison of findings from each transcript could be done using the Excel spreadsheet.

### **Peer Debriefing**

A peer debriefer was enlisted to review all interview data for accuracy and consistency. The peer debriefer was an educator from the school district. A confidentiality agreement form was completed and signed by my peer debriefer to ensure confidentiality. Upon conclusion of the data analysis procedures, I enlisted the peer debriefer to look at the data analysis process and interpretations. The peer debriefer reviewed the transcripts against the audio recordings to double-check accuracy. He also conducted a parallel thematic analysis process and his findings were compared to mine. In-depth discussions were undertaken to identify meanings and reach a consensus regarding any statements that seemed ambiguous. The peer debriefer assisted me in looking at the data from a different perspective and in checking that all perspectives relevant to the research questions were captured. Some revisions were done to the relationships and sub-themes identified from the data due to the peer debriefer's contributions. The peer debriefer also reviewed the school documents, permission for the review was obtained from the school leadership and confidentiality regarding the school documents was included in the confidentiality document signed by the peer debriefer.



There were no discrepancies between the researcher's findings from school documents and the findings of the peer debriefer from the same documents.

### **Findings**

In this sub-section, I present (1) a summary of the patterns - Themes (T) and Sub-themes (ST) - that emerged from the data; (2) a description of the relationship process associated with the data analysis of qualitative data sets to show how the research questions link with the research findings; and (3) in-depth presentation of the themes (T) and sub-themes (ST).

#### **Summary of Patterns**

Three main themes emerged from the thematic analysis as follows: (1) level of parental satisfaction with school involvement strategies; (2) barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities; and (3) recommended strategies to improve family involvement in supporting school activities. Upon additional analysis based on Epstein's (2009) framework, six sub-themes were developed under each main theme as follows: (1) parenting; (2) communication; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision making; and (6) collaborating with the community. Table 3 shows the three main themes (T) and associated sub-themes (ST) that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 3****Themes and Subthemes**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Themes (T)</i>	<i>Sub-Themes (ST)</i>
T1	Level of parental satisfaction with school involvement strategies	T1 ST1: Level of parental satisfaction with parenting T1 ST2: Level of parental satisfaction with communication T1 ST3: Level of parental satisfaction with volunteering T1 ST4: Level of parental satisfaction with learning at home T1 ST5: Level of parental satisfaction with decision-making T1 ST6: Level of parental satisfaction with collaborating with the community
T2	Barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities	T2 ST1: Barriers related to parenting T2 ST2: Barriers related to communication T2 ST3: Barriers related to volunteering T2 ST4: Barriers related to learning at home T2 ST5: Barriers related to decision making T2 ST6: Barriers related to collaborating with the community
T3	Recommended strategies to improve family involvement in supporting school activities.	T3 ST1: Strategies to improve parenting T3 ST2: Strategies to improve communication T3 ST3: Strategies to improve volunteering T3 ST4: Strategies to improve learning at home T3 ST5: Strategies to improve decision making T3 ST6: Strategies to improve collaborating with the community

**Relationships in the Data Analysis Process**

Three relationships occur in the analysis of the qualitative data sets. The relationships occur between the Research Questions (RQ), Interview Questions (IQ), Themes (T), and Sub-Themes (ST). The relationships are broken down, beginning from the first to the last, as follows:

**1. Relationship between Research Questions (RQ) and Interview Questions (IQ)**

- RQ1 relates to interview questions 1 – 4 (IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, and IQ4).
- RQ2 relates with interview questions 5 and 6 (IQ5 and IQ6)
- RQ3 relates with interview questions 7 and 8 (IQ7 and IQ8)

**2. Relationship between Interview Questions (IQ) and Themes (T)**

- Interview questions 1-3 (IQ1, IQ2, IQ3) relate with Theme 1 (T1)
- Interview question 4 (IQ4) relates with Themes 2 and 3 (T2 and T3)
- Interview questions 5 and 6 (IQ5 and IQ6) relate with Theme 2 (T2)
- Interview questions 7 and 8 (IQ7 and IQ8) relate with Theme 3 (T3)

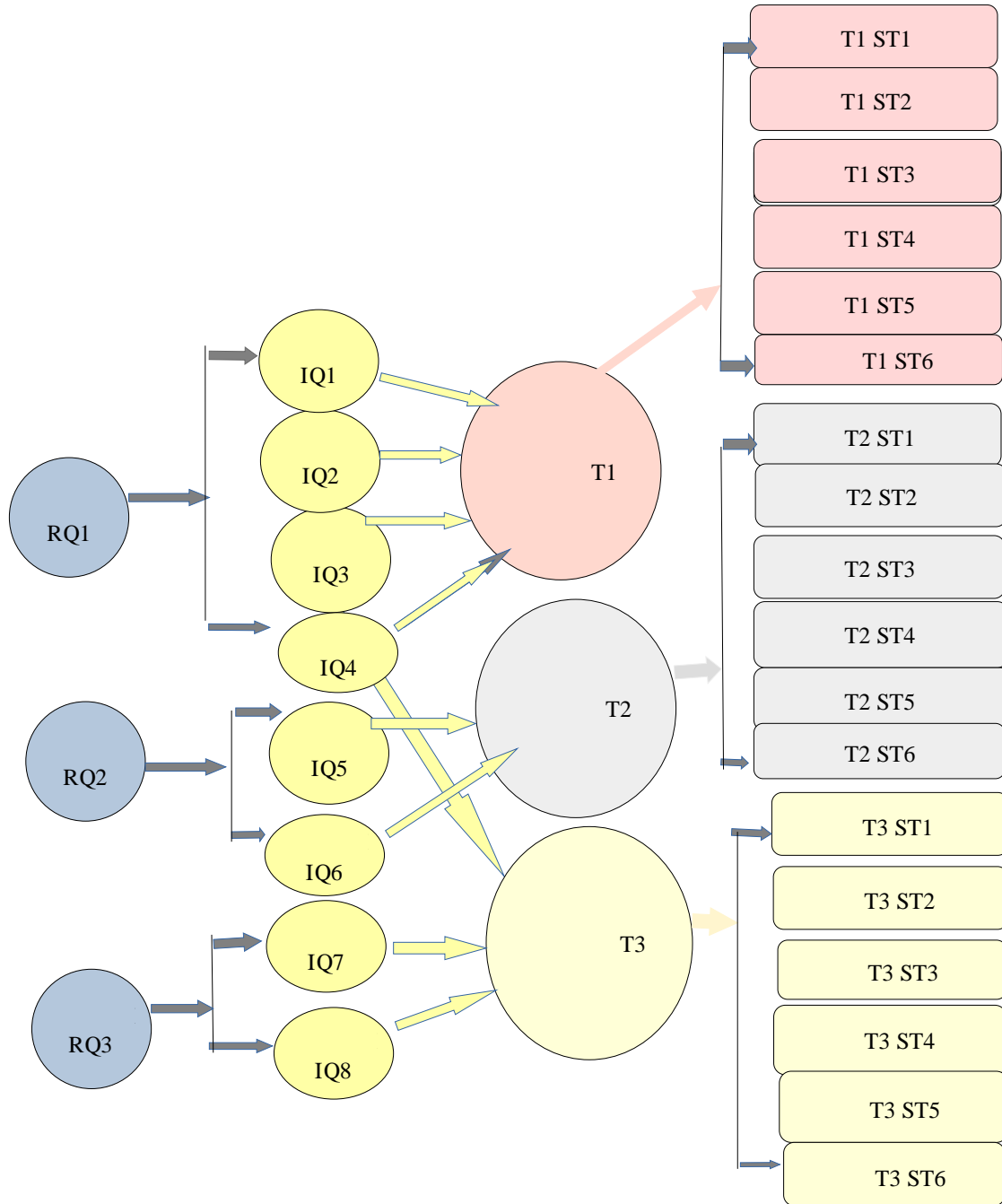
**3. Relationship between Themes (T) and Sub-themes (ST)**

- Theme 1 (T) has six Sub-themes (T1 ST1; T1 ST2; T1 ST3; T1 ST4; T1 ST5; T1 ST6)
- Theme 2 (T) has six Sub-themes (T2 ST1; T2 ST2; T2 ST3; T2 ST4; T2 ST5; T2 ST6)
- *Theme 3 (T) has six Sub-themes (T3 ST1; T3 ST2; T3 ST3; T3 ST4; T3 ST5; T3 ST6)*

These relationships are mapped below (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Relationship Between RQ, IQ, T and ST*



### **Themes and Sub-Themes (In-Depth Presentation)**

#### **Theme 1: Level of Family Satisfaction With Current School Involvement Strategies**

This theme sought to broadly capture how parents felt about the school involvement strategies and programs that were currently used by the school. The theme focused on identifying the “level” of satisfaction as expressed within the data such as high, low, moderate, and so on. Attempts were then made to organize the findings based on Epstein’s framework for parent involvement, to capture the “level” of satisfaction in school involvement in relation to specific types of involvement.

Eleven of the parents interviewed (69%) reported low involvement in their children’s classroom and school while 5 parents (31%) reported moderate to high involvement in school activities. Ten of the participants (63%) reported feeling dissatisfied with the current involvement strategies implemented by the school while 6 participants (37%) reported that while they were not satisfied, improvements could be made in involving families. The reasons reported for ‘not being satisfied’ were few numbers of programs, low meaningfulness of events, poor treatment received at events, and low opportunities for parental input. Some key statements made in reporting such dissatisfaction were: “There are certain activities to which parents are invited as a routine like graduation and so on. But I definitely feel that there is room for improvement” (Participant P7). “I have to be there for my child. But some events are not meaningful. Parents need to be able to make more input” (Participant P10).

The school programs to which families are invited at the project setting are student conferences, school activities such as graduations and games, and workshops for parents and teachers. Families also receive reminders for these events via phone calls, emails, flyers, and class dojo. Eight parents (50%) stated that they did not feel welcome or fully acknowledged at the school. As stated by Participant P12,

My son had an altercation with his classmate a day before the conference. I don't know if that affected how I was received, but I certainly felt unwelcome at the conference. I haven't attended conferences since then although I do go for some other events

The findings reveal an alignment between low parental involvement (69%) and high parental satisfaction (63%), potentially providing an explanation for the low parental participation in school activities reported in school documents. The findings also reveal a host of reasons why parents did not feel satisfied with the parental involvement strategies currently used by the school including feeling unwelcome, few numbers of programs, low meaningfulness of events, poor treatment received at events, and low opportunities for parental input.

Organization of the findings based on the level of satisfaction as it relates to Epstein's specific types of involvement is presented following.

### ***Sub-Theme 1: Level of Parental Satisfaction Regarding Parenting***

There were no statements that described the level of satisfaction in regard to parenting. However, there are positive expressions regarding the help received by the school in regard to parenting. The participants reported that they received support from the school for successful parenting. On IQ3, ‘whether the local urban elementary school or your child’s classroom teacher provides any tips, training, or materials to support parents in helping your child’, all the participants gave an affirmative response.

Participant P7 stated, “We receive helpful tips when we go to parent-teachers meetings. I also attended a workshop on parenting and it was really helpful.” Supporting this observation, Participant P16 also stated, “I didn’t think I needed anyone to tell me how to be a parent. But the workshop I attended made me realize that learning is relevant for every aspect of life, including parenting.” The findings indicate that the school incorporates supports for parenting as one its parental involvement strategies and that this strategy is well received.

However, some dissatisfaction was expressed by 3 participants regarding the frequency of support and the extent of the support. As stated by Participant 4, “We receive materials at parent-teacher workshops on various aspects of children’s education. However, it seems there is never enough time to properly explain those materials to us. I am not an educator. I like things to be explained clearly to me.” Participant 15 similarly stated,

I have a number of handouts I received during the last meeting with teachers. It was supposed to be a training workshop, but the training aspect was lacking. We really just listened to progress being made at the district level with issues at the school and then had the handout packet.

The findings suggest that while the participants appreciated the parenting support provided to them in the form of information and training, more attention is needed to make sure they understand the information they receive. The school might need to align the strategies used in parental training workshops to better align with parental educational levels and language.

### ***Sub-Theme 2: Level of Parental Satisfaction Regarding Communication***

The level of satisfaction or otherwise, with communication strategies used by the school was not explicitly stated. However, the data seemed to suggest that was a need to increase the level or frequency of communication between the school and parents as it affects parental involvement activities. As stated by Participant P2, “I would definitely like to be more involved in what is happening at the school. I do receive invitations to activities but it seems to me such invitations are few and far between when you look at the whole year.” Participant P2’s response suggests that the low level of involvement is due to the low numbers of invitations to programs received per school year. Supporting this position, Participant P4 also stated that, “It would seem there are few activities in the school to which families are invited. Other than the PTA meetings, I only got invited to



two sports events and the end-of-year parties.” This finding was coded as low numbers of parental invitations to school events.

### ***Sub-Theme 3: Level of Parental Satisfaction With Volunteering***

There was little data reported on volunteering among parents. The concept of volunteering, specifically, did not emerge from the data. These findings suggest that there is low effort by the school to enlist and organize support from families for school programs and activities.

### ***Sub-Theme 4: Level of Parental Satisfaction With Regard to Community***

Similar to volunteering, level of satisfaction in regards to the role of the school in identifying and integrating community services and assets to help and support schools, students, and their families, was not mentioned. Some parents mentioned the community programs into which their children were enrolled, but it was not linked to parental involvement. One participant mentioned the beneficial impact of tutorial services on her child while another mentioned benefit from a mental health-related program accessed through the school. Participant P9 stated, “My child receives tutoring and that has helped him improve in his math performance. I think such programs are really important for students in this community.”

### ***Sub-Theme 5: Level of Parental Satisfaction With Learning at Home***

Parental level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with ‘learning at home’ relating to strategies such as giving suggestions, ideas, and data to parents and families about how they can help their children with homework and academic choices did not emerge from

the data. However, it can be inferred that parents appreciate such support since such information is incorporated into training workshops for parents.

***Sub-Theme 6: Level of Parental Satisfaction With Decision-Making***

The level of satisfaction regarding parental involvement in the decision-making activities at the school was not explicitly stated. However, only three of the participants (19%) reported being included in decision making activities: The decision-making activities mentioned were “a request for my opinion regarding an up-going PTA meeting” (Participant P5), “the principal wanted to know if I had objections to my daughter’s PA class” (Participant P8), and “I was invited to an advisory council last summer” (Participant 13). These findings seem to suggest there is no specific strategy to leveraging parental involvement in decision-making activities as they activities are all different. It suggests that the experience of different parents in regards to the decision-making activity they attend is different. Standardizing the decision-making activities for parental involvement might be a helpful strategy for the school to adopt.

In summary, the findings under theme 1 reveals that there is a high level of dissatisfaction (63%) with the current strategies for parental involvement being used by the school for a number of reasons. However, at the level of Epstein’s six typologies of involvement, the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is not so clear-cut. The data does reveal the experiences and perceptions of parents in regards to school involvement, with some experiences being positive and others being negative. However, with respect to this specific theme, the findings on self-reported “level of satisfaction” across Epstein’s

(2009) typologies are near non-existent. The reason for this ambiguity may be due to the method of data collection. A survey with a scaled response option may have been more appropriate for measuring the level of satisfaction for these various constructs. Such a survey could include opportunities for explanations where respondents are invited to provide details on their positions and responses.

The analysis based on Epstein's (2009) typologies, however, is not without value. This analysis provides a valuable contribution to this study as it reveals that the factors identified as the causes of dissatisfaction (poor staff attitudes, poor treatment of parents, low perceived meaningfulness in activities) are not represented within Epstein's (2009) framework. Thus, these findings would seem to suggest that there are limitations for practice where Epstein's framework is adopted as the sole framework for exploring parental satisfaction with school involvement strategies.

## **Theme 2: Barriers to Family Involvement in School Programs**

Barriers to family involvement in school programs are factors that serve as a hindrance or limit the participation of families in their children's school. The data analysis returned several factors that contribute to low family involvement. The factors were then organized into six sub-themes based on Epstein's framework for parental involvement.

### ***Sub-Theme 1: Barriers Related to Parenting***

The barriers to family involvement identified under this sub-theme were the lack of interest or caring for child's progress, time constraints of working parents, and feeling

that their involvement was not a big deal to their children's education. Some parents stated that they could not attend all school activities or provide all their children's needs due to their income levels. As stated by Participant P9,

I am single mother and I have 5 kids. I hold two jobs. I want to participate more in my children's education, but I also have to provide for them. Moreover, I can't leave work without the permission of my employer and that does not happen easily.

Participant P4 similarly stated that,

I did not complete high school myself and so I can honestly tell you I need help to understand some of the issues related to this subject. I do try to attend events when I can to support my kids. But I feel that teachers know how to do their jobs to get my kids to do well.

### ***Sub-Theme 2: Barriers Related to Communication***

Difficulties related to communication emerged as an important barrier to family involvement in school activities. The barriers to communication reported were language differences between parents and teachers, ineffective home-school communication, and lack of a shared definition of family involvement between parents and teachers.

Under language difficulties, some parents who were non-native English speakers could not read nor understand the communication sent by the school to them. Even when they attended school activities, they could not comprehend what was being discussed. As

a result, they limited their attendance to events where they were not required to interact with anyone but their children. Two participants reported this difficulty.

Participants in the study also identified the language jargon that teachers used when communicating with them as a reason why some families were not participating in school-based events. Participants would love for teachers to use lay terms when conversing with them. As stated by Participant P15,

My problem is that I don't understand some of the terminologies that teachers use. When speaking to parents, they don't seem to consider that we are not in that field. The math teacher told me my son needs extra support to perform at grade level. She did not explain what support means. I am thinking she means more homework or tutorial.

Some of the participants discussed the lack of communication between the home and the school from the perspective that teachers did not provide information and resources to families, and the information that was shared did not address the needs of the parents. As stated by Participant P16, "I believe that it is important to provide families with information and resources whether it be on training, student development, new research about children, or any other information that can help families understand school programs more." Participant P13 also stated, "I like to receive information; however, it has to be information that is meaningful and useful to me, something I can apply to my child's education."

Communication between teachers and families was also hindered by the fact that many participants felt belittled by teachers and other school staff. Most of the participants interviewed did not graduate from high school themselves. This was evident during the document review as well as during the interviews; the document reviews contain information about parents such as level of education and during the interviews, participants were asked their level of education as part of the demographic data collected in the study. Their inability to communicate at the same level as teachers meant that as they reported, the teachers did not treat them with respect and did not take the time to help them understand issues. As stated by Participant P1,

I may be wrong, but I feel as though parents that are wealthier are treated with more respect. They are also better educated and can interact with teachers better. At the last parents conference, I would say that 90% of the discussion was done with the two wealthy parents I saw there. I don't think anyone noticed or cared that the rest of us did not say much. It makes you feel less important.

### ***Sub-Theme 3: Barriers Related to Volunteering***

There was little data reported on barriers to volunteering among parents. The concept of volunteering, specifically, did not emerge from the data. However, all the barriers to communication were also applicable for family participation in school activities, which may include volunteering. Parents who had communication difficulties found it challenging to participate in school activities (Participant P3 and P16). [It may be extrapolated that such parents may not receive invitations to participate in "organizing"

activities since they would be unable to contribute to discussions on planning, implementation, and monitoring of students during activities]. Parents who reported feeling belittled and unsure of their importance in school events, also reported that they did not have a desire to engage in school activities as a result of such feelings and experiences (Participant P9, P10, P13, P7, P1, P2, P12 and P15). Participant P8 and P13 who are male, mentioned participating in soccer. However, it is not clear whether they participated as volunteers or in some other capacity. As stated by Participant P13, “I’m there for events like soccer games. My son seems gifted in that area, and I would like to see that nurtured. I’ve been coaching him at home too. My wife attends some of the conferences, workshops, and so on.”

While this parent did not use the word ‘volunteering,’ Participant 7 expressed a willingness to be more involved in organizing if invited stating,

Personally, I like helping to put events together. I am very good at decorating and making craft work, although I am not a teacher. If they invited us to help do meaningful things like that, I would love it. I also think it would make my son proud to see me helping.

#### ***Sub-Theme 4: Barriers Related to Learning at Home***

The key barriers to learning at home were parental level of education and socioeconomic status. Five participants stated that they did not have the requisite education to help their children with schoolwork. These statements emerged from IQ4c. Participant P11 stated that,

I wish I had the education to help my kids more. I sometimes help with their homework if I am sure of what I am doing. More often than not, my cousin helps them as he watches the kids for me when I am away working.

Low-income levels had several negative impacts on family involvement in children's education: some parents held multiple jobs and had less time available for helping their children learn at home (Participant P4, P7, P13, P5, P15, P16, and P12). Some parents also could not afford the learning support tools that their children needed to help them learn better at home such as digital educational programs for kids (Participant P1, P2, P4, P7, P9, and P11). As stated by Participant P11,

I am working hard so I can get my children certain things they need. We just have one laptop which I use for work. I need to buy them the digital tools that children use these days to learn. My sister has digital books she bought for her children, and it helps them stay ahead of their classwork.

#### ***Sub-Theme 5: Barriers Related to Decision-Making***

Only three of the participants (19%) reported being included in decision making activities: Participants P5, P8, P13, and P5. The decision-making activities mentioned were "a request for my opinion regarding an up-going PTA meeting" (Participant P5), "the principal wanted to know if I had objections to my daughter's PA class" (Participant P8), and "I was invited to an advisory council last summer" (Participant 13). Upon further analysis these three participants were all male and two of them were in the self-reported "higher/middle income" bracket. None of the participants in the lower income



bracket reported any type of participation in decision-making – they did not receive any invitations to participate in decision-making meetings.

### ***Sub-Theme 6: Barriers Related to Collaboration With Community***

Five participants reported that the school provided services for the family in collaboration with community organizations and other groups. However, the duration of such collaboration was not discussed. Participant P4 stated that, “My son is mildly autistic. The school enrolled him in a program with the health department last fall. It really had a good effect on him. I wish they had more programs like that.”

Participant P12 also reported participating in a collaborative program with the school stating that,

A tutor was sent to our home for the summer. I don't know if they will do that every summer. The tutor worked with a tutoring company but was assigned to my daughter. Her grades really improved, and I didn't have to worry about homework help.

### **Theme 3: Strategies to Improve Family Involvement in School Programs**

Strategies to improve family involvement are those actions that can encourage, motivate, and support parents to participate more in school activities. This study sought to identify the factors that participants believed would help them improve or increase their participation in school activities at the research site. The findings from the research questions were similarly analyzed using Epstein's framework of family involvement to identify strategies for improvement based on the six areas identified in the framework.

***Sub-Theme 1: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Parenting***

Two suggestions for improvement of the parenting typology of family involvement were identified in the data. Both ideas focused on providing parents with training and skills to improve their child-rearing skills. Participant P16 discussed the need for training related to development issues, stating that,

I know our children are our responsibility but if schools can help us do things well, it would be appreciated. With their resources, they can provide training for parents on issues related to children. How do we make them to focus on their studies? How do we make them to learn more at home at this age? Such things will help their overall performance in the education system.

One participant thought the school could do more to reach parents by offering assistance that was meaningful to them, such as assisting families with the basic living essentials - this would support working parents.

***Sub-Theme 2: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Communication***

Of all the typologies of involvement, the communication typology received the most comments and perceptions. Numerous suggestions were offered for improving communication between the school and parents. Five participants who spoke of the lack of communication between the home and the school stated that communication between the school and parents and between the parents and the schools need to be improved; teachers need to provide information that addressed the needs of parents rather than materials that deal with education in a general manner; training can be held for teachers

and parents on communication skills and communication methods available for two-way communication, and information should be made more accessible to patients such as such as placing a message board outside of the school building.

***Sub-Theme 3: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Volunteering***

Only one participant focused on volunteering in discussing her perceptions of the current strategies used by the school in improving family involvement. The participant stated the skills she would be happy to use in the school if offered the opportunity to help out or to participate more in school activities. From the low number of responses regarding volunteering opportunities or invitations for parents, it may be inferred that the school does not invite families to volunteer or create meaningful opportunities for volunteering for families under their family involvement strategy. The suggestion for improvement identified under this sub-theme is the need to invite families to participate in events and school activities as volunteers using their skills and capabilities.

***Sub-Theme 4: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Learning at Home***

Three strategies emerged from the data that were related to the barriers to learning at home. The strategies had overlaps with strategies identified under improving parenting. The first strategy was that schools can provide training to parents to help them learn how to make children study better in age-appropriate ways and teaching parents curriculum linked activities they can perform at home with the children. The second strategy was that schools can be involved in helping parents access social support in ways that can help them cope economically. When parents are able to cope better, they will have more time

for parenting and to help their children learn. As stated by Participant 4, “If there is a way of linking school with the needs of children, providing some essentials for children, it would really help working parents to cope better”. The third strategy mentioned was helping parents access resources that children can use to learn at home. As stated by Participant P7, “Children these days learn using technology and it is hard to make ends meet. If the school can help parents to gain access to books, computers, and learning programs, families can use it at home to help children learn.”

#### ***Sub-Theme 5: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Decision-Making***

Next to communication, this sub-theme had the most responses. Five strategies were suggested for improving decision-making. The statements made were the need to know what the school is doing with the children and to have a say in it as parents; more invitations to participate in meetings such as committees and advisory councils; obtaining parents approval before any-health or education-related decisions are taken regarding the children; involving parents as leaders in parent conferences; and giving all parents equal say in all decisions regarding meetings regardless of educational level, language barriers, and any other limiting factor. As stated by Participant P15,

I am glad you are asking us these questions. I think we need to have more say in activities for parents. Right now, the school plans activities and sends us emails or texts or calls. We as parents need to be involved in the planning. We know our children, we see their performance from the home perspective, and we can tell teachers what we see. We can discuss agendas together.

***Sub-Theme 6: Strategies to Address Barriers Related to Collaboration With the Community***

An overlap also occurs in the strategies identified under this sub-theme and the parenting sub-theme. Two strategies are related to collaboration with the community. The first is school collaboration with communities and agencies that can help families with some essential needs for their children. The second is collaboration with agencies, organizations, and communities that can offer learning resources to children such as books and electronic resources that support learning at home. Although not mentioned in the context of a suggestion for improving family involvement, one participant mentioned the beneficial impact of tutorial services on her child while another mentioned benefits from a mental health-related program accessed through the school. Such collaborations between the school and community can assist parents with child-rearing and participation in the school system.

**Discrepant Data**

**The Suggestion that Schools Assist Families With Essential Living Needs**

This suggestion was identified within the data and was expressed by two participants. P11: “Schools can help parents to participate more in the school’s activities by helping them find resources they need and by supporting low-income families with their needs.” Participant P2 also stated, “Times are tough. Maybe the schools can encourage parents to participate more in school activities if they have a way of helping families with their needs.” These suggestions are deemed deviant data because while the

participants are framing their ideas on parental involvement, the functions they describe are outside of the role of schools. Schools are educational establishments designed to impart age-appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude into children. They are not social service or welfare organizations and are not responsible for the economic needs of families.

It is important to note that a model of school organization in which schools serve as a community hub has been discussed and is supported and touted by many in the K12 and higher education arenas. Recognizing the viability of schools as community hubs of social service access has been pushed forward from many different fronts, for decades (1960s/1970s). However, that discussion is outside the scope of this study.

#### ***The Idea that Schools Collaborate with Mental Health Organizations***

Four participants mentioned the need for school's to increase their collaboration with mental health organizations. This data is identified as discrepant because schools function under the educational health sector while mental health departments function under the health sector. These are distinct sectors with their own establishments, rules, and services. While schools do have services for children and collaborations with mental health organizations and professionals, such collaborations are done in the context of addressing the participation and learning needs of children with mental health needs rather than parental involvement.

It is important to note that the variability of schools and differences in expectations as may be developed by community, by generation, by political lines, etc.,

have also been discussed by some authors. A model of school organization in which schools are connected to mental health organizations has been discussed and is supported and touted by many in the K12 and higher education arenas as well. In many locations of the USA, these are normalized expectations and are addressed in-district and in-school. Thus these themes may only be considered deviant depending on one's belief system.

For the purposes of this study, while these two deviant data are not directly related to family involvement, an association still exists with family involvement as these factors can improve the family's ability to participate more in school activities if provided. Cross-disciplinary collaborations occur within the context of clearly defined goals; however, the benefits can be reaped in other unrelated areas through ripple effects. Families who are able to provide for their children are better able to devote time and attention to school activities and parents who have access to the healthcare services they need for their children are also better able to focus and pay more attention to the educational needs of their children (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Li et al., 2020).

### **Procedures to Assure Evidence of Quality**

The researcher implemented a series of procedure to assure the trustworthiness of the study. Four criteria were applied to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Gronmo, 2019).

Credibility is the extent to which outputs from the study reflect the real-life situation (Coleman, 2022; Madondo, 2021). Credibility for this study was established through peer review of the interview data and the documents from the school on parental

involvement. The peer debriefer reviewed data from the transcripts, the data analysis process, and the data interpretation (see Appendix A for Interview Transcripts).

Dependability, corresponding to the positivist construct of reliability, can be established by using structured and validated processes and tools (Madondo, 2021). Dependability for this study was established through the use of well-designed sampling, data collection, and analyses procedures. The study design was a basic qualitative study design; sampling was done using the purposeful sampling technique; data collection was done using semi-structured interviews; and data analysis was done using the thematic analysis method.

Transferability reflects the extent to which the outputs can be applied to similar contexts (Madondo, 2021). This quality criteria can be established by providing a rich contextual background to allow readers apply the study to their own contexts (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Transferability was established by providing a rich contextual background in the literature review.

Confirmability aligns with the positivist quality of objectivity and shows the extent to which various types of bias were controlled in the study (Madondo, 2021). The researcher is an employee at the urban elementary school, creating the possibility of bias as a result of an acquainted with the families of students. To control personal bias, a peer review process was engaged in the data scrutiny and analysis process. Member checking was also done to assure accuracy of the data; transcripts for each interview were sent back to the participant to allow them to double-check the content and confirm that



the transcript was accurate. Researcher reflexivity was also applied. I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded my thoughts and decision-making processes during the data collection and analysis process. Triangulation was also applied to support the validity of the findings. Triangulation involved the use of multiple sources of data to develop the findings for this study. The data sources used include data from the literature review, records collected from the school on family involvement, transcripts from the interviews, and notes taken during the study to complement the interview findings. Furthermore, the data collected in the study were also subjected to scrutiny for discrepancies by both the researcher and the peer debriefer. Areas of ambiguity were discussed between the researcher and peer reviewer to arrive at a consensus meaning. Discrepant data were also discussed separately in the final report.

### **Summary of Outcomes**

This summary of outcomes from the data analysis is organized based on the research questions in order to answer those questions.

#### **Research Question 1: Family Perspectives Regarding Current Parental Involvement Strategies**

The first research question explored family perceptions regarding the current parental involvement strategies used at the research site. The findings from the study suggest that while some parents were dissatisfied with the current strategies used at the research setting, some parents felt that there was room for improvement even though they did not state outright dissatisfaction. The reasons provided for dissatisfaction include few

numbers of programs, meaningfulness of events, treatment received at events, and low opportunities for parental input. These issues align with barriers to parental involvement reported both under this study and in the literature. These findings align with the findings from the school's report on its family involvement performance as the attendance logs show low attendance. The findings also confirm that a strong justification existed for this study, that it was necessary to explore the reasons for low family involvement at the research setting and to obtain parental perspectives on what the problems were and how to solve them. A detailed discussion of the findings regarding the barriers to family involvement in the school is reported in the next sub-section.

### **Research Question 2: Barriers to Family Involvement**

The second research question explored the barriers that contribute to families not being involved in activities at the local urban elementary school. The barriers identified in the study are based on Epstein's (2009) six typologies of family involvement which are parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborations with communities.

#### ***Barriers to Parenting***

The barriers related to the parenting typology of involvement identified in the study were the lack of interest or caring for child's progress, time constraints of working parents, feeling that their involvement was not important to their children's education, and not being able to attend all school activities or provide all their children's needs due to their income levels. These findings are supported in the literature. For instance, studies

based on Epstein's typology on family involvement showed that due to financial limitations, poor families are unable to provide some of the needs of their children and often families lack the time to participate in some activities such as assisting their children with schoolwork (Li et al., 2020). Allen and White-Smith (2018) also found in their study that even though black mothers desire to participate in their children's education, they could not do so as they faced multi-dimensional discrimination because they were black, women, and poor. Wheeler (2019) similarly found that factors in the lives of the parents such as unemployment, poverty, and crime were among the key factors that hindered involvement in their children's education.

### ***Barriers to Communication***

The barriers related to communication identified under the study were language differences between parents and teachers, ineffective home-school communication, lack of a shared definition of family involvement between parents and teachers, and lack of respect for parents based on factors such as poverty. These findings are again supported by research evidence in the literature. Scholars identify language barriers to be a very potent hindrance to parent involvement in children's education, particularly in the context of migrant families (Antony-Newman, 2019; Boonk et al., 2017; Calzada et al., 2018). Oranga et al. (2022) also found unclear channels of communication between the school and parents to be a hindrance to family involvement.

### ***Barriers to Volunteering***

The barriers that emerged from the study with respect to volunteering were similar to the barriers to communication. However, there was little data on volunteering itself, representing an area in which an opportunity for further research exists. This supposition is supported as there is little research on the volunteering typology of parental involvement in the literature. Research evidence shows that where there are communication barriers and cultural insensitivity (or disrespect to parents based on some limitation), it leads to withdrawal of parents from school activities or prevents them from engaging in family involvement programs (Antony-Newman, 2019; Boonk et al., 2017; Calzada et al., 2018).

### ***Barriers to Learning at Home***

The key barriers to learning at home that emerged from the study were parental level of education and socioeconomic status. The literature supports this finding. A study conducted by Oranga et al. (2022) found low level of parental education, economic constraints, family size, and absence of frameworks on parental involvement, to be hindrances to family involvement in school activities. Similarly, Gabrielli and Impicciatore (2022) found that SES, the language spoken at home, ethnicity, and gender of parents to be barriers to parental involvement.

### ***Barriers to Decision-Making***

Gender and SES may play roles in preventing parental involvement in decision-making in schools. This study found that male parents and parents from high- and

middle-income status were the only ones who were involved in distinct decision-making activities. While the role of SES in preventing or limiting parental involvement in school activities is discussed in the literature (Park et al., 2017; Silinskas & Kikas, 2019), the role of gender and SES in preventing or limiting parental involvement in ‘decision-making’ in school specifically, is not discussed in the literature. Inferences may, however, be made that such barriers where they occur may be related to communication challenges, negative parent or teacher attitudes, and the presence of bias based on socioeconomic status and gender. Future research opportunities may exist in this area, particularly, to generate data to improve equitable parental participation in decision-making in schools.

### ***Barriers to Collaboration With Community***

The findings in regard to barriers to collaboration with community were inconclusive. The findings seem to suggest that there are not many collaborative efforts between the school and community to promote family involvement or else, that such collaborative programs are sporadic. Hornby & Blackwell (2018) identified declining support for families from external services as potentially affecting parental involvement as a secondary outcome from their study. Other than that, there appears to be scant literature expounding this aspect of family involvement. The barriers to collaboration as a typology of family involvement may, therefore, constitute a second area for additional research that emerges from this study.

### **RQ 3: Strategies for Improving Family Involvement at the Project Setting**

The third research question explored new and effective strategies that the local urban school implement to improve family involvement in supporting school activities. The strategies identified from the data are organized based on Epstein's six typologies as follows.

#### ***Strategies for Improving Parenting***

The strategies that emerged for improving parenting were providing parents with training and skills to improve their child-rearing skills and offering assistance that were meaningful to them, such as assisting families with the basic living essentials. The literature supports training as an important strategy for improving parenting. According to Newman et al. (2019), activities such as providing a variety of courses, training and coaching for families and programs to help with health, nutrition, and home visits are important for improving parenting and family involvement in school activities.

#### ***Strategies to Improve Communication***

The strategies to improve communication that emerged from the study were providing information that addresses the needs of parents rather than materials that deal with education in a general manner; training for teachers and parents on communication skills, and using effective two-way communication models, and making information more accessible to patients such as such as through external message boards. The literature also supports the use of various strategies to improve two-way communication with families such as conferences with families, language translators to aid families as

needed, memos, cellphone calls, newsletters, and other communications (Epstein, 2018; Epstein, 2019).

### ***Strategies to Improve Volunteerism***

The suggested strategies for improving volunteerism were to create opportunities for volunteer activities and to extend more invitations to parents to participate in such opportunities. Examples of volunteer opportunities suggested in the literature include volunteering within the school or classroom by supporting teachers and administrators as mentors or collaborators, volunteering for the school such as engaging in promotional activities for the school, and volunteering to be present at school programs outside of the events designed for family involvement (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Newman et al, 2019).

### ***Strategies for Improving Learning at Home***

The strategies that emerged for improving learning at home include providing training to parents to help them learn how to make children study better in age-appropriate ways and helping parents access social support in ways that can help them cope economically. Both strategies are supported in the literature. Families can be empowered to support children better through training and helping families access the services they need would also improve their ability to participate more fully in school activities (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Newman et al, 2019).

### ***Strategies for Improving Decision-Making***

The strategies identified under the study for improving decision-making are empowering parents with information, providing parents with more invitations to participate in meetings such as committees and advisory councils, obtaining parents approval before any-health or education-related decisions are taken regarding the children, involving parents as leaders in parent conferences, and giving all parents equal say in all decisions regarding meetings regardless of educational level, language barriers, and any other limiting factor. Newman et al. (2019) observed that family involvement can be promoted through parental participation in school administration committees, advisory councils, lobbying groups, and networks to link families with representatives.

### ***Strategies for Improving Collaboration With Communities***

Several opportunities were identified for improving collaboration with communities and agencies towards enhancing family involvement in schools. They include collaboration with agencies, organizations, and communities that can offer learning resources to children such as books and electronic resources that support learning at home, collaboration with communities that can offer health-related programs accessed through the school, and collaboration with communities that can offer social services. The literature supports the integration of services and assets to help and support students, schools, and families. A variety of collaboration points are suggested in the literature such as students' well-being, cultural, recreational, athletic, social support, and other distinctive programs and services (Epstein, 2018; Newman et al, 2019).



### **Project Deliverable**

The purpose of this qualitative project study was to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and potential barriers at a local urban elementary school and describe their perspectives to determine new and effective strategies to help them become more involved. The study found evidence to support parental dissatisfaction, identified key barriers to family involvement at the research setting, and strategies to improve family involvement at the school. The key barriers to family involvement identified were ineffective parent-school communication, language barriers, poverty, low level of parental education, low opportunities for parental participation in decision-making and volunteering within and for the school. Based on these findings the following recommendations emerge for improving family involvement at the school:

1. Improve parenting through the provision of training and external support services for parents.
2. Improve communication by creating a variety of mechanisms for two-way communication, including but not limited to programs, message boards, and shared definition of family involvement between parents and teachers.
3. Improve volunteering by inviting parents to participate in a variety of school projects and activities beyond family improvement programs such as conferences and parent-teacher meetings.

4. Improve learn at home by providing training to parents and resources to support learning at home such as books and computers.
5. Improve family participation in decision-making by creating opportunities for parents to participate in formal teams such as advisory councils, advocacy groups, and leadership committees.
6. Improve collaboration with communities by actively engaging with communities and agencies on projects that will benefit the school, the students, and parents across a range of areas such as social services, recreation, wellness, and supplemental educational services.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

Using a basic qualitative research design, I explored family perspectives about family involvement at a local elementary school. The study found evidence to support family dissatisfaction with their level of involvement in the school, identified key barriers to family involvement, and the strategies to improve family involvement at the school. The reasons provided for dissatisfaction include few numbers of programs for family participation, low perceived meaningfulness of events, poor treatment received at events, and low opportunities for family input at the school. The enablers for family involvement include greater support for families, a better teacher attitude towards families, improved communication between the school and families, and improved opportunities for family involvement in the school. Based on these findings, a three-day Professional Development (PD) program was developed for administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who work with families within the school system (see Appendix A). A description of the project is presented following.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this PD workshop is to provide administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who work with families within the school system with the knowledge and skills to increase the level of family involvement in the local school.

**Target Audience**

The program participants are administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who work with families within the school system.

**Project Objectives/Learning Outcome**

The objectives of the workshop are to provide the target audience with an understanding of the role of family involvement in improving students' achievement, provide a better understanding of the barriers and facilitators for family involvement in the school systems, and provide awareness and practice on new strategies for involving family in the schools.

**Training Curriculum**

The topics for the workshop were selected based on the findings from the qualitative study and were selected to allow the achievement of the stated goals. The topics selected for the workshop are - Concept of parental involvement, Significance of parental involvement, Epstein's model of parental involvement, Barriers and strategies to parental involvement – Applying Epstein's model, Barriers to parental involvement at the local setting – review of research findings at local setting, and Strategies to improve parental involvement at the project setting.

**Training Delivery Methods**

Delivery of information and skills during the workshop will be done using a range of teaching strategies including guided reflection, direct instruction, handouts, PowerPoint presentations, brainstorming, group work, role plays, and discussion.

Opportunities to reflect are built into the workshop to encourage teachers to think about how to apply what they learn. Each session ends with a question-and-answer segment and an opportunity to reflect on learning.

### **Training Materials**

The materials required for the training program are handouts, sticky notes, writing paper, and slides detailing all activities and assignments. The handouts required are pre-training survey, handouts on training topics, post-evaluation survey, and facilitator notes

### **Implementation Plan**

The training program will be delivered over three days. (See the detailed Implementation Plan for the workshop including timeline, activities, and topics in the next section of this report).

### **Components**

A full portfolio of components has been developed for this project including module contents, handouts, slides, facilitator notes, workshop components, hour-by-hour detail of training, and timeline (see the Full 3-Day Training Portfolio in Appendix A).

### **Evaluation Plan**

The plan selected for the project is outcome-based evaluation. The outcome measures are based on the training objectives. (See the detailed Evaluation Plan including goals, justification, outcome measures, and justification in the next section of this report).

## **Rationale**

The problem that this study addressed prompted this study was that educators at the local urban elementary school struggle to find effective strategies to promote family involvement in school events and parent participation in events in the school is very low. Through examining family perspectives, I identified barriers and enablers to parental involvement in the school and in their children's education using Epstein's (2009) six typologies of family involvement. The barriers related to the parenting included time constraints of working parents and feeling that their involvement was not important to their children's education. The barriers related to communication included language differences between parents and teachers and ineffective home-school communication. The key barriers to learning at home were parental level of education and socioeconomic status. The findings on barriers to collaboration with community were inconclusive. The strategies that emerged for improving parenting were providing parents with training to improve their child-rearing skills and offering meaningful assistance; strategies to improve communication included providing information that addresses the needs of parents and training for teachers and parents on communication skills. The strategies identified for improving volunteerism were to create opportunities for volunteer activities for parents and to extend them invitations to participate in such opportunities. The strategies that emerged for improving learning at home include providing training to parents on home-based support for children's education. The strategies for improving decision-making were empowering parents with information and involving parents in

committees and advisory councils. Based on the findings from the study, I concluded that an effective solution to the problem will involve providing teachers with the critically needed awareness, attitudes, knowledge, and skills on how to improve parental involvement in the school.

The four basic genres of projects are evaluation report, policy recommendation, curriculum plan, and professional development. An evaluation report is a document that presents the findings from an evaluation study such as a study that assessed a program, product, service, or policy based on some criteria and standard (The National Council for Voluntary Organizations [NCVO], 2021). An evaluation report is not an appropriate genre for this project as the study was not an evaluation study. A curriculum plan outlines an academic curriculum including aspects such as content, teaching strategy, levels, and duration (International Bureau of Education, 2023). This genre is also not appropriate as the study was a qualitative exploratory study and not a curriculum development task. A policy recommendation is defined as a written suggestion or policy advice prepared for a decision-making body (IGI-Global, 2023). The policy recommendation or position paper genre is also not appropriate for this project as the study focused on understanding a naturalistic phenomenon within a specific local context with the goal of identifying solutions to the problem. The professional development genre, with its goal of providing training to a target audience is appropriate for delivering the skills and knowledge needed by teachers to promote parental involvement. Therefore, I selected the professional development genre as the appropriate genre for this project. A professional development

workshop would allow teachers to identify and eliminate the barriers to parental involvement while providing them with information and skills to implement enablers to parental involvement.

The topics to be discussed in the workshop are understanding parental involvement, the role of parental involvement in student academic performance, barriers to parental involvement, and strategies to improve parental involvement. The strategies that will be used in delivering the workshop were also selected after careful consideration of the goals of the PD as well as who the target audience for the workshop are.

Professional development programs are intended to deliver specific skills, behavior change, and competencies. A skill is the ability to perform an action effectively such as communicate, manage change, motivate (Beevers et al., 2019). Behaviour refers to practices or manner of acting such as treating people with respect, promoting collaboration, being ethical, soliciting feedback, and so on (Holt et al., 2018).

Competency is defined as the ability to apply skills, capabilities, knowledge, behaviours, and personal attributes to tasks when working in a specified position (Overton, 2021). It is, therefore, imperative to select instructional methods for the workshop that will deliver the required skills, knowledge, and competencies to the participants.

The concept of parental involvement will be delivered through guided reflection, brainstorming, lecture, handout, discussion, PowerPoint presentation, and a question-and-answer session. These methods of delivery are carefully chosen to clarify misconceptions



regarding the meaning of parental involvement and to deliver knowledge regarding the various typologies of parental involvement.

The role of parental involvement in student academic performance will be explored and understood through guided reflection, lecture delivered using PowerPoint presentation, and discussion. These methods were also selected to deliver knowledge and promote attitude change through an understanding of the importance of parental involvement in school and student outcomes. Barriers to parental involvement will be delivered through guided reflection, lecture, discussion, and PowerPoint presentation. These methods were also selected to deliver knowledge and promote attitude change such that teachers will know and avoid behaviours and practices that constitute barriers to family involvement. Lastly, strategies for improving parental involvement will be delivered through guided reflection, brainstorming, lecture, handout, discussion, role play, and a question-and-answer session. These strategies were chosen to facilitate dialogue on how to promote parental involvement in the local school, deliver awareness and knowledge regarding the strategies that can promote parental involvement, and deliver skills for implementing those strategies through role plays and active learning.

### **Literature Review**

The development of this professional development project and the content of the projects are supported by theoretical and empirical data. This section presents a scholarly review of the literature related to PD, the alignment of PD and the problem based on theory and research, and the theoretical underpinnings for the development of the project

and its contents. Beginning with the search strategy used in the literature review, the literature review is comprised of four sections: overview of PD; alignment of PD genre with problem; theoretical support for project development; and theoretical and empirical support for project content.

### **Search Strategy**

I conducted a literature search on the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) database and Google Scholar. The search was conducted using the search terms “professional development” and “professional development for teachers.” The ERIC search using “professional development” yielded while the search using “professional development for teachers” yielded 6,487 results. The search was limited to articles published from 2018 and up. Articles were selected for inclusion in the literature review based on the relevance of their titles to the project and English as the language used in the articles. Articles were also sourced from professional organization, agencies, and international organizations that work in the field of education.

### **Overview of Professional Development**

#### **Definition and Goals**

Professional development is defined as “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (Islami et al., 2022, p. 2). Professional development helps teachers to improve their skills and competencies and to perform their work better. The learning outcomes from professional development depend on the area of focus in the activity and may include areas such as improvement in

basic skills (Becker et al., 2019), analytical competence (Ploeger et al., 2019), advancing self-regulated learning (Xu & Ko, 2019), improvement in teaching a specific subject (Thomson et al., 2019), and teacher motivation (Dirk et al., 2019). The Organization for Economic Development (OECD) framework for learning outcomes identifies 11 learning outcomes for teacher professional development including teaching students with special learning needs, instructional practices, student counseling, subject field, student assessment practices, teaching in a multicultural setting, content and performance standards, classroom management, student discipline, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) teaching skills, and school management and administration (Ismali et al., 2022).

According to Papova et al. (2022), teacher professional development programs have three defining attributes: (a) What is taught? (b) the delivery of the PD program, and (c) organization of the program. Each of these attributes is underpinned by theory. For the first attribute, content (what is taught), PD programs may focus on specific subjects (Molina et al. 2018). Since different subjects require different pedagogues, PD programs that focus on subject-specific pedagogy are likely to deliver the largest contribution to student learning. With respect to the delivery of PD, since the targets of PD are working, professional teachers, and the principles of adult education are necessary for the activity. The principles of adult education include clear applications of the PD content to real-life problems and situations rather than theoretical focus, recognizing the knowledge and experience of the learners, learning from experience, and involving learners in problem

solving (Papova et al., 2022). Lastly, the organization of the PD includes aspects such as who is organizing the activity, who the activity is organized for (targeting), scale, and cost.

### **Best Practices in Professional Development**

A plethora of scholarly literature has been developed on the characteristics of effective teacher PD or the best practices in PD. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) conducted a critical review to identify the characteristics of effective teacher professional development. The review was based on the premise that a consensus view on professional development is that it is more effective when it is collaborative, subject-specific, has buy-in from teachers, draws on external expertise, and is practice based.

Popova et al. (2022) conducted a study on the gap between evidence and practice in teacher professional development across the world. However, the scholars noted that evidence of the effectiveness of PD activities are mixed; some programs are effective and have significant impacts on student reading ability (Kerwin & Thornton, 2021), some show negligible impacts on teaching practices, teacher knowledge, or even student learning outcomes (Loyalka et al., 2019). Using the In-Service Teacher Training Survey Instrument as an evaluation tool, the scholars evaluated 33 PD programs and found that programs that focus on a specific subject, link participation to career incentives, incorporate lesson enactment as part of the training strategy (role plays), and initial face-to-face training showed higher student learning gains.

Six best practices for professional development identified by Texas State University (n.d.) are (a) duration—the PD should have sufficient duration to allow educators to learn new strategies being taught and learn the skills to grapple with the problem being discussed; (b) active engagement of participants—participants should not be passively exposed to concepts in the PD, but rather participants should be actively engaged in making sense of the new practice—there should be meaningful discussion of the content based on real situations that model the desired change; (c) demonstrations and modeling—these strategies are highly effective in helping teachers understand new concepts, theories, and practice as they involve active learning—modeling involves an expert demonstrating the new skill or practice; (d) discipline-specific content—research has shown that educators report high effectiveness in their PD experience when there is specific knowledge transfer—the PD content should be specific to grade-level or a discipline, and the appropriate instructional strategies should be used; (e) provision of support during implementation - there should be support for PD participants during the implementation stage of the intervention when specific challenges based on real-life problems or classroom practice is being addressed—there should also be opportunities for feedback after the participants have practiced the new skill; (f) collaborative participation—PD should enable collaborative and collective participation of teachers such as through learning communities—the intervention is likely to be more effective where participants share common characteristics such as being from the same school, department, grade-level or community—such communities are able to share resources

and curricular materials, build a shared professional culture and community, and integrate what they learn from the PD into their own curriculum and community.

These findings on effective PD characteristics are supported by Smith et al.'s (2020) findings from a study to evaluate a model of professional development for teachers that is based on the Team Teaching and Learning (TTL) framework. The framework integrates five traits of effective teacher professional learning from empirical research: (a) content knowledge - this referred to areas such as pedagogical knowledge, subject-area knowledge, or teaching and management methods. The PD participants needed to understand how students learn content in the specific area of focus; (b) active learning – opportunities for active learning can be created through activities such as collaborative planning, reviewing student work, peer observations, discussions, data analysis, and observing others while they teach; (c) coherence—the content of the PD must be coherent with other learning activities and aligning with teaching standards, it should also build on prior teacher learning; (d) collective participation of teachers—this element in the framework emphasizes the need for a collective focus such that PD participants are from the same group such as teach the same subject, same grade, or same school—targeting teachers from the same teaching community allows for a better understanding of students' needs, more collaboration and more integration in PD outcomes; (e) duration—this refers to a specified period of time for the PD—some researchers suggest a minimum of 20 hours of contact time for the PD intervention to be effective. Smith et al.'s (2020) study found the TTL-based model of professional

development involving these five elements to be highly effective with significant positive impacts on teacher skills, knowledge, and classroom practice.

### **Instructional Techniques in Professional Development**

Numerous techniques for the effective delivery of content in PD interventions have been identified in the literature. The mix of strategies and methods selected depends on the knowledge, skills, or behavior change that the PD seeks to impact. It is imperative that PD planners select and implement the appropriate strategies for content delivery in the PD design. Although several instructional techniques are presented individually in this literature review, it is important to note that overlaps may occur among some of them in terms of theoretical basis and application.

### **Lecture Method**

Lecture is a method of content delivery that is very widely used for instruction and teaching. Lecture is considered the primary method of instruction by most teachers. In this method of imparting learning, the teacher teaches a group of students usually through one-way communication (Popova et al., 2022). The teacher talks to the students and students listen with little or no participation in the teaching-learning. This form of instruction delivery carries several advantages—it is very effective for large classes, it is a simple process, a teacher can dispense course information in less time and thereby being able to complete the course syllabus, and it is cost-effective. Other advantages include that the teacher can adapt the course content to the available time and resources, teachers are students are familiar with this method of instructional delivery, the teacher

can monitor non-verbal cues regarding students' learning and the teaching, and lectures can be used to ensure discipline among students (Patel, 2020).

### **Question Answer Technique**

Good questions promote the active involvement of students in learning and helps keep them focused on the teaching session. Questions can be of various types depending on the purpose. For example, questioning can be tailored to purposes such as to introduce new topic, to develop subject matter following a sequence of objectives, to review what has been taught, to stimulate mental activity among students, to assess students' understanding of what is being taught, to encourage healthy discussions, to guide students into new techniques for problem-solving and use of information, to prompt thinking among students, to help students apply previous knowledge, and to help students develop speaking, language, and oral communication skills (Patel, 2020). Accordingly, there are several types of questions used during any instructional session such as introductory questions, leading questions, rhetorical questions, developing questions, capitulatory questions, centering questions, redirecting questions, and probing questions. Learning is reinforced by providing feedback about the correctness of the answers or otherwise. Correct questions are rewarded or reinforced. Incorrect answers are learning opportunities and are handled by providing additional explanation and examples in ways that make it easy for students to understand both the question and the correct answer (Olatunde-Aiyedun et al., 2020; Patel, 2020).



## **Demonstration Method**

Demonstration is an instructional technique that combines oral explanation with action such as the handling of materials and equipment or enactment of a concept being taught. Demonstrations, therefore, serve as link between theoretical presentations and practice (Patel, 2020). In teaching learning environment, a well planned and executed demonstration by the teacher or students provides stimulating visual reinforcement on the content being taught. Demonstrations further reinforce learning by stimulating thinking and offering an opportunity for nuanced discussion of the phenomena or concept. Demonstration is very effective for teaching skills or how something is done (Maulina & Rusli, 2019; Patel, 2020).

Similar to the question answer technique, demonstrations are also divided into types based on the purpose. Display demonstrations usually showcase an object, skill, activity or phenomena and is implemented just for the visual function only. Operational demonstrations involve demonstrating how something works such as how a machine is operated. Instructional demonstration involves using demonstrations to illustrate something that is being taught or demonstrating something that the instructor wants students to learn such as how to log onto an online classroom, how to pronounce a certain word, and so on. Illustrations are a type of demonstrations that shows an example of what is being taught. For instance, a teacher teaching biology will put up a drawing of the part of the body being discussed as an illustration. Demonstrations are used in workshops to

help students develop the requisite skill required for their work (Maulina & Rusli, 2019; Patel, 2020).

### **Group-Based Learning**

This instructional strategy can be used in an informal or formal manner. Group based learning can occur in informal groups or in formal groups. For example, an online student chat group is an informal group formed by students for their own purposes and learning can occur in such settings. For instructional purposes, however, formal groups are preferred. Formal groups are created based on criteria such as targets of the teaching session, requirements of the learning task, learning requirements, time available, availability of the resources, etc. Formal groups can comprise different sizes; dyads are comprised of 2 persons, triads comprise 3 persons, small groups involve 4–8 members, and larger groups involve 12 or more persons (Patel, 2020; Popova et al., 2022).

### **Group Discussion**

Group discussion is an instructional method in which students are placed in groups and encouraged to discuss a given subject matter. Group discussions are generally be used at the end of a course of instruction or classroom session when students have acquired enough information to discuss the subject meaningfully and actively. Group discussions are usually guided and supervised by a teacher or leader. Group discussions enable students to achieve predetermined cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Patel, 2020).

### **Action Learning**

Action learning is rooted in the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism, which is a leading learning paradigm, views learning as a process of knowledge construction in relation to previous knowledge (Elmetaher, 2021). Action learning methods, based on the constructivist paradigm, hold that knowledge is constructed by learners as against the traditional focus on knowledge transmission from teachers to learners. Action learning methods promote creativity and learning through idea generation and idea analysis (Hartikainen et al., 2019; Sivarajah et al., 2019). Action-learning methods are also described as activating instructional methods and research evidence shows that this method of instruction with its student-s centered approach is a more superior approach to learning compared to the traditional, content-centered approaches. Action learning has been found to be highly effective for transferring knowledge, skills, and competences to learners (Elmetaher, 2021). Examples of action learning methods include guided tasks, discussions, small group learning, and assignments (Patel, 2020; Sivarajah et al., 2019).

### **Role Play**

This method of learning is widely used in professional development to develop professional attitudes and professional competence. Role plays help learners to learn skills related to human relations such as how to apply norms, ethics, values, and rules in their work with diverse groups such as superiors, clients, subordinates, and peers (Patel, 2020). Role plays are, therefore, very important for this PD on parental involvement as it

will help participants learn how to interact with parents in a respectful and culturally sensitive way so as to encourage their increased participation in school activities.

### **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a student-centered method of learning. Facilitated by a teacher or group leader, brainstorming is used to promote creativity in group processes.

Brainstorming involves idea generation, reflection, and active participation of all members of the group. It is a very useful technique for identifying multiple solutions to a problem or multiple perspectives on an issue (Patel, 2020).

### **Problem Based Learning**

Problem-based learning is an innovative student-centered approach that involves the delivery of knowledge and skills to solve real problems encountered in the workplace. In problem-based learning, students work in groups to learn about a subject in order to solve specific problems related to that subject. The problem is the central source of challenge, motivating students both to explore the problem in-depth and to dig for effective solutions to the problem. By focusing on a real problem, students develop real knowledge and skills regarding the subject and the problem in ways that can be transferred immediately to action after the PD (Patel, 2020).

### **Alignment of Professional Development Genre With Project Problem**

Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) also argue that effective professional development may be identified by looking for alignment human skill acquisition and elements of PD interventions. Therefore, I looked for an alignment between the genre

chosen for this project (which is professional development) and the problem (which is low parental involvement in the local school) based on the literature. The alignment is evident both in relation to the goals of PD and in the instructional strategies used in PD, demonstrating that the selected genre is appropriate to address the problem.

With respect to the goals of PD, Popova et al. (2022) observed that countries across the income spectrum apply PD as a primary tool to improve the skills and knowledge of practicing teachers. This observation was supported by a review of PD programs conducted in different countries across the world, establishing that PD is indeed a valid method for imparting knowledge and skills to teachers. Based on the OECD's learning outcomes for PD as listed by Ismaili et al. (2022), this project on parental involvement aligns with the professional development outcome of school management and administration as interaction with parents is an activity that falls outside of direct classroom management but represents a necessary activity for student success.

With respect to instructional strategies used in PD, an alignment can be seen by considering the respective instructional strategies that will be used in the PD. Communities of Practice (CoP) comprise of individuals who have similar concerns or interests and who work together to address challenges through collaboration and interaction (Hajian, 2019). The participants for this PD on parental involvement comprise both a formal group and a community of practice as they will be teachers, administrators, and other school workers who have contact with parents in the school setting. For this project on parental involvement, the theoretical concepts will be delivered through the

lecture format. Action learning methods will be richly incorporated into program to allow participants gain skills and competencies for improving parental involvement in the school. Question and answer sessions will be richly incorporated into the PD involving a range of types such as introductory questions, developing questions, centering questions, redirecting questions, and probing question and leading questions (Olatunde-Aiyedun et al., 2020; Patel, 2020). Brainstorming is widely incorporated into this PD on parental involvement to promote diverse perspectives on the problem and idea generation on strategies to solve the problem. Problem-based learning focusing on the problem of low parental involvement will allow the participants to explore all dimensions of the problem from a real-life perspective and to identify real solutions that they can immediately apply to school initiatives to improve family involvement in the school. Instructional demonstrations will be used to convey skills on how to interact with families, effective communication, interpersonal skills, and intercultural skills (Maulina & Rusli, 2019; Patel, 2020). The use of small group discussions in the PD will promote both affective and cognitive learning outcomes.

This PD genre was also selected taking the evidence-based characteristics of teacher professional development into consideration. Smith et al. (2020) stated that learning experiences from the PD must be relevant to school initiatives, policies, and teacher belief systems. This observation is particularly relevant for this PD project since the desired outcome is to achieve greater opportunities for parental involvement through school initiatives. The PD may also lead to school-level policy recommendation

regarding strategies for improving, implementing, and evaluating parental involvement in the school.

### **Theoretical Support for Project Development**

Professional development is an educational practice, and all educational practices are underpinned by educational philosophy and learning theory. The theories provide a conceptual framework that describes how knowledge, skill, and attitudes are gained and how these variables in turn lead to changes in potential, behavior, and performance (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). When teaching is directed at children, the term pedagogy is used to describe the process. When adults are the targets of educational practices, then the term “andragogy” is used to describe the process (“ped” means “child” while “andr” means “man”) (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Developed by a German teacher, Alexander Kapp, the term “andragogy” was later linked to Knowles. The key principle in andragogy is that adults have different experiences, orientation, and motivation to learn compared to children. This principle is particularly relevant for professional education as targets in such programs already have a wealth of knowledge and experience in their professions (Hartikainen et al., 2019). Professional development activities to be effective must therefore, acknowledge and build upon what learners already know as well as provide content that can enrich and enhance that knowledge (Coenders et al., 2019; Elmetaher, 2021; Margunayasa et al., 2019). This PD on parental involvement is based on andragogy as the participants are professionals and adults—teachers, administrators, and school staff that interact with and work with parents and families in the school setting.

Andragogy is underpinned by numerous adult learning theories. An understanding of these theories is important for several reasons. First, these theories provide the basis for evidence-based educational practice. Second, educators can select the best learning objectives, context, and environment as well as best teaching and assessment methods based on a good understanding of different learning theories. Third, integration of various learning theories allows educators to provide effective education and improve student learning. Fourth, educators can draw on learning theories to understand learning differences among individuals. Fifth, an understanding of learning theories also protects teachers as they understand that they cannot take sole responsibility for students' performance and learning process (Hartikainen et al., 2019; Hajian, 2019). In this PD, these benefits of understanding learning theories will be applicable. For example, relevant learning theories will be combined in developing the workshop and the instructional strategies to be used in the project.

There are a number of categories of adult learning theories as follows - instrumental, humanistic, motivational, reflective, transformative, social, and constructivist learning theories. These learning theories are largely derived from psychological theories of learning and exhibit overlaps in principles as they were logically developed from each other. Furthermore, there are several theories under each category (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019).



### **Instrumental Learning Theories**

There are three instrumental learning theories - behavioral theories, experiential learning, and cognitivism (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Behavioral theories hold that a stimulus in the learner's environment is responsible for the individual's change of behavior. Learning is, therefore, a change in behavior caused by the environmental stimulus. Furthermore, reinforcers or positive consequences from the change serve to strengthen the behavior change and enhance learning while punishers (negative consequences) serve to weaken learning. The behaviorist paradigm is teacher-centered as teachers or leaders of the educational activity are responsible for organizing and controlling the learning environment so as to achieve the desired response (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). An application of the behaviorist paradigm in the PD will involve assuring that the learning environment is free of distractions and conducive to learning, designing study lessons in way that the promote learning (Kerwin & Thornton, 2021; Motoko et al. 2019; Richter et al., 2019), monitoring of the activity to prevent any conflicts or sense of discomfort among participants, and encouraging idea generation through group presentations that showcase the ideas generated by small groups.

Cognitivism is an instrumental learning theory that focuses on the internal environment and cognitive structures of the learner, rather than the external environment or contextual variables (Margunayasa et al., 2019). Cognitive learning theories emphasize the mental and psychological processes that facilitate learning and assign meaning to

events such as perceptions, reflection, insight, information processing, metacognition, and memory (Elmetaher, 2021; Margunayasa et al., 2019). In this paradigm, the learning is held to be a process that takes place through verbal or written instructions and demonstrations. Learning is also seen as the accumulation of explicit and identifiable knowledge (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019).

Experiential learning is an instrumental learning theory which holds that learning and knowledge construction occur through learners' interaction with the authentic environment (Elmetaher, 2021; Hartikainen et al., 2019; Ploeger et al. 2019). Kolb's experiential learning cycle describes four phases of the learning cycle as (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstraction or abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, learning occurs through the processes of apprehension, comprehension of information and experience, intention, and extension of knowledge (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). This PD will apply experiential learning theory as the interaction of teachers with parents in the school environment will form the basis for exploring the problem and generating solutions. Participants in the workshop will reflect on their concrete experiences with parents and use the learning that emerge from those experiences to develop strategies that can be used to prevent low parental engagement and instead encourage increased participation of parents in their children's education and in school activities.

### **Transformative Learning Theories (Reflective Learning)**

Transformative learning theories emphasize transformation or change in meanings, contexts, and the status quo. Under this paradigm, learners are encouraged and empowered to challenge their embedded assumptions, also known as “frames of reference,” as a primary element of the learning process (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Learning then takes place when the new knowledge has become integrated into existing knowledge. The learners may maintain their frames of reference but continue to change some of their perspectives and meaning (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Three stages are involved in transformative learning: the first stage involves an experience of confusion regarding an issue or problem and reflecting on one’s previous perspectives about the issue; the second stage involves critical evaluation of the issue and self-reflection on the experience, a process that engages metacognitive thinking; and the third stage involves taking an action based on self-reflection, which leads to a transformation of contexts, meaning, and long-held propositions (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Transformative learning is a critical goal for this project. It is imperative that teachers identify factors in their knowledge, attitude, and long-held perceptions that serve as barriers to parental involvement in school activities. Critical evaluation and self-reflection on such issues will help teachers develop a set of actions that will lead to transformation in behaviors and parental involvement outcomes.

### **Social Theories of Learning**

Social learning theories emphasize observation and modeling as the critical processes for learning, strengthening understanding, and achieving gains in task performance. In addition to the person, these theories hold that social interactions, the community, and the desired behavior are the essential facilitators of learning (Hajian, 2019; Koponen et al., 2019). For example, communities of practice influence learning as members interact with and learn from each other (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Applying these theories, teachers have the responsibility of providing a supportive learning environment and identifying expected behaviors (Hajian, 2019). This PD will draw upon social learning theories by default as it creates a community of practice for teachers, administrators, and school staff who work with parents. Members of the community will learn from each other as they interact with each other during the workshop both formally and informally.

### **Motivational Model**

Motivational learning theories imply that adult learning is associated with two key elements—reflection and motivation. In order for learning to take place, the appropriate motivational factor must be present (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Motivational theories discuss how motivation influences learning as well as the various types of motivation and their impacts on learning. For examples, the self-determination theory focuses on the desire to fulfill one's potential which is an intrinsic or internal type of motivation; the expectancy valence theory focuses on the expectation of success as a motivator; and the

chain of response model focuses on three intrinsic motivating forces - self-evaluation, the learner's attitude toward education, and the role of learner goals and expectations (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019; Sivarajah et al., 2019). In this PD, it will be important that participants identify their motivations for being in the project. If they consider themselves to be forced to attend it as a work requirement, effective learning may not occur. However, if they hold an authentic understanding of the need to improve parental participation in the schools and the role that they can play in achieving that goal, it is expected that effective learning will take place and the rate of success in the PD higher.

### **Reflective Models**

Reflection is a process in which an individual critically thinks about an event or experience. Reflection helps students to make meaning of complex situations and to learn from their experiences (Margunayasa et al., 2019). There are two types of reflection suggested by Schon - reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. The former involves evaluating processes after they happen while the latter involves reflecting on an activity as it is happening (Margunayasa et al., 2019). Reflective learning varies among students depending on the student's own ability to reflect on an experience, the nature of the problem, and the context. A student's reflective thinking can develop over time with encouraging guidance and a supportive learning environment. In guided reflection, learners are given a structured guide for reflection and also receive constructive feedback about the outcome of their reflections from the facilitator or teacher.

The terms reflection and critical reflection are often used interchangeably in the literature. However, they do not mean the same thing as not all reflection is critical. Similar to critical reflection under transformative learning theories, Schön's reflection on action typology involves reflecting on old assumptions and leading to change (Margunayasa et al., 2019; Sivarajah et al., 2019). However, critical reflection engages a higher level of thought and stimulates transformative learning by connecting old and new knowledge regarding an issue or phenomena (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). This PD will use guided reflection practices to help participants reflect on action, their interactions with parents and their assumptions prior to the workshop and help them develop new knowledge and plan of action to improve parental involvement.

### ***Constructivist Learning Theories***

Constructivist learning theories are based on the constructivism paradigm. Constructivism is a psychological theory of learning that explains meaning making processes and knowledge. According to constructivism, people construct new knowledge from the interaction between their previous knowledge, skills, new knowledge gained from social interaction with others, and social activities. Since knowledge is constructed based on the social and physical world (the learner's environment), this makes knowledge relative to the learner's environment (Margunayasa et al., 2019; Sivarajah et al., 2019). The constructivist learning theory emphasizes processing and understanding information rather than memorizing (Hartikainen et al., 2019).

There are different branches in the constructivist theory and how learning is described depends on each branch. For example, learning is considered an individual cognitive processes within the cognitive constructivism paradigm, the social constructivism paradigm focuses on learning as social co-construction of knowledge, and a hybrid of these two paradigms integrates both descriptions of learning as an individual cognitive process as well as a process in which there is social co-construction of knowledge (Alt, 2018). Applying the hybrid definition to instructional strategies, active learning (as an instructional approach) facilitates constructivist learning through emphasizing self-construction of knowledge by students as well as students' responsibility for own learning. Active learning can be activated through numerous techniques such as increased physical activity, social collaboration, deeper processing, interaction, elaboration, metacognitive monitoring, and exploration of the material (Elmetaher, 2021; Hajian, 2019; Hartikainen et al., 2019). The constructivist theory can also guide teaching strategies such as group discussions, critical appraisal, and curriculum development (Margunayasa et al., 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019; Sivarajah et al., 2019).

### **Humanistic Theories (Facilitative Learning Theories)**

Humanism as a paradigm emerged in the 1960s and emphasizes human right to freedom and dignity and the right to achieve one's potential. Applied to learning, the humanist paradigm suggests that learning should be self-directed and independent, and adults can plan, assess, manage, and direct their own learning towards accomplishing

self-fulfillment, self-actualization, and self-motivation goals. This paradigm, therefore, underpins the construct of self-directed learning. The paradigm also holds that learning can be personalized and educators/teachers are facilitators of learning (Hajian, 2019; Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). This theory is not directly relevant for this PD as the entire PD curriculum has been developed based on findings from the qualitative study on parental involvement at the local elementary school. The topics and approach to delivery of content will be selected by the facilitator and not the PD participants. For the workshop, the PD are beneficiaries of the transfer of skills and knowledge and will be engaged in idea generation and problem-solving rather than developing or implementing a self-directed learning agenda.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Foundation for Project Content**

This 3-day workshop comprises the following content areas: an in-depth review of the concept of parental involvement, the significance and benefits of parental involvement to children's academic success, a critical examination of Epstein's typology of parental involvement, identification of barriers and strategies to parental involvement in the local school based on Epstein's parental involvement typology. The content selected for the workshop were based on the findings from the qualitative study on parental involvement conducted among parents of students at the local elementary school and the theory on family involvement in education.

The findings from the study showed parents did not feel valued or welcome at the local elementary school. Parents also did not feel satisfied with the opportunities



available for their participation in the school. This finding led to the selection of ‘the concept of parental involvement’ and ‘the significance of parental involvement to children’s academic success’ as topics in the workshop content. The premise for the selection is that teachers and persons who work with parents in the school may not have a full understanding of the concept of parental involvement. A meaningful review of the causes of low parental involvement in the school can only be achieved where there is a full understanding of the concept. Similarly, a full understanding of the significance of the concept is necessary to build motivation to implement the kind of attitudinal and practical change that can lead to improved parental participation in the school’s activities.

The literature supports the fact that there are various definitions of parental involvement held by different individuals. As stated by Ntekane (2018), parental involvement is not just about keeping parents informed about school events and their children’s performance (which is a process performed by teachers). Some parents view family involvement as transporting their child to and from school and some administrators and teachers view family involvement as families making periodic visits to the school (Epstein, 2018; Newman et al, 2019). Such actions are good but are neither sufficient nor capture the essence of parental involvement as a concept.

Parental involvement is about parents taking an active role to communicate with children about learning and providing genuine encouragement, mentoring, leading and inspiration for learning for the children (Ntekane, 2018). Supporting this position, Li and Fischer (2017) defined the key elements in family involvement as parenting,

communicating with the student, teachers, and the administration, volunteering in activities around the school, guiding the students as they learn at home, playing a role in decision-making, and collaborating with the community on educational matters. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers and administrators understand the meaning and essence of the concept of parental involvement in order to explore their own roles and contribution to the phenomena.

Similarly, research on the impact of parental involvement on children's academic achievement shows that parental involvement can promote students' motivation and performance, emotional and intellectual development, confidence, sense of self-efficacy and behavior (Liu et al., 2019). These benefits are connected with the location of parents in the child's microsystem (Avnet et al., 2019) and entire development from infancy till school age (Liu et al., 2020). Based on these research findings, a recommendation emerged from the qualitative study on parental involvement that parental involvement should be considered as a useful tool for promoting academic achievement as it provides information about student's needs and helps teachers to improve their instructional skills. This recommendation formed the basis for inclusion of the significance of parental involvement and impacts on children's academic success in the content for this PD. Arming teachers with this knowledge will help to improve their understanding of the effects of parental involvement on their students and motivate them to act to facilitate greater parental involvement in school activities.

Epstein's (2009) six typologies of family involvement is a validated theory on the various types of parental involvement. The six types of involvement according to Epstein's model are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Newman et al, 2019). The theory formed the conceptual framework for the qualitative study on parental involvement at the local school and helped the researcher to organize the findings of the study in a structured manner. Therefore, it is important that the participants of the PD understand the theory as the outcomes are framed upon Epstein's (2009) typologies. The theoretical transfer of knowledge regarding Epstein's (2009) typology will be carried out using a lecture method, handouts, and discussions. During the discussion, participants will also apply the model as a structure to guide reflections on the various types of reflections. Participants will reflect on own assumptions, knowledge, and own perceptions regarding the barriers to parental involvement and how it can be improved across each typology using the instructional strategy of guided reflection. Going further in the workshop, using the model, participants in the PD can reflect on barriers and strategies to parental involvement at the specific setting as identified by parents themselves and develop strategies that address the problem in a realistic manner, corresponding to problem-based learning.

### **Description**

In this section, I present a detailed description of the project including the needed resources, potential barriers and possible solutions and a proposal for the implementation

of the project. The roles and responsibilities of persons involved in the project are also presented.

### **Needed Resources**

*Physical resources:* This will include workshop space (conference center) with chairs and tables and electrical outlets for equipment such as laptops and projectors.

*Equipment:* Projectors, Computers.

*Information, Education and Communication Materials:* This will include lecture handouts, workshop program, and writing materials.

*Snacks/Refreshments Bar:* Water, tissue, drinks, and snacks for break time.

### **Existing Supports**

A conference room is already available on site. If my proposal is accepted, the project will have the support of my institution who will in turn allow me access to the physical resources and equipment needed for the project. Approval of the project will also support participant recruitment efforts.

### **Potential Barriers and Solutions**

The workshop has to be approved by the researcher's institution before it can be conducted. If the project is not approved, it cannot be implemented. If suggested are made for change to any part of the project plan, then those changes will be implemented. Time constraints is a primary challenge for this project. Teachers, administrators, and persons who work with parents at the school may not have the time to engage in the workshop, which is scheduled for implementation across 3 days, from 9:30–3:00pm

daily. These are hours when the intended participants are either working with students or carrying out their primary responsibilities. The inability of any group to participate in the project means that the community of practice intended from the workshop will be lost. Moreover, it means that such groups will not gain the skills and information that the workshop is designed to deliver. Potential solutions to this problem include breaking down the content of the workshop into self-learning modules that can be taken in a self-paced manner either through an online format or video/audio recordings that can be taken offline or present the workshop as a paper-based course which would also be taken in a self-paced manner. The workshop can also be delivered in its current format to persons who are available to participate each day while giving them materials to study for any absence (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

**Proposal for Implementation**

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Day 1	The concept of parental involvement	PowerPoint with Lecture Handouts Discussion Question and Answers
	Significance of parental involvement	Lecture Handouts Discussion Question and Answers Guided reflection on own motivations
Day 2	Epstein's model of parental involvement	PowerPoint with Lecture Handouts Discussion Question and Answer
	Barriers and strategies to parental involvement— Applying Epstein's model	Guided reflection Group activity Discussion

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Day 3	Barriers to parental involvement at the local setting—review of research findings at local setting Strategies to improve parental involvement at the project setting	Group presentations Problem-based learning Group activity Discussion Reflection on action Problem-based learning Group activity Discussion Group presentation Role play Develop plan of action document

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The primary responsibility for the project lies with me as the creator and facilitator for the workshop. My first responsibility is to obtain institutional approval for the workshop. This will be done by submitting the proposal following the institution's guidelines. Once approval is obtained, it is my responsibility to secure the conference space and assure that all the needed resources are ready. The workshop will be implemented following all ethical principles such as respect for all participants and protection of their rights. As a facilitator, I will have the responsibility of ensuring that effective instructional strategies are used for every topic and that participants feel comfortable are engaged throughout the workshop.

### **Project Evaluation**

#### **Type of Evaluation Plan**

The type of evaluation planned for the workshop is the outcome-based evaluation.

**Justification**

The goal of the workshop is to provide teachers, administrators and persons who work with parents the requisite knowledge, attitudinal change, and practices to improve parental involvement at the local school district. Therefore, an outcome-based evaluation is appropriate for the workshop as the goal of the evaluation will be to measure whether this goal is achieved.

**Outcome Measures**

The evaluation will be conducted using the specific objectives of the workshop. The specific objectives of the workshop are to (a) provide the community of practice (teachers, administrators and school staff who interact with parents) with knowledge regarding the concept, essence, and importance of parental involvement, (b) to provide the participants with a better understanding of the barriers to parental involvement at the local school setting, (c) provoke a change of attitude in support of parental involvement at the school, (d) to foster the development of strategies to promote parental involvement at the local school setting.

**Overall Evaluation Goals**

A final outcome of the workshop will be developing a set of strategies and recommendations for planning and improving parental involvement in the school. The workshop will begin with a self-reflection activity where the participants will rate their current knowledge, attitude, and practices regarding parental involvement. This activity will provide baseline data for measuring the outcomes of the workshop and whether the

specific objectives are achieved. A post-workshop survey will be undertaken to measure the gains in knowledge, attitudinal change, and new practices on improving parental involvement at the school.

### **Description of Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are persons who are affected by or who will benefit from the success of this project. The stakeholders for the workers are as follows:

**Administrators:** These persons are responsible for managing the school, assuring that teachers have the requisite support and tools they need to be effective in their roles, and for assuring that the school achieves its goal of providing age-appropriate education to children who are enrolled in the school as students.

**Teachers:** They have the responsibility of delivering instruction and knowledge to students.

**School Staff:** Certain school staff such as counsellors, nurses, and other support roles interact with students and their parents on a regular basis.

**Parents:** Parents will stand to benefit from better treatment from teachers and school staff improved opportunities for participation in the school system, and improved engagement in the education of their children.

**Students:** The students will reap the benefits of higher motivation, health emotional and intellectual development, and better educational achievement from improved parental involvement.



School District: The school district has oversight for the performance of all the schools in its jurisdiction.

### **Project Implications**

The project began with a qualitative study to investigate the problem of low parental involvement in the local school. The project found that parents were to a significant extent dissatisfied with the opportunities available for their participation in the school and were also unhappy with the treatment they receive from teachers. A social change outcome of this project will, therefore, include change in attitude and practice among teachers in such a way that parents feel respected and can participate more in school activities. Attitudinal change among teachers will also result to improved parent-teacher relationships and lead to a more sensitive and positive learning and teaching environment. Another social change implication for the project will be increased teacher-parent collaboration as well as increased community-school collaborations since parents are members of community-based organizations and can advocate for more collaboration with the school. High-quality parental involvement programs will not only lead to increased school performance as a whole but also to a better reputation for the school in the community, with the potential for increased student enrolment success.

At the stakeholder level, the project is important to local stakeholders and beyond. Administrators who participate in the workshop will gain awareness, skills, and know-how to improve their interaction with parents in such a way as to facilitate greater parental involvement in the school. The strategies for parental involvement learned

during the workshop will help administrators to better design parental involvement activities as well as to improve upon the numbers of such opportunities offered by the school. Teachers and school staff who participate in the workshop will equally be empowered with information and new knowledge to improve their interactions with parents and to create meaningful, respectful relations that can promote success in their work with children.

In the larger context, student achievement is an important concern for educational leaders and stakeholders. Numerous studies have been conducted on the factors that promote student achievement and how to improve them. Parental involvement has a proven effect of improving students' motivation, confidence, achievement, and intellectual/emotional development. Parental involvement is a strategic factor when looking at how to improve students' achievement given its embeddedness in the children's micro-environments. Moreover, parental involvement has the potential to lead to improved instructional practices and outcomes as teachers may obtain valuable information about children's learning needs from their parents. Given these benefits, the educational system in general would derive important benefits from improved parental involvement in schools. This PD demonstrates how schools can implement strategies to investigate the level of parental involvement, the barriers to the parental involvement, and implement PD activities to harvest strategies and promote action to improve parental involvement. Schools can adopt the concept paper for this PD as a guide to help them

plan their own workshops on parental involvement for their administrators, teachers, and school staff who interact with parents in the school system.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Using a basic qualitative study, I conducted a study on family involvement in a local elementary school. The purpose of the study was to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies and to describe their perspectives on barriers and effective strategies to help them become more involved. The findings showed that some families were dissatisfied with the current strategies used at the research setting while others felt that there was room for improvement even where they did not state outright dissatisfaction. The reasons provided for dissatisfaction include few numbers of programs for family involvement, low meaningfulness of events to families, poor treatment received at events from teachers, and low opportunities for family input in the school. In this section, I discuss the project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship, project development, and leadership and change, importance of the work, and implications and directions for future research.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

#### **Strengths**

The deliverable from this study is a 3-day workshop to build the capacities of teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals who work with parents on how to improve parental involvement in schools. This deliverable is grounded in theory, Epstein's (2009) typologies of family involvement, allowing for the training to be implemented in a structured manner, and making it possible for outcome measures to be developed based on the six typologies of parental involvement. The workshop will, thus, support the

practical application of Epstein's typologies of parental involvement at the research site. The contributions of the workshop to practice and the literature on parental involvement can also be delineated with clarity because the development activity is grounded in theory.

### **Limitations**

This PD also has certain limitations. These involve methodology and the potential for bias from human subjectivity, and time constraints. First, qualitative studies are subject to the possibility of subjective bias due to the subjective nature of qualitative methodologies. There is a basic assumption in the data collection process that the responses provided by participants in the interviews are accurate and truly reflective of their experiences. However, human perceptions may be influenced by their environments, circumstances, and even personalities. Hence, it is possible for subjective bias to occur in the primary data collected through qualitative techniques (Gronmo, 2019). Similarly, qualitative data analysis methods may be affected by researcher bias especially in situations where the researcher works in the same field and already has pre-held notions regarding the problem being explored. To help address this limitation, I engaged in the process of reflexivity and maintained a reflexive journal in which I kept detailed notes regarding my thought processes throughout the PD. Reflexivity is the examination of one's personal commitments and views to see how they influence all aspects of the study from selecting a research approach, framing the problem, data collection, through to data interpretations (Ngozwana, 2018). I also engaged in other processes such as using peer

review for the data collection and analysis, triangulation of data using different sources - the literature, the data collected from the school on family participation, and the primary data collected from families during the qualitative study.

The second limitation is in respect to time constraints. Research evidence shows that learners benefit most from PD when it is delivered in a continuous and gradual manner (Pharis et al., 2019). This PD workshop was, however, designed as a 3-day program. To compensate for the short duration of the program and to promote learning, participants will be invited to become members of an online community of practice forum where they can continue to interact with, collaborate, and learn from each other after the workshop has ended.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

This study was prompted by low participation of families at school activities at the local school. I conducted a basic qualitative study to interview families at the school to explore their perspectives and opinions on family involvement and to identify the factors that may have served as a barrier to their participation in school activities. The study also sought to identify what strategies can lead to improved family involvement at the research setting from the perspectives of families themselves. Based on the findings from the study, I created a 3-day professional development workshop for teachers, administrators, and school staff who work with families within the school setting.

There are three ways in which the problem can be addressed differently. The first is through an evaluation study focusing on the current activities offered by the school.

This approach would involve analyzing the family participation logs to see which activities have the highest and most consistent family involvement and which activities have the lowest. Based on the findings, an exploration of why those activities have high participation and why others have low participation would be made. A response would then have been applied to address the issues identified and build up family participation. A key assumption for an evaluation study would be that the school implements sufficient numbers of family involvement activities.

A second approach to addressing the problem would be to conduct a basic qualitative study that will include data collection from two groups: (a) families; and (b) school staff (teachers, administrators, department heads, and other professionals within the school staff that deal with families in the school setting). While data will be collected from families on their experiences and barriers to family involvement and suggested strategies to improve their participation, data will be collected from the school staff on their knowledge, attitude, and practices in family involvement. Comparative analysis of the two data sets would yield information on family needs and allow an understanding of the gaps in knowledge and practice on family parental involvement. Critical analysis of the two data sets would reveal a more robust information to support the implementation of a PD program.

A third approach would involve creating two workshops, one for school staff (including teaching staff, administrators and other professionals in the school system that work with parents) and the other for parents and guardians of school children. The

workshop for families would help them understand the essence of family involvement, their roles in the children's academic performance, and provide knowledge and information to empower them to take a more active position in their children's education. This would emphasize home-based and school-based involvement as the literature shows that both school-based and home-based family involvement have positive impact on student achievement at the elementary school level (Avnet et al., 2019).

The three alternative approaches discussed above present alternative definitions and alternative solutions to the local problem. The original problem for this study was that educators at the local urban elementary school struggle to find effective strategies to promote family involvement in school events. The school's Parent Engagement Coordinator organized a minimum of seven family involvement events in the school year and data from the events showed that less than 10% of families participated in each event. For student conferences specifically, Family Attendance logs revealed 10% family participation, 25% for school activities and workshops, and 20% for School Improvement Plan. The participation of families in these events remained low despite reminders delivered via phone calls, emails, flyers, and class dojo.

In the first approach, an alternative definition of the problem would be that some school activities had high family involvement while others did not. The solution would, therefore, be to explore which events had high and low participation and find out the reason for those scores. In the second alternative approach the problem may be redefined as low family participation and lack of data on the level of competency among school



staff (encapsulated in their knowledge, attitude, and practices) in regard to family involvement. For instance, studies show that when administrators are not enthusiastic about family involvement in their schools, it can lead to decreased family involvement (Robinson, 2017). Factors such as unclear channels of communication between school personnel and families have also been identified in the literature as examples of barriers to family involvement (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022). The solution would be, therefore, to conduct a study to identify barriers and suggested solutions from families perspectives, investigate the impact of school staff competency on the problem (identify gaps between family expectation and school staff practices), and implement a PD intervention for school staff to address the gaps in practice and knowledge.

The entire process, from the conception of the study to the execution of the PD workshop involved learning for me. I have grown both personally and professionally in the course of performing research and in the development of this work.

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

#### **Lessons on Project Development Processes**

The project provided invaluable experience on the steps involved in project development including proposal development, writing a literature review, selection of appropriate research designs, development of research methodology, and data analysis techniques. While the skills gained in this project were in relation to qualitative research designs, I also gained knowledge regarding quantitative project development, evaluation

studies, policy development and analysis through the extensive reading I conducted as part of the project development process.

### **Reflective Analysis on Personal Learning**

This project is built upon the foundation of research and the formal project development processes of planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating a project. In carrying out these processes, I gained new insights into my own abilities, attitudes, knowledge, and practices, as well as gained significant self-transformation. In regard to my abilities, prior to conducting the project, I did not realize that I had the necessary skills or would be able to learn so much about research work, and my level of confidence was low in the sense that I knew I had so much to learn. As I started the project and continued to work, I was able to build on my abilities and fill in my own gaps in skills and knowledge, some by reading and studying on diverse steps of the process, and others by intuitively knowing what the next step would be. My level of confidence, problem-solving ability, and critical reflection skills grew with each phase of the work. My skills in areas such as writing, editing, communication, and using education technologies also grew. In regard to attitude transformation, I was also able to reflect on my own values and attitudes as I carried out the study. I asked myself questions about my interpersonal skills, my level of cultural sensitivity, my interactions with families, my own biases in dealing with people as I carried out the project. I identified areas of improvement and shifts occurred in my thinking and expression as a result. I came to treasure this work not just for the opportunity to grow as a scholar, but also for the personal growth it

engendered. My work as an educator after this project will show marked difference from what it was before the project due to the various aspects of self-transformation gained in the project.

### **Analysis of Growth as a Scholar**

Through this project, I also made gains in academic skills and knowledge and grew as a scholar. While conducting the research, I grew in knowledge regarding the various types of research—designs, methods, evaluation of evidence, and selection of appropriate methods whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. I honed my research skills such as search strategies, article analysis, systematic review of the literature, data collection methods, data analysis methods, applying measures of quality in research, academic discussion, and identification of deviant data and their relevance. I developed skills such as critical thinking, writing skills, editing skills, how to seek and utilize feedback, formatting and citation, and enhanced knowledge regarding various word processing software. My growth as a scholar was anchored on the project guide provided by my institution as growth took place as I worked through each of the progressive steps for project development outlined in the document.

### **Analysis of Growth as a Practitioner**

My growth in personal learning and growth as a scholar combine to create a positive transformation in my growth as a practitioner. I work as an ESOL teacher in a local elementary school. Part of my job includes reporting students' progress or issues to their families and interacting with families when they come to the school for various

reasons. The process of interviewing families to obtain their perceptions about family involvement provided me with a greater understanding and sensitivity to families' expectations and their faith in teachers to help their children deliver those aspirations. As each family situation is different, a one-size fits all approach to family involvement may not always work to improve their participation in school activities. A closer contact with families through interviews transformed my relationship with families from an impersonal professional relationship, to one where I was stimulated to develop new strategies to better assist family participation in their children's education. I learned how to communicate better with families, how to be more culturally sensitive in my communication with families, and how to approach issues of family absence with an open and helpful attitude.

I also made gains in knowledge and awareness that I can share with my colleagues in the work context. An interview provides an opportunity for rich discussion regarding the subject matter as against what would have been obtained from a mere meeting to ask a question. The semi-structured interview format is designed to allow the researcher to explore an issue using open-ended questions as well as provides participants with the freedom to provide additional context to their perceptions and experiences where they feel comfortable doing so. Persons who have not had the opportunity to interact with families in an interview process may not have the full understanding of the barriers and perceptions of families regarding family involvement. I have a responsibility to share the information and knowledge gained through this work with my community of practice

towards promoting better support for families and improved family involvement. It is important to disseminate information from the workshop to all stakeholders who are concerned and involved in family involvement in order to create positive change using appropriate techniques whether reports, articles, conference papers, emails, face-to-face conversations, or through teacher meetings in the school.

### **Analysis of Growth as a Project Developer**

The project was built upon the foundation of my previous degree, a Specialist's degree in Elementary Education and my work experience as a teacher. Building on this foundation, I grew in knowledge and skills as a project developer as a result of this work. First, I gained the skill of looking at issues from an analytical lens; I am able to look at issues from the factual perspective and explore the evidence-base to explain or support a problem. I am able to identify, find, and apply the appropriate theoretical framework to ground a project and derive the best alignment from the problem to its solutions. I am also able to develop SMART objectives as an essential process in developing and implementing successful projects. I have gained confidence as a researcher and know how to seek out information for diverse kinds of projects. The development of a 3-day professional development workshop as the cumulative deliverable from this project reflects this growth.

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

The central subject of this work is the subject of improving family involvement at the local school setting. However, I gained a better understanding of the importance of

this work by looking at the importance of family involvement from the student achievement, family, government, societal perspectives, and the project design level. In terms of student achievement, the topic of family involvement in the school is very important as years of research have shown the importance of family involvement in student success (Weyer, 2018). Family involvement in school activities carries benefits such as increased motivation, confidence, and academic achievement for children (GADOE, 2019). Research evidence also show that family involvement facilitates good family-teacher relationships, contributing to a more positive school environment that favors learning (Epstein, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022). Therefore, family involvement in their children’s education support learning and improved educational outcomes (Oranga et al., 2022).

From the family perspective, family involvement leads to improved confidence in the care and development of their children within the educational context as families can see their children’s experiences in the school and see how their expectations for their children’s education are being met. From the government and policy perspective, as a result of the importance of the issue, family involvement has been located on the radar of educational policy and reform efforts (Weyer, 2018). For instance, family involvement is recognized in federal policy via Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as a key component for academic success and Title I schools are required to develop policies involving families and “school-family compacts” for student success under the Act (GADOE, 2019). A project that leads to improved family involvement in

the school helps the school to meet higher federal and state requirements regarding family involvement in the school.

From a societal perspective, family involvement and the positive reinforcement and encouragement it delivers to children are linked to a strong feeling of self-worth, fewer behavioral problems, positive social relations, in addition to high academic competence and better performance for children (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Katenga 2017; Oranga et al., 2022). Thus, parental involvement leads to a more healthy, balanced, and productive society.

At the project design level, the problem that underpinned this project was the difficulty in finding effective strategies to promote higher levels of family involvement at the local school. The purpose of the study was to investigate family perspectives on family involvement strategies used in the school, to describe their perspectives on barriers to their participation, and to elicit from them suggested strategies that would help promote more family involvement in the school. Eliciting this data from the families was important as they are the intended targets of family involvement strategies and a realistic intervention program cannot be developed without finding out their perceptions, needs, and opinions. This study was, therefore, very important in that it allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand insights from families on their perceptions, needs, and concerns regarding family involvement in the school into which their children are enrolled.

The purpose of the PD workshop was to use the findings of this study to build teacher knowledge, awareness, and skills, and to promote attitudinal change in support of

increased family involvement in the school. The PD itself is very important as the content was selected based on the findings from the qualitative study with family, allowing the workshop curriculum to directly address the real concerns of the families in the school. A PD that is based on theory or previous research from other scholars in other contexts may have had some benefits, but it would not have captured the needs of the families at the specific local school. By conducting the qualitative study and building on the findings to develop the content for the PD workshop, the gaps between the needs and expectations of families and the knowledge, attitude and practices of school staff (teachers, administrators, and persons that work with parents) can be addressed.

This study is important because it revealed the actual feelings of families regarding family involvement activities at the school. Without conducting the study, the leadership of the school would not have known that families are not satisfied with the parental involvement strategy used by the school. In every business, customer satisfaction is crucial to success and periodic evaluation of customer satisfaction levels is crucial for success. Therefore, this study is important as it allowed the school to take stock of the level of family satisfaction regarding family involvement activities.

The study also allowed the researcher to identify the barriers that families face in the research setting or the causes of the dissatisfaction. By identifying the issues, effective intervention steps can be taken. Furthermore, a third objective of the study was to elucidate family suggestions on strategies that can improve their participation in school activities. This step was critical as it allowed families to take into consideration the



limiting situations that they face in their lives and come up with opportunities that would work for them. For instance, families who have to work long hours in order to provide for their family were able to think of what kinds of opportunities for family involvement they would be able to access given they have to be at work for most of the day and so on. The study also provided the opportunity for the school staff and teachers to think of innovative ways of promoting family involvement. Factors such as financial and economic challenges may pose barriers to parental involvement in ways that the parents themselves cannot overcome without help from the school or other sources.

Lastly, although the PD is based on findings from the local school, the entire project is supported by a rich research context such that other researchers can apply the findings to their own contexts. The content of the PD can be beneficial to any school seeking to increase the participation of parents in school activities.

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

In this section, I present the project's potential impact for positive social change at the individual, family, school, and policy levels. The theoretical, methodological, and empirical implications of the project are discussed. I also present a set of recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research.

#### **Potential for Social Change**

The study carries potential for positive social change at the individual, family, school, and policy levels. Although the subject of focus in the study is involvement, at the individual level, there are three sets of beneficiaries, the family as an individual, the

student as an individual, and the school staff as individuals. The study carries the potential to lead to improved participation of families in the school's activities as individuals. Such improved participation will build the families' sense of being valued, sense of contribution to their children's education, as well as improve their confidence in the school. The student as an individual gains in confidence, motivation, and performance, creating a foundation for a productive, happy, and healthy adult life. The teacher, school staff, and administrator who participates in the PD will gain transformations in knowledge, skills, and attitude as an individual as a result of participation in the workshop.

The family involvement model (Epstein's typology of family involvement) used in this study includes parenting as a typology of family involvement and the deliverables from the study addressed each type of typology including parenting. At the family level, increased family involvement in school activities will lead to greater cohesion in the family unit as they are able to contribute and have oversight of their children's learning and children are aware of higher family support and presence in their lives. At the school level, higher family involvement leads to better teacher-family relationships and a more positive learning environment for children (Samuels, 2018). Family involvement also promotes children's motivation and achievement. Taken together, these impacts contribute to the goal of providing age-appropriate education for children and also allows the school to meet policy requirements in regard to student achievement and family involvement.

## **Implications**

The project also carries theoretical, methodological, and empirical implications. The project has theoretical implications as it contributes to available literature on the subject of family involvement. The study contributes to the literature that explore Epstein's (2009) typologies of family parental involvement as a model for categorizing and understanding family involvement. The findings from the study support the findings from other scholars regarding the barriers to family involvement such as communication and family socioeconomic status (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Oranga et al., 2022), and supports strategies identified in other studies to promote family involvement such as training of teachers and family (Guo et al, 2018; Liu et al., 2020).

The project carries methodological implications as the methodology used in the project may be replicated by other scholars who wish to identify the barriers and potential strategies for improving parental involvement in their own research settings. The study showcases how theory-driven research may be applied to align a research problem with research findings and deliverables. The study also showcases how qualitative studies can be used as a backdrop to develop streamlined interventions to address a research problem. Lastly, the project has empirical implications for the research setting as it shows the level of parental satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the school's family involvement strategy, identifies the barriers to family participation in the strategy, as well as identifies suggestions for solving the problem and improving family involvement in the school.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings from the project, I have identified a set of recommendations for practice:

- A strong family involvement strategy is a requisite for any school that seeks to promote student achievement and success.
- Family involvement strategies may work best when they are developed based on data that considers the needs of families and any limiting circumstances that families may be facing.
- The attitude of teachers and school staff is important in improving family participation in school activities. It is important that school staff have competencies such as effective communication skills, interpersonal skills, and intercultural skills to help them maintain positive relationships with the family of children enrolled in the school.
- Professional development programs that build teachers skills for improving family participation are important for overall school success. Such PD programs may be conducted in diverse formats such as online or face-to-face, videos, handouts, or through external agencies such as conferences and seminars organized by educational organizations.
- It is also important for schools to develop a parental involvement framework that outlines the key programs implemented under the strategy, the goals of each program, and how such programs are monitored.

### **Directions for Future Research**

While the current study carries important implications for addressing the problem of low family involvement in schools, there are still numerous opportunities for research. First, additional research may be needed to identify the roles of teachers and administrators and the extent to which they can legally participate in certain aspects of family involvement such as home-based involvement and parenting. Additional research into the impacts of online and self-paced PD on training for family involvement may also be necessary. Additional research may also study the extent to which online formats can be used to achieve increased family involvement.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to identify the perceptions of families on family involvement activities at the local elementary school, to identify the barriers to their participation, and obtain their perspectives on how to improve their participation in the school. In conducting this study, a key takeaway is that family involvement is vital for student success. The impact of family involvement spans student success, improved family-teacher relationships, and increased school-community collaborations. This activity is so important that it is mandated in federal education policy. Given its benefits, all schools should strive to strengthen their family involvement programs. A PD program on family involvement for teachers and other school staff is critical for providing such staff with an opportunity to understand the barriers to family involvement in the school

and for providing them with the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes to take action to improve family involvement in the school.

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## Appendix A:

### Professional Development Workshop on Parental Engagement

Purpose: The purpose of this PD workshop is to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to increase the level of parental involvement in the local school.

#### **Goals**

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the workshop, the following objectives should be achieved:

- The participants would have an understanding of own motivations for parental involvement
- The participants should have an understanding of the role of parental involvement in improving students achievement
- The participants should have a better understanding of the barriers and facilitators for parental involvement in the school systems
- The participants will have gained awareness and practiced new strategies for more involving parents.

Target Participants: Administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who work with parents within the school system.

**DAY 1****1.1 Activities**

	Time	Topic	Activities
	9:00–9:30am	Housekeeping, pre-training Survey	Introductory activities, self-assessment survey
9:30–10:00am	Setting norms and expectations	Brainstorm, handout	
10:00–10:30am	Understanding Parental Involvement	Define parental involvement, guided reflection, brainstorming, exploring own motivations	
10:30–10:40am	Break		
10:40am–12:00pm	Understanding parental involvement continued.	PowerPoint presentation Question and answer Discussion	
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch		
1:00–2:00pm	Significance of parental involvement	PowerPoint presentation, guided reflection, brainstorming, group work, discussion	
2:00–3:00pm	Closing session	Summary of sessions, Question and Answer (Q+A) session, Exit activities	

**1.2 Workshop Materials**

- Handouts
- Sticky notes

- Writing paper
- Slides detailing all activities and assignments

### 1.3 Handouts

- Pre-training survey
- Handout: The role of parental involvement in student academic performance
- Handout: Barriers and facilitators to parental involvement
- Handout: Summary and exit notes

### 1.4 Handout: Pre-training Survey Form

Professional Development Workshop on Parental Involvement  
**Pre-Training Survey**

Name (optional):

Date:

Location:

Facilitator:

The questions in this form are adapted from Epstein et al.'s (2009) Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. Use the following scoring rubric to complete the pre-training survey and rate your current parent involvement practices: 1 – Never; 2 – Rarely; 3 – Sometimes; 4 – Often; 5 – Frequently.

1. I produce clear and usable information for families. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I ask parents for information about children's strengths, and talents. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I provide families with information on home conditions that support learning 1 2 3 4 5
4. I review all communication with parents, print or non-print, for clarity and meaningfulness.  
1 2 3 4 5
5. I communicate with parents in their own language. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I maintain two-way channels of communications - home to school and school to home.

1 2 3 4 5

7. My school conducts an annual survey to obtain parental input on student needs, school programs, and satisfaction 1 2 3 4 5

8. I have participated in conducting orientation for new parents and continue to do so. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I send student progress reports to parents weekly or monthly for their review and feedback.

1 2 3 4 5

10. I inform parents when their children have behavior or academic problems. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I produce a class newsletter with information about the events, meetings, and parenting

1 2 3 4 5

12. My school conducts annual surveys to identify parental interests and talents, and to match them with volunteer and classroom needs. 1 2 3 4 5

13. We create volunteering opportunities to encourage and allow parents to participate.

1 2 3 4 5

14. We train parents who serve as volunteers. 1 2 3 4 5

15. Parents who serve as volunteers are recognized for their time and efforts. 1 2 3 4 5

16. My school encourages parents to be involved with the school using multiple strategies.

1 2 3 4 5

17. We coach parents on how to monitor their children's schoolwork at home.

1 2 3 4 5

18. I provide information to parents on major subjects. 1 2 3 4 5

19. I provide information to families on how to support children and help them to improve their skills 1 2 3 4 5

20. I schedule interactive homework with students that requires them to discuss their work

with a family member. 1 2 3 4 5

21. I deal openly and respectfully with conflict situations 1 2 3 4 5

22. I help parents and students access resources on critical community programs, agencies, and services. 1 2 3 4 5

23. I involve parents in locating community resources. 1 2 3 4 5

24. My school works with local organizations - businesses, parks, industries, parks, museums - on programs to enhance student learning. 1 2 3 4 5

25. I help parents build networks and connect with the other parents. 1 2 3 4 5

### **1.5 Facilitators Notes for Day 1**

Slide 1: This slide presents the title of the workshop, day, and the name of the facilitator.

Slide 2: Participants are encouraged to introduce themselves to each other and also share an ice breaker: what do you like best about teaching?

Slide 3: The workshop will start from 9.30am and end at 3pm each day. Slide 3 presents a timeline of the activities for Day 1.

Slide 4: The norms that will guide the behavior of all participants are presented in slide 4. All participants will be required to state if there is any norm they disagree with. Participants are also free to add or suggest additions to these norms.

Slide 5: The pre-training survey will be administered to participants at this point. The goal of the survey is to collect baseline data on the current knowledge, attitude, and practices of teachers on parental involvement. The data will be compared against a post-training survey to verify that the workshop was effective and that the desired knowledge and skills on parental involvement were transferred to workshop participants.

Slide 6: This is a guided reflection activity in which participants think about their experiences interacting with parents and the reason for the method selected for that interaction. The participants work together as a group for this activity and have 7 minutes to present their experience.

Slide 7: Here we explore what parental involvement means to each participant. It is important that the concept is understood properly. Parental involvement is not just parents dropping off and picking up their children after school.

Slide 8: A 10-minute break time.

Slide 9: The concept of parental involvement as described in the literature is presented in this slide. The literature describes two prongs to parental involvement, school-based and home-based involvement.

Slide 10: Lunch break for an hour.

Slide 11: In this slide, we discuss the significance of parental involvement, and why it is important.

Slide 12: Summary of morning and afternoon sessions, questions and answers.

Slide 13: Exit: basic reminders for Day 2 are provided – time of starting and goals.

**1.6 Slides for Day 1**

*Slide 1*

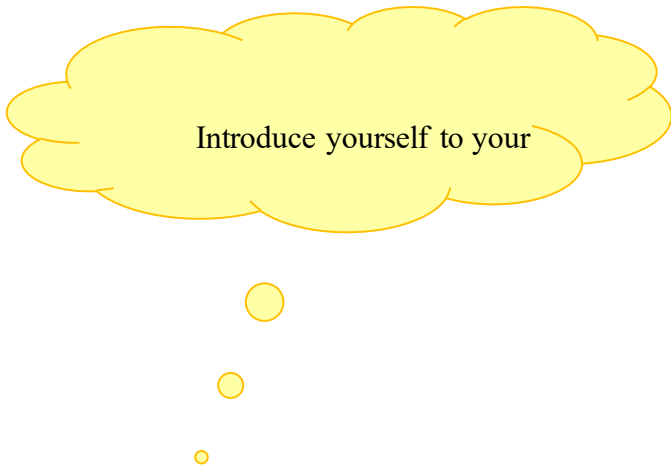
Parental Involvement Workshop

**Day 1**

Facilitated  
by  
Barbara A. Smith

*Slide 2*

**Introductions**



Introduce yourself to your

*Slide 3*

<b>Day 1 Timetable</b>	
9:30–10:00am	Introductory activities
10:00–10:30am	Defining parental involvement
10:30–10:40am	Break
10:40am–12:00pm	Significance of parental involvement
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch
1:00–2:00pm	Barriers to parental involvement
2:00–3:00pm	Summary of sessions, question and answer (Q+A), exit activity

*Slide 4*

<b>Workshop norms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will begin and end on time.</li> <li>✓ All phones and other devices will be silent</li> <li>✓ Feel free to ask question</li> <li>✓ Less urgent questions can be addressed during Q+A sessions.</li> <li>✓ Speak and listen.</li> <li>✓ Everyone in the group is encouraged to participate.</li> </ul>

*Slide 5*

<b>Pre-training survey</b>
<p>Use the scoring rubric below complete the pre-training survey and rate your current parent involvement practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Never</li> <li>2 – Rarely</li> <li>3 – Sometimes</li> <li>4 – Often</li> <li>5 – Frequently</li> </ul>



*Slide 6***Guided Reflection**

- Three minutes: Think about your experiences interacting with parents whether face-to-face, notes, phone calls, or other forms of interaction.
- Five minutes: Share one type of interaction with parents and why you chose that method.
- Seven minutes: Share your group's experience with the class.

*Slide 7***Defining Parental Involvement**

**What does parental involvement mean to you?**



*Tips:*  
*Who*  
*What*  
*Where*

*Slide 8*

*Break Time*

**Slide 9**

Family involvement is a process in which parents/families are directly involved in the education of their children; parents are involved by teachers and the school in their children's learning process and also provide learning assistance to the children as much as they possibly can (Ntekane (2018).

There are two prongs to parental involvement, school-based and home-based involvement.

School-based involvement is when parents are volunteering during school hours, attending school meetings, participating in school events, and communicating with teachers

Home-based involvement is when parents play a part in their child's education at home by assisting with homework, communicating with their child about their day at school, and responding to their child's academic performance (Anthony-Newman, 2019).

**Slide 10**

*Lunch Break*

**Slide 11**

### **Benefits of Parental Involvement**

- ◆ Supports children's learning and academic competence (Oranga et al., 2022).
- ◆ Linked to a strong feeling of self-worth, fewer behavioral problems, positive social relations (Oranga et al., 2022).
- ◆ Better performance at school (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).
- ◆ Facilitates good relationships between parents and teachers and contributes to a more positive school environment (Epstein, 2018).
- ◆ Offers a sense of security and reinforces the importance of educational achievement.
- ◆ Promotes increase in children's positive attitude about school and overall progress (Lavoie, 2021)

*Slide 12*

*Summary of morning and afternoon sessions*

**Questions?**

*Slide 13***Closing Session****Exit**

- Basic reminders for Day 2 – time, goals
- Thank you for your participation!!!
- Looking forward to seeing you all for Day 2!!!

**DAY 2****2.1 Day 2 Activities**

Time	Topic	Activities
9:00–9:30am	Housekeeping, introduction	Introductory activities, distribution of handouts
9:30–10:00am	Review of norms, review of workshop goals, and recap of Day 1	Participatory discussion
10:00–10:30am	Epstein’s typology of parental involvement	PowerPoint presentation, Critical analysis, participatory discussion.
10:30–10:40am	Break	
10:40am–12pm	Barriers to parental involvement based on Epstein’s model	Guided reflection, PowerPoint presentation, handout
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch	
1:00–2:00pm	Strategies for parental involvement based on Epstein’s model	Role playing, brainstorming, group work, discussion
2:00–3:00pm	Closing session	Summary of sessions, Question and Answer (Q+A) session, Exit activities

**2.2 Facilitator’s Notes for Day 2**

Slide 14: Welcome to Day 2 of the professional development training workshop on parental involvement for teachers and school professionals who work with and interact with parents.

I am the facilitator, Barbara A. Smith.

Slide 15: We introduced ourselves to each other yesterday. Let's say hello to each other once again and tell each other our favorite hobby. If you need to introduce yourself to anyone, please go ahead and so do. We will also form a new group at this point...so please pick a number from 1-3 and form a group with participants who picked the same number as you.

Slide 16: This slide presents the activities for the Day and the timetable for the day's activities. We begin at 9am and will wrap up the program at 3:00pm. We will have a 10-minute break at 10:30am and an hour-long break for lunch at noon. We will begin with a recap of the Day 1 and then end with some playing to allow us gain practical skills for parental involvement. So, we have an exciting day ahead...buckle up and enjoy the ride.

Slide 17: Our norms were established yesterday: we will begin and end on time, all phones and other devices will be silent; feel free to ask questions; less urgent questions can be addressed during Q+A sessions; speak and listen; and everyone in the group is encouraged to participate.

If you have an additional norm you would like to add, feel free to share it at this time.

Recap of Day 1 – The guiding question for this re-cap is “What new or critical information or insight did you gain from Day 1?” Was there any new insights you gained or that came to mind at any time during Day 1? This is an open floor question; anyone can share their insights.

Slide 18: Introduction to Epstein’s typology of parental involvement. This model formed the framework for the qualitative study on parental involvement in this school and will guide our exploration of barriers and strategies to improve parental involvement.

Slide 19: Break Time. There’s water, coffee, and juice at the “Refreshment Center.” Enjoy.

Slide 20: Here, we will review the barriers for parental involvement based on Epstein’s model.

Slide 21: Lunch Break

Slide 22: In this session, we will now focus on strategies for improving parental involvement based on Epstein’s model.

Slide 23: Summary of morning and afternoon sessions, questions, and answers.

Slide 24: Exit: basic reminders for Day 3 are provided – time of starting and goals.

## **2.3 Slides for Day 2**

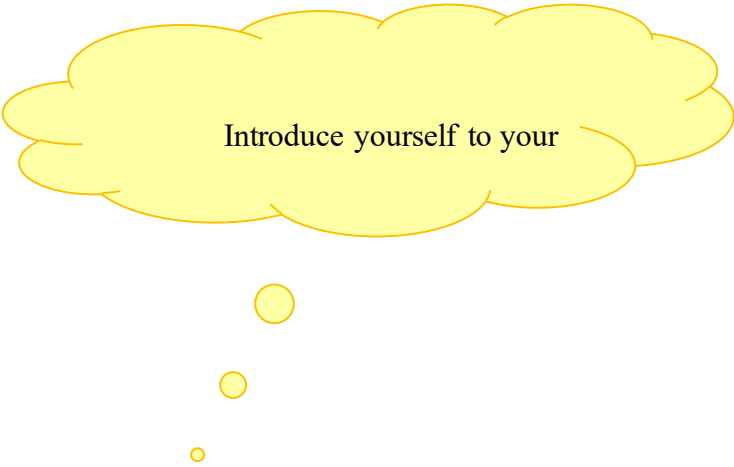
### ***Slide 14***

Parental Involvement Workshop

**Day 2**

Facilitated  
by  
Barbara A. Smith

*Slide 15*

<b>Introductions</b>	
 <p>Introduce yourself to your</p>	

*Slide 16*

<b>Day 2 Timetable</b>	
9:00–9:30am	Sign-in, introductory activities, ice breakers, distribution of handouts
9:30–10:00am	Recap of norms, review of workshop goals, recap of Day 1
10:00–10:30am	Introduction to Epstein’s typology of parental involvement
10:30–10:40am	Break
10:40am–12:00pm	Barriers to parental involvement/ Epstein’s model
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch
1:00–2:00pm	Strategies for improving parental involvement/Epstein’s model
2:00–3:00pm	Summary of sessions, Question and Answer (Q+A), Exit activity

*Slide 17***Workshop norms/Recap of Day 1**

- ✓ We will begin and end on time.
- ✓ All phones and other devices will be silent
- ✓ Feel free to ask question
- ✓ Less urgent questions can be addressed during Q+A sessions.
- ✓ Speak and listen.
- ✓ Everyone in the group is encouraged to participate.

*Slide 18***Introduction to Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement**

- ◆ Parenting
- ◆ Communicating
- ◆ Volunteering
- ◆ Learning at Home
- ◆ Decision Making
- ◆ Collaborating with the Community

*Slide 19*

*Break Time*



*Slide 20*

<b>Unpacking Epstein's model</b>
<p>What are the barriers to Parental involvement based on the components below?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Parenting</li><li>◆ Communicating</li><li>◆ Volunteering</li><li>◆ Learning at Home</li><li>◆ Decision Making</li><li>◆ Collaborating with the Community</li></ul>

*Slide 21*

<p><i>Lunch Break</i></p>
---------------------------

*Slide 22*

<b>Unpacking Epstein's Typology of Parental Involvement</b>
<p>What strategies can teachers/administrators/school staff adopted to improve parental involvement based on the components below?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Parenting</li><li>◆ Communicating</li><li>◆ Volunteering</li><li>◆ Learning at Home</li><li>◆ Decision Making</li><li>◆ Collaborating with the Community</li></ul>

*Slide 23*

*Summary of morning and afternoon sessions*

*Questions?*

*Slide 24***Closing Session****Exit**

- Basic reminders for Day 3 – time, goals
- Thank you for your participation!!!
- Looking forward to seeing you all for Day 3!!!

**DAY 3****3.1 Day 3 Activities**

Time	Topic	Activities
9:00–9:30am	Housekeeping, introduction	Introductory activities, distribution of handouts
9:30–10:00am		Participatory discussion
	Review of norms, review of workshop goals	
10:00–10:30am	Recap of day 2	PowerPoint presentation, Critical analysis, participatory discussion.
10:30–10:40am		
	Break	
10:40am–12:00pm	Barriers to parental involvement	Guided reflection, PowerPoint presentation, handout
12:00–1:00pm		
	Lunch	
1:00–2:00pm		
	Strategies for parental involvement	Role playing, brainstorming, group work, discussion
2:00–3:00pm		
	Closing session	Summary of sessions, Question and Answer (Q+A) session, Exit activities

**3.2 Facilitator's Notes for Day 3**

Slide 25: Welcome to Day 2 of the professional development training workshop on parental involvement for teachers and school professionals who work with and interact with parents.

I am the facilitator, Barbara A. Smith.

Slide 26: We introduced ourselves to each other yesterday. Let's say hello to each other once again and tell each other our favorite hobby. If you need to introduce yourself to anyone, please go ahead and so do. We will also form a new group at this point...so please pick a number from 1-3 and form a group with participants who picked the same number as you.

Slide 27: This slide presents the activities for the Day and the timetable for the day's activities. We begin at 9am and will wrap up the program at 3:00pm. We will have a 10-minute break at 10:30am and an hour-long break for lunch at noon. We will begin with a recap of the Day 1 and then end with some playing to allow us gain practical skills for parental involvement. So, we have an exciting day ahead ... buckle up and enjoy the ride.

Slide 28: Our norms were established yesterday: we will begin and end on time, all phones and other devices will be silent; feel free to ask questions; less urgent questions can be addressed during Q+A sessions; speak and listen; and everyone in the group is encouraged to participate.

If you have an additional norm you would like to add, feel free to share it at this time.

Slide 29: Recap of Day 1 – The guiding question for this re-cap is “What new or critical information or insight did you gain from Day 1?” Was there any new insights you gained or that came to mind at any time during Day 1? This is an open floor question, anyone can share their insights.

Slide 30: Break Time. There's water, coffee, and juice at the "Refreshment Center." Enjoy.

Slide 31: Here we will carry out group work to explore the questions "What are the barriers to parental involvement in your experience?". We want to link the barriers to parental involvement to our real-life experience and build on previous knowledge.

Tips: Family-based? School-based? Others?

Slide 32: Please look at your handout on "Barriers to Parental Involvement - School-based factors"

Slide 33: Please look at your handout on "Barriers to Parental Involvement - Family-based factors"

Slide 34: Lunch Break

Slide 35: This will be a Guided Reflection segment to think about your experiences interacting with parents whether face-to-face, notes, phone calls, or other forms of interaction, share one type of interaction with parents in which you had to encourage the parent to participate in a school program. Was it successful? If yes, why do you think it was successful.

Slide 36: This will be a group work activity. In your groups, explore the question "How can we improve parental involvement in the school based on what we have learned" Share your guided reflection and group work outcomes with everyone through group presentations.

Slide 37: Review of strategies for parental Involvement - School-based

Slide 38: Review of strategies for parental involvement - Family-level

Slide 39: Review of strategies for parental involvement - Parent-school collaboration on students achievement

Slide 40: Strategies for parental involvement - Who else can help?

Slide 41: Develop an action plan and recommendations for the school based on the components of Epstein's model Slide 42: Group Presentations, Summary of morning and afternoon sessions, and Q+A

Slide 43: We will summarize everything learned and discussed today. Any final words? How do we feel about the workshop? The post-training survey will now be handed out. Kindly take a minute to complete them. Thank you very much for your participation in this workshop and for making it a success!

Slide 44: Exit: Please leave your completed post-training survey on the front table on your way out. A transcript of the results from the surveys, the findings from the group discussions will be emailed to everyone in 3 days. Again, thank you all so much for making this program a success!!!

**3.3 Slides for Day 3**

*Slide 25*

Family Involvement Workshop

**Day 3**

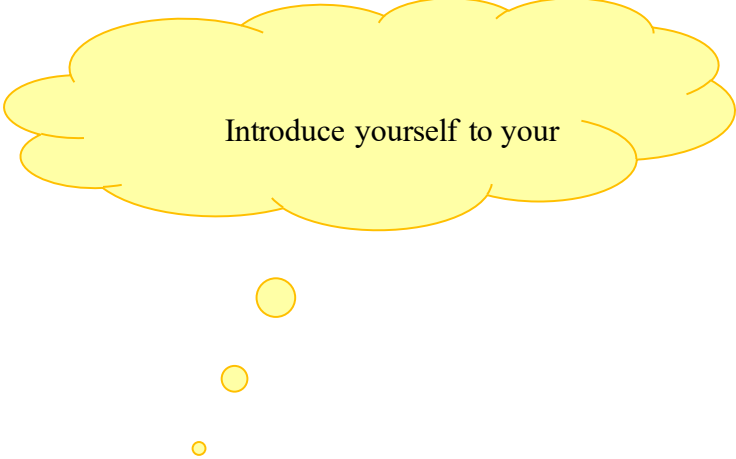
Facilitated

By

Barbara A. Smith

*Slide 26*

**Introductions**



Introduce yourself to your

*Slide 27*

<b>Day 3 Timetable</b>	
9:00–9:30am	Sign-in, introductory activities, ice breakers, distribution of handouts
9:30–10:00am	Recap of norms, review of goals for the workshop
10:00–10:30am	Recap of Day 2
10:30–10:40am	Break
10:40am–12:00pm	Strategies for improving parental involvement
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch
1:00–2:00pm	Role playing on parental involvement
2:00–3:00pm	Summary of sessions, question, and answer (Q&A), post-training survey, exit activity

*Slide 28*


<b>Workshop Norms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will begin and end on time.</li> <li>✓ All phones and other devices will be silent</li> <li>✓ Feel free to ask question</li> <li>✓ Less urgent questions can be addressed during Q+A sessions.</li> <li>✓ Speak and listen.</li> <li>✓ Everyone in the group is encouraged to participate.</li> </ul>



*Slide 29*


**Recap of Day 2**

**What new or critical information or insight  
did you gain from Day 2?**

Two yellow starburst shapes with blue outlines, one on the left and one on the right, positioned below the central text.*Slide 30*

*Break Time*

*Slide 31*

<b>Group Work</b>
<p>What are the barriers to parental involvement in your experience?</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tips:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">? <i>Family-based</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">? <i>School-based</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">? <i>Others?</i></p>

*Slide 32*

<b>Barriers to Parental Involvement</b>
<p><b>School-based factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Absence of frameworks on parental involvement in schools</li> <li>◆ Unclear channels of communication between the school and parents (Oranga et al. 2022)</li> <li>◆ Family involvement is still largely ignored in some schools</li> <li>◆ Teachers do not encourage family involvement in a systematic manner</li> <li>◆ Shortage of staff on the part of the school</li> <li>◆ Teacher bias</li> <li>◆ Low cultural competency among teachers</li> </ul>

*Slide 33*

<b>Barriers to Parental Involvement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Family-based factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Parents do not always participate in school activities even when they are invited (Avnet et al., 2019)</li><li>→ Family challenge with providing the needs of children</li><li>→ Financial limitations/Economic constraints/SES</li><li>→ Time constraints</li><li>→ Exclusion from their children's schools due to racial discrimination and poverty</li><li>→ Immigrant status (Park &amp; Holloway, 2018).</li><li>→ Low level of parental education</li><li>→ Family size (Oranga et al. (2022)</li><li>→ Language spoken at home</li><li>→ Ethnicity (Gabrielli &amp; Impicciatore, 2022).</li><li>→ Parental unconcern for any reason</li></ul>

*Slide 34*

<p><i>Lunch Break</i></p>
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*Slide 35***Guided Reflection**

- **Three minutes:** Think about your experiences interacting with families whether face-to-face, notes, phone calls, or other forms of interaction.
- **Five minutes:** Share one type of interaction with families in which you had to encourage the parent to participate in a school program. Was it successful? If yes, why do you think it was successful
- **Seven minutes:** Share your group's experience with the class.

*Slide 36***Group work**

**How can we improve parental involvement in the school  
based on what we learned**

???

*Slide 37*

<b>Strategies for Family Involvement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>School-based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Variety of family improvement activities such as lectures on topics related to family involvement; regular family–teacher meetings; share weekly family-teacher journals via email; individual conversations or meetings (Liu et al., 2020).</li><li>• Teacher training on cultural intelligence, effective communication, and family involvement (De La Cruz, 2020).</li><li>• Positive teachers’ attitudes towards family involvement</li><li>• Family involvement should be encouraged and valued by teachers (Liu et al., 2020).</li><li>• Positive, respectful, bias-free attitudes towards families (Allen et al., 2018)</li></ul>

*Slide 38*

<b>Strategies for Family Involvement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Family-level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage positive parenting styles (positive parental expectations, aspirations, and support)</li><li>• Encourage family participation in children’s formal education (Gabrielli &amp; Impicciatore, 2022).</li><li>• Encourage families communication of achievement expectations and fostering of aspirations in academics and future career (Avnet et al., 2019)</li><li>• Encourage families involvement even when children are excelling in their studies</li></ul>

*Slide 39*

<b>Strategies for Family Involvement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Family-school collaboration on students achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Clear communication pathways/framework between families and schools</li><li>◆ Select appropriate approach to parental involvement (Gabrielli &amp; Impicciatore, 2022)</li><li>◆ Parental training such as training workshops (De La Cruz, 2020).</li><li>◆ Create a positive school environment</li><li>◆ School environment that promotes social justice and equity (Guo et al., 2018).</li></ul>

*Slide 40*

<b>Strategies for Family Involvement</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Who else can help?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Governmental Support</li><li>◆ Policies that support family involvement</li><li>◆ Policies that support families such areas providing better nutrition, mitigating mental health issues for parents</li><li>◆ Programs that support learning such as technology-related assistance, training and acquisition of gadgets (Hamilton et al., 2018).</li></ul>

*Slide 41*

<b>Action Plan and Recommendations</b>
<p>What s strategies can teachers adopted to improve parental involvement based on the components below in this school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Parenting</li><li>◆ Communicating</li><li>◆ Volunteering</li><li>◆ Learning at Home</li><li>◆ Decision Making</li><li>◆ Collaborating with the Community</li></ul>

*Slide 42*

<b>Group Presentations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Summary of morning and afternoon sessions</li><li>◆ Q+A</li></ul>

*Slide 43*

<b>Wrapping up</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Final words</li><li>◆ Post-training survey</li><li>◆ Thank you for your participation!!!!</li></ul>

## Slide 44

Exit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Please leave your completed post-training survey on the front table on your way out.</li> <li>◆ Thank you for your participation!!!!</li> </ul>

## Slide 45

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### 3.4 Handout: Post-training Evaluation Survey

#### Professional Development Workshop on Parental Involvement

#### Post-Training Survey

Please circle your response as appropriate using the following scale.

1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree,

5=Strongly agree, N/A=Not applicable

#### CONTENT

1. This training workshop provided me with knowledge and skills on parental involvement. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

2. The information provided and strategies taught in the workshop are to my job. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

3. I feel more confident about working with parents due to participation in this workshop 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

#### WORKSHOP DESIGN

4. The activities conducted during the workshop were effective at stimulating my learning. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

5. The activities at the workshop were engaging. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

6. I received sufficient practice and feedback during the workshop. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

7. The workshop was appropriate for my level as a school professional. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

8. The pace of the training workshop was appropriate. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

**WORKSHOP FACILITATOR**

9. The facilitator was well prepared and professional in her conduct. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

10. The facilitator was encouraging and helpful. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

11. The facilitator encouraged and supported full participation of every person. 1 2 3 4 5  
N/A

12. The facilitator answered all questions clearly and meaningfully. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

**WORKSHOP RESULTS**

13. I find the learning and information useful for my work. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

13. The workshop was effective as a way of providing skills and knowledge on how to  
improve parental involvement. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

14. Appropriate learning styles were used to encourage active learning. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

15. I would recommend this workshop to other school professionals who work with or  
interact with parents. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

**Additional questions**

16. What changes, improvements, or additions would you recommend to this  
workshop?

17. What did you find to be least valuable about the workshop?

18. What did you find to be the most valuable about this workshop?

19. Was there any particular activity you found to be critically useful in the transfer of  
knowledge during the workshop?

20. Other comments?

## Appendix B:

### Consent Form for Participation in Interview

Thank you in advance for your acceptance to participate in this study. The purpose of this qualitative project study is to investigate family perspectives at a local urban elementary school on family involvement strategies and potential barriers that may be inhibiting them from being involved. The interview will be audio recorded, and the recordings will not be used for any other purpose beyond the scope of this project. Notes will be written during the interview. The audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews for accuracy. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years by the researcher. The interview will take about a half hour to an hour. Follow-up questions may be asked if clarification is needed. All information obtained in connection with this project study will be confidential. Data collected will be reported without reference to identity of participants and local urban school.

I consent that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and I will not be paid to participate.

I consent that I may withdraw and discontinue my participation at any time without penalty.

I consent that I have the right to decline to answer any questions during the interview if I feel uncomfortable during the session.

I consent to audio recordings being made of the interview session for the purpose of this research project study.

I consent that all information collected during the interview will not be identified per participant, pseudonyms will be used, and confidentiality maintained.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Signed\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that, in respect of audio recordings made, every effort will be made to ensure professional confidentiality to protect the anonymity of all those involved in the interviews.

Dated\_\_\_\_\_ Signed\_\_\_\_\_ Researcher Signature\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C:

## Interview Questions

1. Please describe your experience of being involved in your child's classroom and school? How often are you involved during the school year?
2. What classroom or school functions have you been invited to attend?  
When you do attend, please describe your experience. Can you give an example?
3. How welcomed do the school staff and classroom teachers make you feel when you visit the local urban elementary school? Is there an example of a time when you felt specifically welcomed or unwelcome?
4. How have you participated in your child's educational journey?
  - a. What types of support do you offer him/her at home?
  - b. Do you feel prepared to help your child with their academic studies?
  - c. Has the local urban elementary school, or your child's classroom teacher provided any tips, training, or materials to support you in helping your child?
5. In your experience what needs to be changed for families to become more actively involved at their child's school?
6. During your experience communicating with the local urban school, how well does the school staff listen to parents?
  - a. Are they respectful of the families' cultures, language, goals, or financial condition?

- b. What changes need to occur to increase family and staff interactions? Among the ideas you have shared, which one is most important?
  - c. What would you tell the principal is a priority to get families involved?
  - d. What other priorities do you believe the school must take?
7. In your experience with the local urban elementary school, is there anything the school can do, change, or implement to encourage families to be actively involved at the local urban elementary school? How can the school start to include families?
8. Finally, Do you have any other comments you would like to add regarding your experience with family involvement in the local urban elementary school? Is there anything you want to add to our conversation that I haven't asked you and you feel is important for me to know?

Thank you so much for your time and support in this research project study.