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## Perceptions of Parents and Guardians Regarding Home-to-School Involvement

Brie Merritt  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Brie Merritt

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

2024

Perceptions of Parents and Guardians Regarding Home-to-School Involvement

by

Brie Merritt

MA, Xavier University of Louisiana, 2021

BS, Xavier University of Louisiana, 2016

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

Walden University

November 2024

## Abstract

The problem that was addressed through this study was the decline in home-to-school partnerships within a local, public, and ethnically diverse middle school (DMS) in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore parents' perspectives on the decline in home-to-school partnerships at a DMS. Using Epstein's six types of family involvement as a guide, a qualitative, exploratory design was used, with data collected through semi structured interviews with 12 Black mothers of eighth-grade students from DMS in the 2022–2023 school year. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis revealed the following four themes: communication satisfaction, parent-school engagement, barriers to involvement, and the role of technology. Findings showed that communication challenges, inflexible engagement strategies, and structural barriers contributed to the decline in parental involvement. Based on the results, flexible scheduling, proactive invitations, and careful integration of technology are recommended to improve home-to-school partnerships. A professional development curriculum was created to help teachers engage better with parents, especially those from diverse and low-income backgrounds. The results might contribute to social change by fostering stronger partnerships, which, in turn, might allow teachers to concentrate more on instruction which then benefits students' learning.

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my father, my cousin Jackie, my best friend, my sister, my son Cairo, and to myself. This journey has shown me that with God's guidance and grace, any goal is within reach. To my cousin, Jackie: thank you for your steadfast support, prayers, and boundless love. To my best friend, thank you for encouraging me to keep moving forward, especially when I felt I could not take another step. To my sister, your unwavering support and belief in me have meant more than words can say. Dad, I wish you could be here to see me reach this milestone.

To my son, Cairo, thank you for inspiring me to strive for a better future. Remember, "Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." Winston Churchill. Mommy loves you beyond words, and every day, your life fills me with the motivation to be and do more. I hope to make you proud, always.

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## Table of Contents

Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale .....	2
Definition of Terms.....	3
Significance of the Study .....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Review of Literature .....	4
Perceptions of Parental Involvement .....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Factors Influencing Parental Involvement .....	7
Types of Parental Involvement .....	7
Promoting Parental Involvement .....	8
Benefits of Home-to-School Involvement .....	9
Barriers to Home-to-School Involvement.....	10
Suggested Methodologies Based on Parental Barrier Case Studies .....	18
Literature Review Summary .....	20
Implications.....	20
Summary .....	22
Section 2: The Methodology.....	23
Design and Approach.....	23
Participants.....	26
Sampling Method.....	26



Sample Size.....	27
Data Collection .....	27
Role of the Researcher .....	29
Data Analysis Results .....	29
Theme 1: Communication Satisfaction.....	30
Theme 2: Parent–School Engagement .....	30
Theme 3: Barriers to Involvement .....	31
Theme 4: Role of Technology in Education .....	32
Limitations .....	32
Section 3: The Project.....	34
Introduction.....	34
Rationale .....	35
Review of the Literature .....	36
Comprehending the Crucial Role of PD .....	36
Characteristics of Effective PD.....	38
Teacher Beliefs and Self-Perception.....	41
Impact on Student Outcomes .....	42
Role of Feedback and Coaching .....	43
Problems While Enhancing PD Programs .....	44
Policies and Support of Institutions .....	47
Lifelong Learning for Teachers .....	49
Literature Review Summary .....	51
Project Description.....	52

Needed Resources .....	52
Proposal for Implementation.....	55
Roles and Responsibilities .....	58
Project Evaluation Plan.....	59
Formative Evaluation.....	59
Summative Evaluation .....	60
Project Implications .....	62
Importance to Local Stakeholders .....	63
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	67
Project Strengths and Limitations .....	65
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches .....	65
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change .....	66
Reflection on the Importance of the Research .....	66
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research .....	69
Recommendations for Future Research .....	69
Recommendations for Local Practice .....	69
Conclusion .....	68
References.....	69
Appendix A: The Project .....	80
Appendix B: Formal and Summative Evaluations.....	91
Appendix C: PACER Interview Protocol/ Instrument.....	97
Appendix D: PACER Instrument Permission.....	98

## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

The problem that was addressed through this study was the decline in home-to-school partnerships within a local, public, and ethnically diverse middle school (DMS) in the Southeastern United States. For this study, the term *home-to-school partnership* referred not only to parental/home involvement in school activities and parent–teacher conferences, but also to student participation. Parental involvement traditionally encompasses a variety of activities that parents engage in both at home and within the school environment (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010). This involvement manifests in numerous ways, such as parents volunteering their time at the school, maintaining open lines of communication with teachers, aiding with homework, and participating in school-related events like performances or parent–teacher meetings (Epstein et al., 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Personal conversations had taken place with assistant principals, counselors, special education (SPED) coordinators, and teachers at this DMS regarding their struggles with parental involvement. These challenges include student behavior in the classroom, student academic motivation, decline in parental attendance for 504, multitiered support system, and individualized education plan (IEP) meetings. These challenges are due to rejected parental phone calls, negative behaviors not being corrected at home before students return to school from suspension, and a decline of parental attendance at school events and parent–teacher conferences.

This problem at the chosen site was studied because of the lack of home-to-school partnerships. Between 2019 and 2023, there had been a drastic decline in eighth grade

academic success, based on local school data. Elevated levels of engagement from families and partnerships within the community not only enhanced a student's academic performance but also transformed their attitude towards schooling. A well-structured and effectively implemented parental school community can result in many positive outcomes (Blad, 2023). These include improved grades and test scores, enhanced attendance, better behavior, improved social skills, a higher number of classes passed and/or credits earned, and an increase in graduation rates.

### **Rationale**

As a seventh-year teacher of eighth-grade social studies, I have had the real pleasure of mastering student–parent relationships as well as class management and class pedagogy. However, since returning to the classroom post COVID-19, the home-to-school partnership had shifted. Within my personal classroom, negative classroom behavior had increased, motivation for academic achievement had decreased, and parental involvement within the school and in the classroom had decreased. I have had personal communication with administrators who also struggle with home to school partnerships. The middle school assistant principal had stated several times in staff meetings how difficult it has been to get parents on the phone to discuss scholars' negative behaviors or suspensions.

Middle school teachers have also communicated that once scholars return to the classroom for disciplinary action such as out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, or detention, teachers shared that they feel these consequences have not been effective due to low parent communication or in-school presence. Administrators and teachers have reported feeling there is a higher rate of unchanged behavior in the classroom due to

this decline. Students' well-being and success had fallen more on the teacher and less on the parent. This responsibility was seen as unfair and unrealistic for teachers. Thus, it is critical to better understand parents' perspectives on school partnerships. Results of the study demonstrated that schools also needed to understand why parental involvement had declined so that this issue can be addressed.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Home-to-school partnership* refers not only to parental/home involvement in school activities and parent–teacher conferences, but also to student participation.

### **Significance of the Study**

The problem that this research aimed to solve was there was a decline in home-to-school partnerships within a local, public, and ethnically DMS) in the Southeastern United States. Interviews were conducted with parents to obtain a more thorough understanding of the barriers they faced and why their participation had declined. Through the findings of this research, I aimed to provide solutions to teachers and administrators at the DMS to increase their home-to-school partnerships. More parental involvement can enhance student learning, motivation, and academic success.

### **Research Questions**

1. From the parents' perspectives, what are the reasons for the decline in parental involvement in parent-to-school partnerships at a DMS?
2. Which parental perspectives can help address the decline in parental involvement in home-to-school partnerships at a DMS?

## **Review of Literature**

Since 2019, there had been a concerning decline in the academic performance of eighth-grade students. This decline was substantiated by data gleaned from the recorded sign-in sheets, which highlighted a discernible reduction in parental engagement. Specifically, the documented decrease encompassed a spectrum of activities, ranging from parent–teacher conferences to meticulously planned events designed to involve parents in their children’s social interactions within the school environment. However, the intricate and multifaceted concept of parental participation in education has garnered substantial attention and investigation over recent years. Scholars such as Hood (2020) had converged on the notion that parental participation correlates positively with diverse aspects of student achievements, encompassing academic accomplishments, regular attendance, and even social and emotional maturation. Nonetheless, there remained a measure of divergence within academic circles regarding the optimal manifestations of parental engagement and the most effective methodologies to both measure and foster it within the educational domain.

A pivotal determinant influencing a child’s academic performance is the level of engagement between the home and the school environment. According to Henderson et al. (2020), parents’ and guardians’ active involvement affects their children’s academic performance, motivation, and general well-being. Thus, in this context, I examined the available research on the perspectives of parents and guardians on home-to-school partnerships. In this review, I offer insight by discussing and reviewing current research regarding the elements that determine parental participation, its advantages, and potential hurdles that may prevent successful engagement.

## **Perceptions of Parental Involvement**

Hood (2020) asserted that parents' and guardians' actual levels of participation in their children's education are influenced by how they view their own participation. Tan et al. (2020) examined that parents who feel they are not extremely active in their children's education, for instance, are more unlikely to participate in standard events, including volunteering at the educational institution or going to conferences between parents and educators. Even if they do not participate in traditional tasks, parents who feel active in the education of their children are far more inclined to encourage learning at home and foster a positive learning environment for their kids (Alford-Keith, 2022).

## **Conceptual Framework**

Joyce Epstein's classification of family engagement comprises six distinct types. Epstein and Boone (2022) stated that parenting type 1 involves parents addressing fundamental needs such as health, housing, safety, and nutrition. This encompassed general child-rearing and fostering a positive home environment conducive to children's development and learning. Type 2 focused on interactive communication between schools and households regarding children's education and progress. Communication methods include diverse channels like phone calls, notes, meetings, and report cards, emphasizing a two-way flow of information (Epstein & Boone, 2022). In Type 3, families actively volunteer to contribute to their children's education (Epstein & Boone, 2022). This involvement extends beyond traditional on-site contributions, with families also making valuable contributions from home to support the educational program. Volunteering encompasses participation as audience members at school events, sports activities, and other school functions (Epstein & Boone, 2022).

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, developed in 1987 and further discussed in 1992 (Epstein & Connors, 1992), integrates psychological, educational, and sociological viewpoints on social institutions. These spheres—family, school, and local community—overlap, symbolizing the collaborative partnership among these entities, with the child as the central focus. Epstein notes that the degree of overlap is influenced by numerous factors, including the child's age, grade level, and historical influences (Epstein & Boone, 2022). Additionally, Epstein's comprehensive framework extends to encompass three more types: Learning at Home (Type 4), where parents nurture a learning-rich environment by augmenting classroom education with home-based activities; Decision-Making (Type 5), involving parents in school-related choices and participation in governance, advisory groups, or associations; and Collaborating with Community (Type 6), highlighting the synergy between schools and families in utilizing community resources and partnerships that enhance students' holistic development.

The use of the Epstein framework relates to the qualitative research method in that qualitative studies rely on personal accounts or documents that illustrate in detail how people think or respond within society (Walden University, 2023) The Epstein framework works with the interviews because the questions aligned with the details and thoughts of people in this society regarding their experiences with home to school partnerships with their scholars and the Epstein framework related using the data analysis process by using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis approach. This is a well-known qualitative research method that involves reading a data set and looking for patterns to derive themes (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023).



## **Factors Influencing Parental Involvement**

Parents' perceptions of home-to-school participation were influenced by various circumstances. The socioeconomic level of the parents is one such element that had an impact on their participation. According to Hood (2020), parents from low-income families may have additional obstacles to engagement as a result of financial limitations, a lack of resources, and restricted opportunities for information and systems of educational assistance. According to Alford-Keith (2022), parents who believe in the importance of education and their child's academic development are far more inclined to be involved meaningfully. Tan et al. (2020) noted that the views of engagement are also influenced by cultural and ethnic origins. Parents' engagement patterns and preferences may be influenced by different social conventions, opinions, and expectations, which highlights the value of knowing about and appreciating other viewpoints (Slone, 2021).

## **Types of Parental Involvement**

According to Henderson et al. (2020), parental participation may take various forms, and the forms that are most successful will fluctuate depending on the particular child, family, and school. One of the more widespread and successful forms of parental participation is regular communication with teachers. Tan et al. (2020) showed that regular communication between parents and teachers increases the likelihood that parents will be knowledgeable about their children's academic development and will be able to offer assistance and words of encouragement. Parents who volunteer at the school may help teachers and children in a meaningful way while also learning more about the institution as well as ways they can become involved (Smith et al., 2019). Parents who assist their children with their homework may offer them extra support and direction as

well as contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards learning (Hood, 2020). By showing up for school functions like parent–teacher conferences and theatrical performances, parents can set an example for their children to show that they care about their education and respect their participation.

Parents who cultivate a learning-friendly atmosphere at home give their children the tools and encouragement they need in order to excel in school. This entails making books and other educational resources available, allocating time for schoolwork, and cultivating a love of learning (Slone, 2021). Moreover, another form of involvement includes volunteering, which may include assisting with schoolwork, coaching, or chaperoning field trips (Alford-Keith, 2022).

### **Promoting Parental Involvement**

Slone (2021) asserted that parental participation is crucial to their children’s academic success. The academic performance, participation, and general mindset of children may all be enhanced when their parents are actively participating in their educational experiences. According to Henderson et al. (2020), parents can participate in their children’s educational experiences in a variety of ways, and the ideal strategy is based on the particular family and school. One of the most popular and successful strategies for encouraging parental engagement is making the school’s surroundings inviting for parents. This involves creating arrangements where parents are given chances to get involved as well as ensuring they feel comfortable and valued at the school.

Tan et al. (2020) observed that schools may do this by presenting information in many languages, allowing malleable meeting hours, and additionally making it simple for parents to contact instructors. Further, schools may provide instructors with training in

the best ways to include parents. Teachers must receive training on how to include parents in the education of their children in the most efficient way possible. This includes being aware of the many forms of parental participation, knowing how to interact effectively with parents, and making the school a friendly place for parents.

Not every parent has the same finances or time to devote to their children's education. Schools should be accommodating to parents' demands and provide a range of opportunities for parental involvement (Alford-Keith, 2022). Hence, it is crucial to recognize parents who contribute to their children's education. This can encourage other parents to get involved and demonstrate the importance of parental participation (Slone, 2021).

The facilitation of parental involvement in their child's educational experience is a pivotal consideration within the purview of educational institutions (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Ensuring the ease of access for parents to participate and engage in this process is integral. This encompasses the establishment of opportune moments that align with the convenience of parents' schedules. Also, providing unambiguous instructions regarding the modalities and avenues for participation constitutes a fundamental component of this approach (Smith et al., 2019).

### **Benefits of Home-to-School Involvement**

According to Henderson et al. (2020) and Smith et al. (2019), there are several advantages for both parents and children of home-to-school participation. Active parental participation tends to lead to students performing better academically, being more motivated, and having a greater sense of self-worth. When parents are involved in their

children's education, they convey the value of education and offer emotional encouragement (Alford-Keith, 2022).

Tan et al. (2020) found that engagement from the family and school seems to be linked to better learning outcomes and fewer behavioral issues among children. According to Smith et al. (2019), when parents take an active role in their child's education, they develop a rapport with the instructors and open channels of communication. This partnership involving carers, educators, and parents fosters a nurturing atmosphere that heightens student participation, resulting in greater academic achievement (Hood, 2020).

### **Barriers to Home-to-School Involvement**

Notwithstanding the accepted advantages, a number of obstacles might prevent parents from actively supporting their child's education, as studied by Slone (2021). Time restrictions may prevent parents from volunteering in the classroom or attending school events and conferences, especially if they have several jobs or busy work schedules. Successful involvement can be hampered by linguistic and interpersonal hurdles, particularly among nonnative English speakers who may have trouble comprehending school procedures and interacting with instructors. Tan et al. (2020) stated that divergences in academic achievement and cultural background may sometimes make participation difficult. Parents who have experienced poor experiences with their own schooling or who feel alienated from the educational system may be less inclined to participate (Smith et al., 2019). Insufficient knowledge regarding possibilities as well as resources may contribute even more to these gaps, especially for parents who have little exposure to assets and social networks (Alford-Keith, 2022).

The degree of participation that parents and guardians exhibit can be influenced by how they view their own involvement (Đurišić, 2019). Parental participation may take many forms, and the particular forms that are most successful will depend on the particular child, family, and school. According to Đurišić (2019), schools may encourage parental engagement by making parents feel welcome, staying in touch with them frequently, giving them chances to volunteer, and directing instructors to find ways to engage parents in their children's education.

The conventional involvement definition features activities both at home and in school. Collaborative relationships, termed home-to-school partnerships, develop between families and schools. They foster consistent work and behavior in students, enhancing interest, motivation, and engagement in learning both at school and at home (Hood, 2020). Family engagement and community partnerships, when high, not only enhance student performance but also alter a student's school attitude (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). A well-planned partnership can result in improved student performance.

Henderson et al. (2020) demonstrated that parents are expected occasionally at school for open houses, student performances, parent-teacher conferences, or report card pick-ups. However, expecting frequent parental attendance is unreasonable and may lead to home school dissonance. Home school dissonance arises from differing values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations between home and school, contributing to variations in parental involvement levels (Ayeni, 2021). This expectation discriminates against working parents, those living far from the school, and single parents with family obligations. Emphasis should shift to instructing parents on effective ways to work with

their children at home, encouraging partnership in their children's education across all grades (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020).

### ***Lack of Support***

Family engagement is crucial to academic achievement (Lareau, 2019). However, family engagement practices in schools are inequitable and often do not reach families of color (Alford-Keith, 2022). In response to the urgent need highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, an initiative has been set in motion to rectify the disparities in family engagement within education. This initiative centers on the recognition that a collaborative partnership between families and educational institutions is essential for student success. With a commitment to inclusivity and equitable participation, the initiative focuses on addressing four fundamental drivers that contribute to uneven family engagement practices: (a) bolstering educator training, (b) broadening the scope of engagement beyond the school context, (c) dispelling negative perceptions about families, and (d) nurturing trust between families and schools. Employing a comprehensive approach, the initiative seeks to bridge existing gaps, foster inclusivity, and create an educational environment conducive to student achievement. This initiative addresses challenges such as limited educator training, a narrow school-centric view of engagement, negative assumptions held by educators about families, and a deficit of trust between families and schools (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

The initiative's goal is to enhance partnerships between schools and families of color. This aims to better serve students of color, reducing opportunity gaps. Educators report that professional learning is beneficial, expanding their view of family engagement. It provides training to create equitable family engagement activities,

positively impacting beliefs about families and fostering trust between educators and their students' families (Alford-Keith, 2022). Feedback from families suggests that more effort is required to establish equitable partnerships. This would enable them to provide input on school improvement and decision-making processes (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

### ***Lack of Education***

Home–school dissonance (HSD), denoting differing values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations between home and school, may contribute to parental involvement variation (Smith et al., 2019). Using data from parent and teacher interviews, Smith et al. (2019) explored perspectives on parental involvement and HSD in middle school, employing thematic analysis for qualitative data. Teachers described an HSD spectrum from low parental involvement (high-HSD) to high involvement (low-HSD). Although all parents reported school involvement, some noted negative race-related experiences and a fear of retaliation from school officials. Schools stand to benefit by refining policies and practices to diminish HSD, thus enhancing parental involvement.

The parental involvement construct encompasses diverse ways parents collaborate with their children's school to enhance educational outcomes (Smith et al., 2019). It includes home-based (e.g., homework assistance, high academic expectations) and school-based activities (e.g., volunteering or attending events), along with academic socialization—direct and indirect messages about educational expectations (Smith et al., 2019). Parental engagement links to positive academic outcomes, yet cultural and linguistic barriers hinder involvement for many families (Smith et al., 2019).

Despite calls for authentic partnerships, school efforts often favor school-centric activities, sidelining nontraditional parental engagement (Joyce & Steven, 2019). Teachers' perceptions often focus on visible school presence, overlooking home and community engagement. School organizational contexts influence this emphasis; high-stakes accountability and stressful environments may hinder collaboration (Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). The research underscores parental roles in literacy development (Madaio et al., 2019). However, in contexts lacking literacy in the target language, effective parental support strategies remain unclear. Prior work addressed children's literacy but overlooked designing for low-literate parents, especially in multilingual and developing contexts.

### ***Low Income***

Delprato and Frola (2022) discovered that barriers exhibit varying impacts across exclusion zones, with low parental education and involvement, along with the local language, being primary determinants. Some barriers, notably, have a more significant impact on girls. Policies linking financial support to attendance, coupled with improving teaching quality and reducing discrimination, propel youth cohorts to the top zones of exclusion, facilitating greater education (Delprato & Frola, 2022).

Delprato and Frola's (2022) research primarily focused on examining parental involvement levels and patterns, particularly among different Supplementary Educational Services (SES) backgrounds. Notably, parents from lower-SES backgrounds are found to be less involved than those from more advantaged social environments (Delprato & Frola, 2022). Many researchers suggest that policymakers, school leaders, and teachers can enhance involvement among parents from lower-SES backgrounds. However,



expecting uniform involvement is unrealistic due to differing resource access levels (Tan et al., 2020). Additionally, these strategies should be complemented by environmental changes initiated by local governments (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020).

### ***Lack of PD***

When educators are adept at creating inclusive and equitable classrooms, students from marginalized communities exhibit increased academic achievement, motivation, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). However, many teachers graduate feeling ill-equipped for culturally diverse classrooms, emphasizing the crucial need for high-quality PD in this realm (Parkhouse et al., 2019).

Two significant teacher-related barriers to parental involvement stem from teacher training. One issue is a dearth of projects fostering change and improvement. Herrera et al. (2020) emphasized the vital role of teacher training in inclusive success, revealing significant shortcomings in this domain. From the viewpoint of aspiring educators, the overall assessment of this dimension uncovers numerous barriers and limitations in terms of resources, hindering students from enjoying equal opportunities. Insufficient resources and disorganized structures pose significant obstacles to learning and the participation of all students. Emphasizing the importance of providing resources and support is necessary to meet students' demands with quality responses (Arnaiz Sánchez et al., 2019).

### ***Teacher's Beliefs on Communication with Parents***

In examining communication between educators and parents, it is essential to explore beliefs about the use of digital media held by both parties. The primary barriers to digital media usage, particularly for teachers, stem from context-related beliefs (i.e.,

based on their perceptions of the setting and themselves) rather than medium-related beliefs (i.e., based on the characteristics of emails and online platforms; Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020). Aranda-Balboa et al. (2020) also found that positive attitudes toward digital media are more prevalent among parents and teachers in schools where management actively promotes the use of emails or online platforms for family–school communication. A significant implication is that management teams should initiate the introduction of digital media for communication with families (Aranda-Balboa et al., 2020).

Family–school engagement is notably higher in elementary compared to middle schools. Student-level characteristics, such as identifying as White, participating in the free/reduced-price lunch program, and displaying lower levels of disruptive behavior, are associated with increased family–school engagement. Student characteristics, including race/ethnicity and levels of disruptive behavior, moderate the relationship between family–school engagement and developmental context. Irrespective of developmental context, family–school engagement predicts positive end-of-year behavioral outcomes, such as increased youth prosocial skills and decreased concentration problems, disruptive behaviors, and emotional dysregulation (Smith et al., 2019). Moderation analyses indicate that these effects are particularly pronounced in middle school for concentration problems and emotional deregulation (Smith et al., 2019).

### ***Improved Involvement Between Parents and Teachers***

Historically, the evaluation of school, family, and community partnership programs and practices has been overlooked (Smith et al., 2019). Instead, focus often centers on assessing other school organization components, such as curriculum and

achievement test scores, sidelining family, and community engagement programs. Joyce and Steven's (2019) study on evaluating these programs emphasized that school-based partnership teams, when dedicating time to assess their efforts, demonstrate a seriousness of purpose. This commitment leads to more equitable outreach, engaging all families in their children's education, and results in goal-linked engagement activities contributing to student success in school.

Epstein and Boone (2022) conducted a study on state leadership to strengthen family engagement programs, confirming that regardless of family background and student achievement level, engaged families contribute to better student outcomes. Nearly every U.S. state and district has an official policy on family and community engagement, often linked to federal directives like Every Student Succeeds Act for Title I, Title III, and other funded programs (Epstein & Boone, 2022). Despite variations among states and districts, their official policies on family engagement typically declare that education is a shared responsibility and direct each district to guide schools to communicate and collaborate with all students' families, supporting student achievement and success indicators (Epstein & Boone, 2022). However, despite the widespread adoption of such policies, many districts and schools do not prioritize these partnerships as they focus on other school improvement initiatives (Epstein & Boone, 2022).

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has created a lack of robust data on potential learning deficits and perpetuation of social inequalities during school closures. Goudeau et al. (2021) suggested that the reliance on families and digital tools during closures may amplify social class inequalities in educational achievement. As countries experience subsequent waves of the pandemic, systematic efforts are urgently needed to

test these predictions and mitigate the impact of school closures on the social class achievement gap (Goudeau et al., 2021).

### **Suggested Methodologies Based on Parental Barrier Case Studies**

A complicated interaction of elements affects parental involvement in their children's schooling. This complex web of influences is the foundation for efficient methods. Parental attitudes and perceptions, along with socioeconomic markers like income and occupation, reveal the depth of parental engagement (Goudeau et al., 2021). As parents' ideals and circumstances intersect, these characteristics reveal a delicate balance of personal and pragmatic perspectives. Taking these insights into account, various methodologies may be suggested. By acknowledging the influential role of beliefs, socioeconomic contexts, and practical barriers, educational approaches can be shaped to empower parents and overcome challenges. One such methodology involves tailored communication strategies that address varying parental perspectives. Understanding that parents' beliefs influence their engagement, establishing open and receptive channels for communication becomes crucial.

Additionally, considering socioeconomic dimensions and offering flexible engagement opportunities that accommodate diverse work schedules and responsibilities can foster more inclusive involvement. Moreover, the implementation of well-structured parental engagement policies is strongly recommended as a proactive approach to surmounting these challenges (Slone, 2021). Such policies can serve as systematic mechanisms to bridge gaps, offering avenues for parents to overcome constraints and actively participate in their children's educational journey.

Post-elementary school, parents often express feeling unwanted or unneeded, particularly parents of Black and Brown students who may perceive racism and biases in schools, exacerbated by limited communication. Despite their genuine interest in their children's educational success, educators may misperceive these parents as less engaged due to a sense of unwelcomeness (Slone, 2021). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandates parental involvement in policymaking (Sec. 1118, Title I Part A). Title I schools must have policies addressing parental involvement in various aspects, including program evaluations, school activities, annual meetings, literacy and parenting training, childcare to reduce barriers, and regular school-home communications (Slone, 2021). However, schools often fulfill only the minimum requirements to comply with these mandates.

Parents may serve on local boards of education and decision-making councils but are often not involved in daily school affairs (Slone, 2021). Although some parents participate in parent-teacher associations, this involvement tends to decline beyond primary school (Slone, 2021). Silva-Laya et al. (2020) noted that this pattern reflects a broader trend in education and urbanization where potential advantages do not consistently reach disadvantaged communities, highlighting the complexities and structural constraints of ensuring fair schooling options.

Despite increasing school attendance globally, attendance does not guarantee learning, particularly for poor children, who exhibit lower achievements (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017). This underscores the profound impact of socioeconomic context on education, as discussed for over 50 years since the Coleman Report (Hood, 2020). Urban poverty exacerbates restrictions on social rights, including education

(Alford-Keith, 2022). Studies indicate that poverty concentrated in urban neighborhoods and accompanying adverse social conditions affect school and student performance (Henderson et al., 2020). Recognizing the educational challenges among the urban poor should be a priority for research, policies, and social programs (Silva-Laya et al., 2020).

### **Literature Review Summary**

A child's scholastic path and general well-being are greatly influenced by home-school interaction. The literature has emphasized the elements that affect parents' views of involvement, the advantages of active participation, and the obstacles that prevent efficient cooperation. To build healthy relationships involving parents, guardians, and schools have to eventually improve student results, it is crucial to acknowledge and address these concerns. Further studies ought to concentrate on investigating novel approaches and treatments to avoid obstacles while promoting significant home-to-school involvement, ensuring that each child receives the motivation that they require to succeed both in school and in life.

### **Implications**

This study offers knowledge and suggestions to enhance and boost parental participation by identifying the difficulties and hurdles to it in the neighborhood middle school. The study emphasized the necessity of PD programs for instructors that emphasize cultural awareness and responsiveness. Teachers can create a friendly and inclusive climate that promotes parental involvement by raising awareness, offering training on effective communication, and developing strong connections with parents. According to the research presented in the literature review, a reduction in home-to-school relationships may be caused in part by some parents having encountered

unfavorable or inequitable treatment by school personnel. Schools can attempt to develop trust and establish good relationships between parents and staff members by understanding and resolving these concerns. To answer the research questions, I interviewed parents to gain an understanding of their perceptions and experiences.

This study was conducted because of the need to foster trust and positive relationships between parents and school staff members. The goal of this initiative was to resolve issues that may hinder these key stakeholders' participation. The primary objective of the study was to address concerns that hinder effective collaboration between these vital stakeholders. The proposed project (see Section 3) will conclude with PD/training curriculum and materials. This included considering the purpose, goals, outcomes, and target audience. I outlined the components, timelines, activities, trainer notes, and evaluation plan. I provided materials (e.g., PowerPoints, implementation plan, and evaluation plan) and specified hour-by-hour details of the training with a minimum of 3 full days of training.

Through this platform, parents had the opportunity to express their concerns, questions, and suggestions while school staff members actively engaged in addressing these matters. This initiative was used to bridge any existing gaps in understanding and create a space where both parties feel heard and valued. The rationale behind this project stemmed from the understanding that nurturing trust and positive relationships had a profound impact on student success. It is hoped that when parents and staff members can collaboratively address concerns, a sense of partnership may be promoted that enhances the overall educational experience. This project was chosen for its potential to improve the school community. Improving communication and teamwork will have a ripple effect

beyond immediate contact. This project is intended to enable students, parents, educators, and the institution to grow and succeed together. This project aligns with the commitment to create a cohesive and supportive educational ecosystem that benefits all stakeholders, especially the students.

### **Summary**

The problem of a declining home-to-school relationship in a neighborhood, public, and ethnic DMS was the study's main concern. Parental participation in school events, parent-teacher conferences, and involvement with children are all included within home-to-school partnerships. Stakeholders who struggle with parental participation include middle school teachers, assistant principals, counselors, SPED coordinators, and assistant principals. These difficulties include unruly behavior on the part of the students, low parental participation at meetings and accommodations, and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the pupils. Stakeholders believe that issues like parent phone calls being ignored, as well as low attendance at school activities and teacher-parent conferences, are to blame for the drop in parental involvement. According to the research, however, the reduction in parent-teacher relationships was caused in part by some parents' possible unpleasant or unfair treatment by school personnel (Blad, 2023). To enhance the caliber of teacher-parent interactions, the study suggests offering PD for instructors with a focus on cultural sensitivity and responsiveness.



## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Design and Approach**

I examined the home-to-school partnership perceptions of parents using a qualitative research study. Danford (2023) noted that, traditionally, qualitative research is characterized as a method for delving into a particular social or human issue or phenomenon within a natural setting, focusing on the people and environment of interest. The primary aim of qualitative researchers is to study specific phenomena and interpret or derive meaning from the individual's perspective. I conducted interviews with participants (see Appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol).

The select qualitative research design derived logically from the problem and guiding research questions given that addressed the research problem required the researcher to address the research questions by obtaining participant responses that helped to explore declines in home-to-school partnerships in Southeastern middle schools within the United States. A qualitative exploratory study was chosen for this study. A qualitative exploratory study was particularly suited to examining the problems and research questions in this study for several reasons; it included the fact that qualitative research allowed for a deep understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it (Dobrosovestnova et al., 2021). In this case, the phenomenon was the decline in home-to-school partnerships. The research questions aimed to understand this decline from the perspective of parents. A qualitative exploratory study also allowed for an in-depth exploration of these parental perspectives (Baldwin et al., 2019). A qualitative exploratory study approach also allowed me to understand the context in which the decline in partnerships occurred, providing insights into the specific barriers

that hindered effective collaboration between parents and school personnel. It provided a platform for parents to share their experiences and perceptions in their own words, thereby capturing the complexity and nuances of their experiences.

Qualitative exploratory research is adaptable and reacts sensitively to the data it uncovers. This means that as parents shared their experiences and perceptions, I explored emerging themes in greater depth as recommended by Baldwin et al. (2019). This flexibility was crucial in addressing the research questions, which were open-ended and exploratory in nature. Since qualitative exploratory research is designed to explore areas where little is known and generate new insights, which aligns with the goal of the research questions, as the researcher, I was able to discover new insights into why there is a decline in parental involvement in home-to-school partnerships and how this issue can be addressed. Additionally, according to Tschirhart et al. (2019), exploratory research is characterized by a design that necessitates researchers to offer comprehensive descriptions of research questions, study design, and the methods employed for data analysis when investigating a specific topic. From this standpoint, the current study aligned with such a research design as it allowed me to incorporate the perspectives of participants.

As opposed to other research traditions, I adopted a basic qualitative design. This decision was founded on the fact that a basic qualitative design approach is suitable for exploring a specific phenomenon in its natural context, and it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of individuals (Clarke, 2018). A basic qualitative design is particularly appropriate for this study because it allowed for the exploration and understanding of the decline in home-to-school partnerships within a

local, public, and ethnically diverse DMS in the Southeastern United States. The research questions aimed to understand this decline from the perspective of parents, and a basic qualitative design provided the flexibility and depth needed to explore these perspectives in detail. This approach similarly did not involve the generation of a new theory as is the case of this study, distinguishing it from a grounded theory approach (Pande & Bharathi, 2020). Instead, this study focused on understanding the experiences and perceptions of individuals, making it a suitable choice for this study.

Other research designs were considered but were not found appropriate. For instance, ethnography was found unsuitable because the topic under research did not need to live frequently with the research subjects and no cultural aspects were involved in the study (Hennink et al., 2020). The phenomenological research design was unsuitable because the researcher was not looking to gather information regarding how the participants experience parental involvement (Busetto et al., 2020), but rather to explore their perceptions. Further, the narrative research design would have been useful since it focuses on obtaining participant perceptions but was found inappropriate because the research objective is not to make sense of the participant's lived experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). A case study also did not fit for this study's analysis. A case study could be used but was not selected because this design is characterized by the in-depth examination of an event to issue using multiple sources, all geared towards understanding the same phenomenon (Yin, 2011), while in the case of this study, I only intended to use semi structured interviews. Grounded theory was also not the appropriate design for the current study because the research is not to develop a theory or new model related to parental participation in their children's academic activities (Charmaz, 2020).

## **Participants**

My goal was to carefully choose a particular audience to ensure the most accurate responses. The participants all consisted of parents of 13- to 14-year-old middle school students in a DMS in the Southeastern United States. To ensure that the data I collected were useful, I set clear standards for what diversity means in a school setting, considering factors like the racial and ethnic backgrounds of students and their socioeconomic status. The most crucial step in this study project was to obtain permission from the school or school district. To this end, I explained the importance of this study and asked for their help in making links between parents and the school community. I did this because the participants are paramount to the success of this research.

## **Sampling Method**

In this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy, a form of nonprobability sampling. Purposeful sampling involves selecting individuals who are most able to contribute valuable insights to the research (Obilor, 2023). In this case, those individuals were parents whose children attended this DMS. The aim was to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who experienced it. This aligned with the goals of this study, which sought to understand the decline in home-to-school partnerships from the perspective of parents. Purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of participants who provided rich, detailed, and varied perspectives, thereby contributing to a nuanced and comprehensive examination of the parents' experiences within the setting of this DMS in the Southeastern United States. This sampling strategy was cost-effective and improved the efficiency and validity of the research by focusing on those participants who provided the most relevant and in-depth views (Campbell et al.,

2020). The participants included parents of all incomes, ensuring a diverse range of parental perspectives was represented in the study. The use of purposeful sampling in this study enabled a thorough exploration of the research questions, providing valuable insights into the decline in home-to-school partnerships at this DMS.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size was 12 participants. Participants were Black mothers of eighth-grade male and female students who attended this DMS in the 2022–2023 school years. Participants' contact information and names were accessed through the school's parental contact database called Infinite Campus. This sample size was chosen to obtain rich and detailed data from a wide range of parents (Lakens, 2022). During the study, data saturation was closely watched, and changes were made if needed to ensure that all parental situations and points of view were examined in depth.

### **Data Collection**

A semi structured interview protocol was my primary data instrument (see Appendix C). I asked the participants the questions on the interview sheet online via Microsoft Word. Each interview question was carefully planned and open-ended, creating an environment that would allow participants to openly discuss their varied experiences and points of view in private. Throughout the interviews, I strategically asked follow-up questions. This enabled a more in-depth investigation of developing topics and concerns as they occur spontaneously in the course of the conversation. Parent and guardian suggestions and solutions were asked of interviewees. This was to determine what suggestions they have that would work to increase home-to-school partnerships. The purpose of this method was to facilitate an in-depth examination of important issues

while also capturing the complexity of individual stories. Each interview was done in 30-minute segments.

The interview protocol was created by the PACER Center and was titled Parent Focus Group Questions on Parent Involvement and Engagement with the School. The PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) is a nonprofit organization based in Minnesota that provides support, information, and training for parents of children with disabilities. Founded in 1977, PACER aims to empower families and help them navigate the complexities of education, healthcare, and disability rights to ensure their children receive appropriate support and services (PACER Center, n.d.) The interview included 13 questions that were answered by all 12 participants. Appendix D notes permission from the PACER Center to use the instrument. I adjusted some of the quantitative questions to take a qualitative approach. This adjustment to the instrument was permitted by PACER Center.

To maintain validity and reliability, I used two methods: member checking and the maintaining of a reflexive journal. Member checking involved sharing with participants the interview transcription for them to review prior to their interview. Then I concluded by taking the findings back to the participants and checking for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. With member checking, I sought to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through the eyes of the participants in the study (Motulsky, 2021). Maintaining a reflexive journal involved my keeping a record of the research process and progress, including the reflections on the project and the changes made as the study progressed (Meyer & Willis, 2019). This approach, according to Meyer and Willis (2019), increased the trustworthiness of the study.

Discrepancies in data did not emerge during the process of data validation for various reasons. In many instances, minor discrepancies are inconsequential. However, substantial, or persistent discrepancies may signal underlying issues with the data, necessitating further investigation. Multiple factors could contribute to data discrepancies, such as errors in my capturing participants' responses. To prevent such occurrences, I diligently reviewed the data for any potential mistakes (Usermaven, 2023).

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I was responsible for scheduling the interviews at times that were convenient for the participants to take the online interview session. This strategy was helpful in extracting true narratives and experiences from parents, which provided me with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their roles, challenges, and points of view within the setting of the middle school. I used reflexive journals to keep track of data and emerging insights. In this reflective journal, I recorded notes on patterns, themes, and new discoveries. I was the researcher of this study, and I have taught at this school for the past 3 years. This role did not affect the research due to my personal relationship built with both the students and their parents. This role did not affect the data collection, as parents' experiences are their own and were reported as such.

### **Data Analysis Results**

Data analysis for this doctoral project study involved thematic analysis to identify recurring themes from parent interviews and surveys. This method allowed for the identification of patterns in the data and provided insights into parents' experiences with school communication, engagement, barriers to involvement, and the role of technology in education. The thematic analysis resulted in four key themes, detailed below.

**Theme 1: Communication Satisfaction**

The first theme, Communication Satisfaction, captured the range of parental experiences with school communication. Responses varied, with some parents feeling satisfied and well-informed through regular communication, while others expressed frustration with the lack of responsiveness from school staff. Parents who were satisfied with communication appreciated the consistency of updates and felt connected to the school. In contrast, those who were dissatisfied reported instances where their attempts to communicate with school staff were ignored or unanswered. For example, Participant 1 expressed frustration, stating, “The teachers never returned my phone calls.” On the other hand, Participant 2 highlighted a more positive experience: “I was ok with the way the school communicated with me. They called and would tell me stuff.” Participant 5 stated, “I was okay with the way they communicated; they kept me informed about what was going on,” and Participant 4 said, “The school didn’t communicate with me until it was already a problem.” These divergent experiences highlight a key area where school systems can improve, as communication practices directly impact parent satisfaction and involvement.

**Theme 2: Parent–School Engagement**

The second theme, Parent–School Engagement, reflects parents’ sense of feeling welcomed and their involvement in school activities. The data revealed that some parents felt a strong connection with the school community, due to the positive and inclusive attitudes of the school staff. Parents who felt recognized and welcomed were more likely to engage with the school on a deeper level. Participant 3 shared, “I felt welcomed every time I came to the school because everyone knew who I was,” suggesting a keen sense of



belonging within the school community. In contrast, Participant 1 expressed a lack of outreach, stating, “They never really asked me to be involved.”

Adding a further dimension, Participant 8 described feeling excluded, stating, I did not feel they wanted me involved, only reaching out during negative situations, which highlights the adverse effects of limited outreach on engagement. On the other hand, Participant 7 had a positive view, noting, they always asked for parent volunteers and kept us informed of events, reinforcing the idea that consistent efforts to involve parents contribute to positive engagement experiences. These contrasting experiences demonstrate the importance of proactive engagement strategies by schools to foster a welcoming environment for all parents.

### **Theme 3: Barriers to Involvement**

The third theme, Barriers to Involvement, emerged as a significant factor influencing parents’ ability to participate in their children’s education. Parents cited various obstacles, such as inflexible work schedules, lack of invitations, and inconvenient event timing, as reasons for their limited involvement. This theme highlights the structural and personal challenges that prevent parents from engaging with the school. Participant 4 explained, “Academically the times and the dates were hard for me to get to because my work schedule did not allow me to come.” Similarly, Participant 3 shared, “They never asked me to be involved,” underscoring the role that schools play in either facilitating or hindering parent involvement. These findings suggest that schools need to develop more flexible and inclusive strategies to accommodate diverse parent schedules and needs.

**Theme 4: Role of Technology in Education**

The fourth theme, Role of Technology in Communication with Parents, explores parents' experiences and opinions regarding how technology facilitates communication between schools and families. While many parents appreciate the convenience and efficiency of digital communication tools—such as emails, messaging apps, and online portals—some expressed concerns about the effectiveness and personalization of these methods. There is a common sentiment that while technology can enhance communication, it should not replace meaningful, direct interactions with school staff.

For instance, Participant 2 voiced a desire for more personal communication, stating, “I would like for the school to call me instead of just sending emails.” This highlights the need for schools to balance digital communication with personal outreach to foster stronger relationships with parents. Additionally, Participant 5 noted, “I appreciate receiving updates through technology, but I sometimes feel disconnected because it lacks a personal touch.” These perspectives emphasize the importance of schools thoughtfully integrating technology into their communication strategies to meet the diverse preferences of parents.

In summary, the thematic analysis revealed critical insights into how technology impacts parent–school communication. By understanding these dynamics, educators and school administrators can enhance their outreach methods and strengthen parent–school partnerships, improving overall engagement practices.

**Limitations**

A qualitative research project, while offering rich, in-depth insights, comes with inherent limitations. Firstly, its subjective nature can lead to biases, as interpretations are

heavily dependent on the researcher's perspective. This subjectivity can also make it challenging to replicate the study with the same precision, affecting its reliability.

Secondly, due to its typically smaller sample sizes and nonrandom selection, the findings might not be generalizable to a broader population. Moreover, qualitative research often requires a significant investment of time for data collection and analysis, which can be a constraint in time-sensitive projects. The analysis is also more prone to being influenced by the researcher's preconceptions, potentially leading to confirmation bias. Additionally, qualitative data, rich in text and narratives, can be difficult to succinctly summarize and present, posing challenges in effectively communicating the findings to a wider audience.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The problem that was addressed through this study was the decline in home-to-school partnerships within a local, public, and ethnically diverse DMS in the Southeastern United States. For this study, the term *home-to-school partnership* referred not only to parental/home involvement in school activities and parent–teacher conferences, but also to student participation. Parental involvement traditionally encompasses a variety of activities that parents engage in both at home and within the school environment. This involvement manifests in numerous ways, such as parents volunteering their time at the school, maintaining open lines of communication with teachers, aiding with homework, and participating in school-related events like performances or parent–teacher meetings (Epstein et al., 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Personal conversations had taken place with assistant principals, counselors, SPED coordinators, and teachers at this DMS regarding their struggles with parental involvement. These challenges include student behavior in the classroom, student academic motivation, decline in parental attendance for 504, multitiered support system, and IEP meetings. These challenges are due to rejected parental phone calls, negative behaviors not being corrected at home before students return to school from suspension, and a decline of parental attendance at school events and parent–teacher conferences.

This was a problem at the chosen site because of the lack of home-to-school partnerships. Between 2019 and 2023, there was a drastic decline in eighth-grade academic success. Elevated levels of engagement from families and partnerships within the community not only enhance a student’s academic performance but also transform

their attitude towards schooling. A well-structured and effectively implemented parental school community can result in many positive outcomes. These include improved grades and test scores, enhanced attendance, better behavior, improved social skills, a higher number of classes passed and/or credits earned, and an increase in graduation rates.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for the project, in the form of PD stems from the findings in the qualitative research conducted, which highlighted significant barriers to parental involvement in home-to-school partnerships at this DMS. The study revealed that these partnerships have seen a notable decline, particularly post-COVID-19, leading to various challenges such as increased negative classroom behaviors, decreased academic motivation, and reduced parental engagement in essential school activities.

This decline in engagement was identified as a critical factor affecting student outcomes, including lower academic performance and poor behavior management, which further exacerbates the disconnection between parents and the school. The data suggested that one of the primary reasons for this decline is the lack of effective communication and collaboration between the school and parents, compounded by socioeconomic and cultural barriers that prevent parents from fully participating in their children's education.

To address this issue, the project will focus on developing a PD curriculum for educators at the DMS. The goal of this curriculum is to enhance teachers' skills in engaging parents, particularly those from diverse and low-income backgrounds, in meaningful and productive partnerships. By improving communication strategies, fostering a welcoming school environment, and offering targeted support to parents, the project aims to rebuild the home-to-school connections that are vital for student success.

The chosen approach of PD aligns with the study's findings, which emphasized the need for a structured and intentional effort to re-engage parents. This initiative will provide educators with the tools and strategies necessary to overcome the identified barriers, thereby promoting a more inclusive and collaborative school community. This PD was designed to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of individuals in their professional roles due to the decline in parental involvement. The project was designed to create sustainable improvements in home-to-school partnerships, leading to better educational outcomes for students at the DMS where the study occurred.

### **Review of the Literature**

The effectiveness of education and student success depends on teacher training. This valuable PD equips educators with important techniques and comprehension to cater to a variety of student demands and maneuver through shifting learning circumstances. Drawing from 15 peer-reviewed articles from 2018 to 2024, this review investigates important characteristics of successful PD and its major effect on educational standards.

### **Comprehending the Crucial Role of PD**

Through PD aimed at bettering student outcomes in education, teachers' skills and knowledge undergo a major change. According to a 2019 study by Darling-Hammond and Oakes, PD is significantly more than just lectures; it is vital for initiating vital shifts in teaching strategies and boosting student outcomes. When PD is planned with care and consideration, it can reshape both teaching and learning and push teachers toward achieving excellence.

In her analysis of 78 studies, Kirsten (2020) pointed out how PD is an essential driver of changes in educational practices and student learning. Kirsten showed that PD

achieves its greatest effectiveness when it complements the educational targets of school leaders and includes a mix of policy approaches. Coordinating these efforts shows that PD holds value and associates it with different methods that support educational development.

Studying PD from the standpoint of administrators can build a beneficial atmosphere for enhancing educators' growth. To achieve clear communication about teachers' methods and standards, PD should comply with existing policies. Combining classroom insights with PD boosts its efficacy and enhances the possibility for further enhancements in education (Smith, 2020.) Practical fiscal strategies change PD into a critical resource that enhances teachers' development.

In her evaluation of educators' views on standard grading methods for middle schools in Connecticut in 2024, Prukalski pointed out that PD supports educational development. The results indicated that vague grading criteria combined with ineffective instruction reduce grading effectiveness and cause varied approaches that might mask a student's accomplishments. When PD is executed effectively, teachers can harmonize their evaluation strategies with educational intentions and gain the necessary trust to foster improvement in their teaching practices.

According to Prukalski (2024), PD links teachers' grading techniques to standard-based methods. A few PD tactics enable teachers to coordinate grading criteria and approaches while focusing on their core beliefs and values. Joint action is crucial to implementing crucial grading changes that truly evaluate students' learning. With effective PD practices in place, teachers can assess and improve their grading strategies, promoting a space of ongoing transformation and meaningful learning.

### **Characteristics of Effective PD**

Key characteristics of effective PD improve its effect on teaching methods and students' achievements. These features comprise teamwork and reflection, along with personalizing and contextualizing methods and participatory learning. Effectiveness in PD requires educators to team up and build an environment that allows for the exchange of knowledge and strategies. According to their analysis of 125 research articles, Ventista and Brown (2023) noted that collaborative, ongoing PD (CCPD) is related to positive educational outcomes for students. In CCPD, teachers come together to explore successful methods for improving personal skills. This collaborative method builds the abilities of every teacher while also improving teaching standards across the school or district.

According to Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019), teacher training should include collaborative learning networks. Evidence suggests that when teacher candidates and educators work together, their understanding of and aptness for varied classrooms increases. When collaborating in groups, teachers gain chances to review their skills and experiment with innovative techniques. Kho et al. (2019) discovered that supportive and nonauthoritative coaching methods improve the effectiveness of PD in Malaysia. When coaches modify their approach to fit teachers' requirements and cultivate trust, they allow teachers to explore their practices safely and initiate change. The authors outlined the essential roles of instructional coaches as implementers, advocates, and educators, pointing out that the flexibility of these roles influences teacher readiness and context.

Ehlert and Souvignier (2023) stressed the importance of reflection for PD. The analysis showed that teachers prefer PD, which promotes hands-on activities and active



learning and allows them time to consider their practices and implement innovative approaches. Professional advancement relies heavily on reflection since it inspires teachers to question their beliefs and explore revised methods for effective teaching.

Emphasizing personalization and contextual relevance is essential to enhancing PD effectiveness. Teachers usually connect with and reap rewards from PD that take into account their contexts and difficulties. Abakah (2023) explored how teachers in Ghanaian junior high schools participate in ongoing learning and revealed that effective engagement incorporates active reflection and agency. Teachers obtain superior learning through PD that presents applicable experiences tailored to their teaching environments.

Smith and Wyness (2024) found that PD needs to relate directly to teachers' everyday work. Teachers want PD activities that they elect to join voluntarily and that meet their urgent classroom needs. This desire reveals that PD initiatives must be adapted to meet the unique needs and circumstances of teachers rather than following a generic strategy.

According to Esquivel-Hofstedt (2023), teachers need to be part of the PD planning process. Research showed that how teachers see themselves influences their engagement in PD and their activities. Educators value PD which considers their previous learning and experience. To achieve relevance and success in PD programs, teachers should take part in the design phase. When involved in PD efforts, teachers can more closely relate to their career aspirations.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) emphasized that PD is designed to prepare teachers for better learning opportunities in their work. According to these authors, recognizing the diverse cultural and economic contexts of students became vital for PD

programs to supply teachers with the resources required to enhance fairness and inclusivity in their classrooms.

When teachers actively participate in PD sessions, their learning improves, and they find the experience more valuable. Teachers tend to prefer PD that includes participatory learning and practical exercises, as shown by Ehlert and Souvignier (2023). Teachers choose shorter formats that easily integrate into their schedules and supply resources they can directly use in class. Teachers respond better to workshop sessions and practical activities than to traditional learning methods.

Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) underscored the use of action research and project-based learning in their analysis of teacher development courses. Such techniques enhance interactive learning and practical use of information, permitting teachers to try different approaches, record their outcomes, and adjust their approaches with evidence. Through action research, teachers assert their role in PD while enriching the existing knowledge about effective teaching strategies.

According to Kirsten (2020), PD is more beneficial when based on experiential learning. PD must incorporate teachers into hands-on learning activities linked to their classroom settings. By connecting PD sessions with real-life classroom issues, teachers gain insight into the value of the content and are encouraged to try fresh strategies.

Participating actively in PD fosters teachers' self-assurance. By involving themselves in practical tasks and noting the outcomes of new approaches on their students' development, teachers boost their self-belief. This works to advance enduring adjustments in teaching styles and inspires a promise to maintain professional growth.

## **Teacher Beliefs and Self-Perception**

Teachers engage with PD and how effective PD initiatives are greatly affected by their beliefs and self-confidence. Identifying and confronting these variables is important for supporting genuine professional improvement and raising student performance. According to Prukalski (2024), teachers' beliefs about grading influence their attitudes toward PD intended for grading reforms. The research indicated that teachers consider conventional grading to be only partly effective in representing actual student achievement. This viewpoint may lead to opposition to change unless PD programs confront these ideas explicitly. Through discussions on grading techniques and presenting research-backed options, teachers can change their perspectives and support better assessment practices with PD.

Teachers' PD interests and skill development hinge on their self-perceptions, according to Esquivel-Hofstedt (2023). Teachers value PD that shows appreciation for teachers' experience and creates prospects for career progress. When PD corresponds with what teachers perceive as their needs and ambitions, their engagement and enthusiasm for learning also increase. It is essential to create PD programs that cater to the professional identities and goals of teachers.

Research from 2019 by Johnston et al. gathered findings from the past 10 years on teacher beliefs and underscored their substantial impact on student academic results. High expectations often result in teachers constructing areas for learning that support and challenge students toward greater achievements. On the other hand, expecting little can impede student access and slow progress. To tackle teachers' expectations, PD programs

should foster reflection, challenge biases, and equip them with strategies to help every student.

According to Abakah (2023), critical reflection plays a key part in teacher education. To effectively impact learning from their CPD experiences, teachers must exercise their agency through careful reflection. By examining their beliefs and practices, teachers gain awareness of their growth areas and embrace new methods. Teachers integrate new understanding and apply it significantly when reflective PD initiatives support their learning.

Teachers' belief in how they impact student learning drives their desire to use techniques gained from PD. Through mastery opportunities, the demonstration of effective strategies, and useful feedback, PD can lead to significant and lasting improvements in teacher practices.

### **Impact on Student Outcomes**

Strong PD uniquely raises the efficacy of student learning. Ventista and Brown (2023) found that PD initiatives rich in coaching and collaboration yield enhanced student performance. In their 2018 study, Kraft et al. analyzed 60 studies and concluded that teaching coaching significantly improves educational methods with an effect size of 0.49 standard deviations and student outcomes by 0.18 standard deviations. The results reinforce the need to allocate resources toward coaching efforts that uplift educational standards and support student performance. Gan et al. (2021) examined universities in China and determined that constructive feedback significantly increases student initiative and participation, leading to superior learning results and greater satisfaction with classes

and exams. This reveals that focusing PD on teachers' feedback techniques can build a vibrant and attentive learning space.

Johnston et al. (2019) found that when teachers expect more from their students, they achieve better results, and lower expectations obstruct progress. The examination underlined the vital role of establishing developmental programs targeting the alteration of teacher beliefs and the encouragement of significant goals for each student to decrease achievement differences and support justice. Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) stated that when teachers undergo effective PD training, they empower students to cultivate their cognitive and social traits. By adopting techniques for profound learning, teachers support students in enhancing their critical thinking skills and making valuable connections with knowledge. According to Ehlert and Souvignier (2023), adjusting PD initiatives to accord with teachers' wishes and the aim of raising student performance improves their efficiency and leads to meaningful gains in student results.

### **Role of Feedback and Coaching**

Feedback and coaching play essential roles in successful PD that improves teaching effectiveness and student learning results. Kho et al. (2019) analyzed instructional coaching among teachers in Malaysian primary schools to define the responsibilities of coaches as advocates and educators. Instead of using directive approaches, coaches chose to focus on collaborative and assistive communication while stressing the significance of developing trust and awareness of teachers' environments.

Teachers receive PD that adjusts to their expertise and willingness to work with a coach. Kraft et al. (2018) showed that coaching can be highly effective in PD but highlighted issues that arise when trying to grow the program efficiently. Greater

programs frequently showed smaller impacts compared to their smaller counterparts, and they pointed out the critical role of consistent implementation as coaching efforts grow.

Gan et al. (2021) demonstrated that powerful teacher feedback boosts student engagement and motivation. The findings imply that PD, which emphasizes building teachers' competency in delivering significant and positive feedback, can elevate student interest and learning results.

Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) encouraged mentorship along with valid evaluation within PD and offered continuous aid and evaluations tied to performance. With this strategy in place, teachers can acquire meaningful advice to assess their methods and adjust their teaching as needed.

Ehlert and Souvignier (2023) discovered that incorporating coaching and feedback strengthens the outcomes of PD efforts. Allowing teachers to get comments on new methods and participate in thoughtful talks promotes richer learning and enduring transformations in practice.

### **Problems While Enhancing PD Programs**

Expanding PD programs to a larger group while maintaining effectiveness creates major obstacles. The most critical issue is preserving the essential aspects of the PD program when changing it for different settings and larger groups. A qualitative investigation by Patfield et al. (2022) focused on the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) PD program in two varied school communities in New South Wales, Australia. The results showed that slight modifications of the PD structure might greatly influence its efficiency. The authors stressed the necessity of keeping the foundational ideas and systems that originate from the PD program intact during scaling. To effectively scale up

a program, they wrote one must find a subtle equilibrium between preserving its core values and making required changes to fit the particular needs of diverse educational institutions.

In their analysis of 60 teacher coaching studies, Kraft et al. (2018) revealed that extensive programs showed lower impacts on teaching strategies and student outcomes compared to smaller initiatives. A decline in effectiveness was linked to factors such as fluctuations in implementation quality and fewer opportunities for customized support, as well as challenges in the application of the program in different contexts. To sustain effectiveness while growing programs, the design and strategies that enable coaching effectiveness must be emphasized. It means that the coaches are fully trained and that sufficient resources are provided to assist teachers.

Improving capabilities on an individual and systemic basis is vital for the effective scaling of PD programs. Révai et al. (2019) highlighted three key aspects: the need to strengthen facilitators' skills and build nurturing institutional atmospheres with continuous evaluation. They claimed that lacking crucial abilities makes it likely that upscaled PD efforts will either become superficial or fail to yield the expected results. By focusing on the PD of PD facilitators, they gain the skills needed to implement the program effectively and tailor it appropriately while preserving its fundamental concepts.

Maintaining the involvement and drive of participants presents extra obstacles to expanding PD programs. In their extensive review of PD for university teachers, Smith, and Wyness (2024) found that relevance and applicability are key factors teachers value. The risk exists for PD programs to standardize when they grow large and fail to align with teachers' requirements, which may decrease engagement. Keeping teachers invested

requires preserving features that render PD attractive, such as its applicability to their unique teaching settings and chances for teamwork. Smith and Wyness noted that PD resources can be modified based on teacher opinions for program design.

How resources are handled and assisted influences the growth of PD initiatives. Alexandrou (2021) indicated that the move to online PD brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic boosted access and facilitated greater engagement from a variety of areas. A major effort needs to emphasize creating technology systems and providing training to educators on new platforms to enhance online teaching strategies. Difficulties occur because of the requirement to keep interest alive and to continue involvement throughout. Alexandrou highlighted the need for critical resources and technology backing along with approaches to boost online involvement while PD efforts are being expanded.

According to Hammond et al (2015), teachers usually measure the relevance of PD in relation to the provided materials. Changes are required to make teachers appreciate the value of their involvement in PD programs. Should expanded programs lose clarity or fail to align with classroom requirements, educators might not remain engaged, leading to the failure of the PD initiative.

Careful planning and thoughtful execution are crucial for PD programs to grow effectively and maintain essential program features in various settings (Guskey, 2002). Pursuing favorable growth results involves addressing issues related to keeping program quality high and promoting participant enthusiasm while securing adequate resources. Various stages help develop that capability.



## **Policies and Support of Institutions**

For PD initiatives to thrive and progress effectively, institutions and policies are essential (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021.) Successful PD should include planned activities together with policies and frameworks that support implementation and deliver essential backing. Kirsten (2020) identified the escalating role of state involvement in PD through her in-depth analysis of policy tools from 2020. She highlighted that state actions are increasing to affect PD techniques using resources like state financial resources and associating PD with educational goals and teacher performance measures.

Enhanced participation can yield important benefits and relate PD to extensive educational targets. Kirsten (2020) highlighted that teacher professionalism leads to a more effective PD rather than mere compliance. If teaching prioritizes compliance instead of professional growth development initiatives, it might weaken teachers' freedom and decrease the potency of PD efforts.

Alexandrou (2021) investigated the influence of the COVID-19 crisis on professional learning and development in 2021 and pointed out that adopting online PD created a mix of advantages and difficulties. For this shift to occur, both policies and institutions provided crucial aid. Entities that set up virtual learning methods and adaptable PD regulations effectively utilized online PD resources. Ensuring participation and interaction in virtual approaches was tough and underscored the necessity for continuous policy action.

Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019) called for policies to improve ongoing and meaningful professional training. Numerous policy changes were suggested, including

enhanced funding for scholarships that benefit program development and debt forgiveness for aspiring teachers, as well as elevating accreditation performance criteria. Implementing these actions allows the involvement of top teachers in their field and support for their education while offering ongoing PD for their PD. These policies encourage hands-on education and deploying effective instructors in neglected regions can minimize learning inequalities.

Révai et al. (2019) highlighted the significance of leadership strategy and controlling knowledge while boosting capabilities for progress within individuals and groups. For strategic governance to succeed, a cohesive understanding of teacher evolution must be created, and connections between educational authorities and institutions must be forged. The management of knowledge encourages the creation and use of ideas about effective PD practices. Creating resources and skills enables people and groups to execute PD effectively.

Establishing a community that supports and stresses professional advancement is included in support from institutions. According to Smith and Wyness (2024), when educational settings cultivate environments that satisfy teachers' emotional requirements, such as relations and independence, PD engagement grows. By arranging PD events and recognizing teacher growth with incentives, facilities can create an environment that encourages teamwork.

Policy and institutional assistance are vital elements for impactful PD to occur. The effect of PD is increased when policies deliver resources and foster teacher professionalism. Instant help from institutions that nurture continuous education and deliver vital facilities is vital for sustaining PD efforts and eventually improving teaching

and student achievement.

### **Lifelong Learning for Teachers**

Teachers' professional improvement represents an unbroken process that lasts from their initial training to lifelong PD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d.). Understanding education as an ongoing learning process is crucial for promoting continuous development and flexibility in the changing education system. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2021) emphasized the need to weave continuous education into teacher preparation and the teaching profession as a whole. Researchers acknowledged critical obstacles in initial teacher preparation systems that require the development of self-improving and evidence-based frameworks. According to the authors' viewpoint, initial teacher preparation cannot be treated as a singular action but should serve as the core for perpetual learning. Under this strategy, new teachers receive structured induction initiatives, guidance, and continuous learning opportunities that enrich their foundational training.

According to Darling-Hammond and Oakes (2019), the preparation of teachers for comprehensive learning prioritizes critical thinking and practical application. These authors endorsed PD strategies that cultivate lasting learning by urging teachers to persistently refine their skills and practices based on the latest findings and teaching developments. Abakah (2023) investigated Ghanaian junior high school teachers' engagement in ongoing PD and determined that teaching effectiveness depends on active mediation through reflection and community interactions. The investigation highlighted that their contexts and interactions drive the process of teachers' learning. This means

that PD initiatives need to give teachers lasting opportunities to contemplate their roles, cooperate with peers, and practice their autonomy. Alexandrou (2021) revealed that the move to online PD has generated innovative chances for perpetual learning. With increased access to online PD resources, teachers can now learn professionally at their rhythm and follow their interests. Alexandrou noted that preserving engagement levels and guaranteeing the quality of online PD resources presents issues. She pointed out that institutions must help teachers make effective use of these resources.

According to Ehlert and Souvignier (2023), teachers usually focus on PD, which delivers instant practical advantages. PD programs should match delivering practical resources with promoting enduring PD. By embedding PD within teachers' daily activities and providing ongoing support, we can connect it with career development.

According to Smith and Wyness (2024), levels of motivation and self-efficacy are vital for teachers' involvement in continuous professional learning. Training sessions that target teachers' natural motivations, such as growth and personal advancement, are more apt to encourage sustained participation. Educational bodies should encourage this by honoring and compensating for continual learning and by developing atmospheres that enhance teachers' sense of belonging.

Shankar (2020) argued that recognizing the importance of continuous teacher learning significantly enhances the effectiveness of PD programs. By providing ongoing opportunities for growth and collaboration, along with robust support for teachers throughout their professional journeys, educational systems can cultivate skilled and adaptable educators capable of meeting the demands of contemporary classrooms.

A detailed examination of writings indicates the various dimensions of impactful PD and its significant influence on improving educators' strategies and pupil achievement. Significant aspects of effective PD are working together and making learning experiences personal and pertinent. Joint effort creates an environment for teaching professionals to interact and assist one another in advancing personal growth. By emphasizing personalization and contextualization, PD aligns with the specific requirements of teachers and their respective classrooms (Abakah, 2023; Smith & Wyness, 2024).

The way teachers see themselves and their beliefs play a critical role in their involvement in PD. Using reflective practices, along with recognizing teachers' knowledge, improves the efficiency of PD programs (Esquivel-Hofstedt, 2023; Prukalski, 2024). Feedback and coaching serve as effective instruments for increasing teacher growth. They offer tailored assistance and encourage reflective practice, which affects instruction methods and student results.

### **Literature Review Summary**

Growing PD efforts create challenges that necessitate a precise focus on essential concepts and underlying structures. To maintain effectiveness during scalability, it is important to merge program integrity with adaptations that fit the context (Kraft et al., 2018). Institutions and policies are indispensable to uphold PD initiatives effectively. When schools provide the right resources and encourage ongoing learning, PD initiatives contribute more to educational success.

Recognizing that teacher education reflects a steady process plays a key role in enhancing enduring professional growth. Incorporating PD at different phases of an

educator's career allows them to respond to changing requirements and encourages continuous progress in teaching and learning.

For PD to succeed, it needs the joint participation and resolve of teachers and entities such as institutions and policymakers. Teaching quality can be boosted while positively influencing student achievement when educational systems tackle the challenges of teacher learning, design impactful PD that responds to teacher demands and utilize effective strategies and resources. Reviewed research offers a framework for shaping and delivering PD initiatives that not only work but are also lasting for teachers and their learners.

### **Project Description**

The following section will outline a description of the project for this study. Included will be resources, technology, facilities, and personnel.

### **Needed Resources**

Multiple barriers exist related to parent involvement in their children's education including time constraints (Leitch & Tangri, 1988), mistrust of schools (Edwards & Young, 1992), miscommunication between parents and schools, lack of knowledge about subjects that children are learning about in school (Brock & Beazley, 1995; Finders & Lewis, 1994), and lack of parent understanding of how to be involved (Bright, 1996). These barriers have been articulated by parents related to their involvement in general education, but in an extremely limited way regarding health education.

To successfully implement the PD and training curriculum focused on improving home-to-school partnerships at the DMS, the following resources will be needed: The training materials for the PD sessions will include PowerPoint presentations for each

training module, providing a clear visual guide for participants. In addition, handouts and workbooks will be distributed, which will include self-assessment tools, communication strategy guides, and evaluation templates to support learning and practical application. Case studies and real-life examples will be incorporated to facilitate group discussions and role-playing activities, helping participants connect theory to practice. Finally, evaluation tools will be provided to measure the effectiveness of the training and assess its impact on parental engagement.

The training will require a reliable audio-visual system to facilitate presentations and video demonstrations. Participants should have access to computers or tablets to engage with digital tools and resources during the sessions, ensuring hands-on learning. Additionally, the use of online platforms for follow-up support, such as discussion forums and resource-sharing portals, will be essential to reinforce the training and foster ongoing collaboration.

The training will take place in a large, comfortable room designed to facilitate group work and collaboration, with seating arrangements that promote interaction. In addition to the main space, breakout rooms or designated areas will be available for smaller group activities and discussions, allowing for more focused and intimate engagement. The room will also be equipped with essential presentation tools, including a projector, whiteboards, and other resources to support the delivery of the training content.

The PD sessions will require experienced trainers who are knowledgeable in parental engagement strategies, communication skills, and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, support staff will be essential for assisting with logistical needs, such as

setting up the training space, distributing materials, and managing technology. These combined efforts will ensure that the training is both effective and smoothly executed.

Several existing supports can be leveraged to facilitate the implementation of this project. The commitment of school leadership, including the principal and assistant principals, to improving home-to-school partnerships. School administrators have access to the school's parental contact database (e.g., Infinite Campus) for identifying and reaching out to parents.

Teachers and staff who have expressed interest in improving parental engagement and are open to participating in the training will attend this PD. This PD will highlight how previous initiatives or programs aimed at enhancing communication with parents can be built upon. Local community groups and organizations that have established relationships with the school and can provide additional support or resources.

To support educators' professional growth, offer flexible training schedules, such as a three-day PD session spread over a longer period or online modules that can be completed at their own pace. Securing buy-in from school leadership is also essential to ensure the allocation of dedicated PD days for this training, making it more accessible and effective.

Teachers are often hesitant to attend PD sessions because they perceive them as boring or irrelevant to their specific needs. However, engaging in well-designed PD is crucial for staying current with educational practices and addressing the diverse needs of students. The PD program described here is different because it focuses on practical, relevant strategies tailored to real classroom challenges. By incorporating diverse cultural and economic contexts into the training, we ensure that teachers are equipped with tools



to create inclusive, equitable learning environments. This makes the PD both meaningful and directly applicable, enhancing student outcomes and teacher effectiveness.

### **Proposal for Implementation**

The following is a timetable for pre-implementation of this PD program.

#### ***Day 1: Understanding Parent–School Dynamics and Communication***

- 8:30 AM - 9:00 AM: *Welcome and Workshop Overview*  
Introduce objectives, agenda, and expected outcomes.
- 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM: *Session 1: The Importance of Parent–School Partnerships*
  - Trainer Note: Present findings from research on how parent engagement impacts academic outcomes.
  - Activities: Group discussion and reflection activity on current practices.
- 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM: *Session 2: Communication Satisfaction—Strategies for Effective Communication*
  - Trainer Note: Discuss effective communication techniques (e.g., weekly newsletters, personalized emails).
  - Activity: Case study analysis using parent feedback (e.g., reviewing effective versus ineffective communication scenarios).
- 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM: *Session 3: Technology Tools for Parental Communication*
  - Trainer Note: Demonstrate digital tools (e.g., school apps, online portals) and their role in parent engagement.

- Activity: Small group practice with tech tools for simulated communication.
- 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM: *Session 4: Balancing Digital and Personal Communication*
  - Trainer Note: Highlight the importance of personal communication alongside digital methods.
  - Activity: Role-play scenarios for in-person and virtual parent–teacher interactions.

***Day 2: Enhancing Engagement and Addressing Barriers***

- 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM: *Session 1: Creating an Inclusive and Welcoming School Environment*
  - Trainer Note: Emphasize the need for an inviting school climate and proactive outreach.
  - Activity: Brainstorm ways to make the school more welcoming for diverse parents.
- 10:15 AM - 12:00 PM: *Session 2: Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Involvement*
  - Trainer Note: Review common barriers (e.g., work schedules, lack of transportation).
  - Activity: Problem-solving workshop where participants brainstorm solutions to specific barriers.
- 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM: *Session 3: Utilizing Flexible Scheduling and Technology for Inclusive Events*

- Trainer Note: Show how flexible scheduling and online event options can improve attendance.
- Activity: Design a sample event schedule that includes virtual participation options.
- 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM: *Session 4: Parent Feedback and Continuous Improvement*
  - Trainer Note: Introduce methods for gathering and responding to parent feedback.
  - Activity: Participants draft a feedback survey to assess parent satisfaction with school engagement efforts.

### ***Day 3: Implementing and Evaluating Engagement Strategies***

- 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM: *Session 1: Integrating Technology for Sustained Communication*
  - Trainer Note: Demonstrate long-term communication plans with digital and traditional methods.
  - Activity: Participants create a monthly communication plan incorporating multiple formats.
- 10:15 AM - 12:00 PM: *Session 2: Planning a Parent Engagement Event*
  - Trainer Note: Discuss steps in planning inclusive parent events that encourage diverse participation.
  - Activity: Small groups plan a “Parent Engagement Night” or similar event with various engagement strategies.

- 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM: *Session 3: Developing a School-wide Communication and Engagement Policy*
  - Trainer Note: Guide participants in drafting a policy to standardize best practices in communication and engagement.
  - Activity: Collaboratively draft policy statements that can be adapted school wide.
- 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM: *Session 4: Implementation Plan and Evaluation Techniques*
  - Trainer Note: Share strategies for implementing and monitoring engagement efforts, including metrics for success.
  - Activity: Participants draft an action plan to apply workshop learning.
- 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM: *Wrap-up and Feedback*
  - Discuss next steps and gather participant feedback on the workshop.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

As the student (doctoral candidate/project leader), I will lead the project by overseeing the development and delivery of the training curriculum. I will coordinate with school leadership, including the principal and assistant principals, to ensure alignment with school goals and to secure necessary resources. Additionally, I will facilitate training sessions by either delivering the training modules myself or coordinating with expert trainers. Throughout the process, I will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the training by collecting data, adjusting as necessary, and providing a final report on the project's overall impact. I will receive support from these stakeholders to conduct my PD.

Educators, including teachers, SPED coordinators, and counselors, are expected to actively participate in training sessions and apply the strategies learned when interacting with parents. They will collaborate on creating and implementing plans to improve home-to-school partnerships and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the training and any challenges faced during implementation. Support staff will assist with logistics, managing the set-up and preparation of training materials, and ensuring the smooth operation of technology. Additionally, they will provide ongoing logistical support as educators implement the new strategies.

This project aims to foster a more collaborative and supportive educational environment at the DMS by enhancing the skills and strategies of educators in engaging parents effectively. Through careful planning, dedicated resources, and active participation from all involved, the project will lead to sustainable improvements in home-to-school partnerships and benefit the students' academic and social development.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The type of evaluation for the proposed PD and training curriculum, a survey will be administered at the end of the for strategies learned and feedback.

#### **Formative Evaluation**

This type of evaluation will be conducted throughout the training sessions to gather continuous feedback. Its purpose is to track progress, identify emerging issues, and make real-time adjustments to the content or delivery methods. Formative evaluation plays a vital role in ensuring that the training achieves its immediate objectives, such as keeping participants actively engaged, fostering elevated levels of interaction, and ensuring that the content remains relevant and accessible to all attendees. This evaluation

will utilize an observation checklist, participant discussions, and quick polls throughout the PD sessions.

### **Summative Evaluation**

At the end of the project, a summative evaluation will assess the overall impact and effectiveness of the training. This evaluation will measure the extent to which the project has achieved its intended outcomes, such as improved parental engagement and enhanced educator communication strategies. The summative evaluation will help determine the project's success and inform future initiatives.

The combination of formative and summative evaluations is justified because it allows for both continuous improvement during the project and a comprehensive assessment of its outcomes. This approach ensures that the project remains adaptable and responsive to participant needs while also providing a clear measure of its effectiveness and value.

To assess the impact of the training, several metrics will be tracked. Participation rates in school events, parent–teacher conferences, and other school-related activities will be monitored before and after the training to gauge its effectiveness in increasing parental involvement. Educator feedback will also be collected, focusing on teachers' confidence and competence in engaging with parents, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. This feedback will provide insights into how the training has influenced their ability to build stronger parent–school partnerships.

Additionally, student performance indicators, such as grades, attendance, and behavior, will be analyzed to determine whether improvements are linked to increased parental involvement. Participant satisfaction will also be measured through post-training

surveys and interviews with educators to assess how well the training was received and identify areas for improvement.

Key stakeholders involved in the evaluation process include school leadership, such as principals and assistant principals, who are responsible for overseeing the project and ensuring its alignment with school goals. They will also facilitate access to necessary data and resources for the evaluation. Educators, including teachers, SPED coordinators, and counselors, are both participants and beneficiaries of the training. Their feedback will be crucial for formative evaluation, while their performance post-training will serve as a key outcome measure in the summative evaluation.

Although not directly involved in the training, parents and guardians are indirect stakeholders whose engagement levels will be a key measure of the project's success. Their feedback may also be collected as part of the summative evaluation to assess changes in home-to-school partnerships.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the project, students' academic and behavioral outcomes will serve as vital indicators of the project's impact. While students are not directly involved in the evaluation process, their performance data will be crucial for the summative evaluation.

The district administration may have an interest in the results of the project, particularly if the training is considered for implementation across other schools. They may also provide additional support or resources for the evaluation process.

This evaluation plan is designed to ensure that the project is effectively meeting its goals and delivering the desired outcomes. By involving key stakeholders and utilizing

both formative and summative evaluation methods, the project can adapt to challenges during implementation while providing a clear assessment of its overall success.

### **Project Implications**

The proposed project, which focuses on enhancing home-to-school partnerships through PD and training, has significant potential for social change, particularly in the context of the DMS and the broader educational community.

By addressing the barriers to parental involvement, especially for low-income and diverse families, the project promotes greater equity in education. Improved home-to-school partnerships can help bridge the gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring that all students have the support they need to succeed academically.

The project fosters a culture of collaboration between educators, parents, and the community. This collaborative approach not only enhances student outcomes but also strengthens the social fabric of the community, leading to a more engaged and supportive environment for all members.

Empowering parents with the tools and strategies to engage effectively with their children's education can lead to lasting changes in family dynamics and attitudes towards education. Similarly, equipping educators with the skills to communicate and collaborate with parents fosters a more inclusive and responsive educational system.

As students experience greater support both at home and at school, they are likely to develop better academic habits, improved social skills, and a more positive attitude toward learning. These benefits extend beyond their time at the DMS, contributing to long-term success in higher education and future careers.



### **Importance to Local Stakeholders**

The project provides educators at the DMS with practical strategies and tools to overcome the challenges they face in engaging parents, particularly those from diverse and low-income backgrounds. By improving communication and collaboration with parents, teachers can create a more supportive and effective learning environment for their students.

School administrators will benefit from a more engaged and supportive parent community, which can lead to better student outcomes, an improved school climate, and stronger overall school performance. This project's success could also serve as a model for similar initiatives within the district.

Parents will hopefully gain a better understanding of how they can support their children's education and become more active participants in the school community. This increased involvement can lead to stronger parent-child relationships and a greater sense of ownership and investment in the school.

Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. As their parents become more engaged and their teachers more equipped to collaborate with families, students are likely to experience improvements in academic performance, behavior, and overall well-being.

If successful, the project could serve as a model for other schools facing similar challenges. The strategies and practices developed through this initiative could be adapted and implemented in schools across the district or even at a national level, contributing to broader educational reform efforts aimed at improving parental engagement and student outcomes.

The findings from this project could add valuable insights to the existing body of research on parental involvement, home-to-school partnerships, and educational equity. By documenting the challenges, strategies, and outcomes, the project could inform future research and policy decisions in the field of education.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

One of the main strengths of this project lies in its targeted approach to addressing a specific and significant issue—declining parental involvement in home-to-school partnerships at the DMS where the study was conducted. By focusing on PD for educators, the project provides practical and actionable strategies to enhance communication and collaboration between the school and parents. The use of a qualitative exploratory design allowed for a deep understanding of the problem from the perspective of those directly affected, leading to a well-informed and context-specific intervention.

However, the project also has limitations. Additionally, the project’s focus on PD for educators, while necessary, does not directly address potential systemic issues within the school that may also contribute to declining parental involvement. For example, broader cultural or structural barriers that impact parent engagement might require more extensive institutional changes beyond the scope of this project.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

An alternative approach could involve a more comprehensive school-wide initiative that includes not only PD for educators but also workshops and resources directly aimed at parents. By simultaneously empowering both educators and parents, the project could foster a more holistic improvement in home-to-school partnerships. Additionally, incorporating a mixed-methods research design could provide a more robust understanding of the issue, combining qualitative insights with quantitative data to assess the effectiveness of the interventions more broadly.

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

This project underscores the importance of scholarship in informing educational practices and interventions. By grounding the project in existing literature and using a rigorous qualitative methodology, it contributes to the academic discourse on parental involvement and school partnerships. The development and evaluation of the project also demonstrate key aspects of leadership and change management. Effective leadership in education requires not only identifying problems but also implementing evidence-based solutions and continuously evaluating their impact. This project exemplifies these principles by providing a clear, actionable plan for improving parental involvement through targeted PD.

### **Reflection on the Importance of the Research**

This research work has had a profound impact on me, both personally and professionally. As I delved into the issue of parental involvement, I became acutely aware of just how vital these partnerships are to student success. Seeing the data firsthand and hearing parents' stories made the need for stronger home-to-school connections feel deeply personal. Writing this project study was both challenging and rewarding—it forced me to think critically about how we, as educators, can do more to foster these relationships. The process also reinforced my belief in the importance of PD, not just as a tool for teacher growth, but to create meaningful, lasting change for parents and students. Knowing that this work could make a tangible difference at the DMS, especially for families in diverse and low-income communities, has been incredibly motivating. It is a reminder that the work we do goes beyond the classroom and touches lives in ways we often do not fully realize.

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

The implications of this project extend beyond the immediate context of this DMS and have broader applicability to schools facing challenges with parental involvement. The strategies and insights gained through this work provide a foundation for future improvements in home-to-school partnerships. Based on the findings of this project, several recommendations for future research and local practice emerge.

#### **Recommendations for Future Research**

One key area for further study is the long-term impact of PD on both parental engagement and student outcomes. This research could provide valuable data on whether the strategies implemented in the short term have sustained effects over time. Additionally, future research should investigate other factors that influence these partnerships, including cultural differences, language barriers, and socioeconomic challenges. Such studies could identify more tailored interventions to address the specific needs of diverse school communities.

#### **Recommendations for Local Practice**

Locally, the DMS and similar schools should consider implementing more proactive and flexible approaches to involving parents. For instance, based on the feedback from parents about communication challenges and barriers to involvement, the school might adopt more varied methods of communication and provide more flexible scheduling for parent–teacher interactions. Additionally, ongoing PD sessions should focus on equipping teachers with strategies to enhance parent–school engagement, ensuring that staff are responsive and welcoming to all parents. These changes could

improve the overall effectiveness of home-to-school partnerships in fostering student success.

### **Conclusion**

The problem addressed through this study was the decline in home-to-school partnerships within a local, public, and ethnically DMS in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of this training program is to equip educators at the DMS with the skills, strategies, and tools necessary to rebuild and strengthen home-to-school partnerships, particularly with parents from diverse and low-income backgrounds. This training will address the challenges identified in the research, such as decreased parental involvement and the need for more effective communication and collaboration.

Through targeted PD, the project provides educators with the tools they need to re-engage parents and create a more supportive and collaborative school environment. While there are limitations and areas for further research, the strengths of the project lie in its practical application and potential for positive impact on the school community. Moving forward, continued focus on both educator and parent engagement will be essential in sustaining the improvements achieved through this work.

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Appendix A: The Project

**PD/Training Curriculum**



1



2

## Agenda Overview

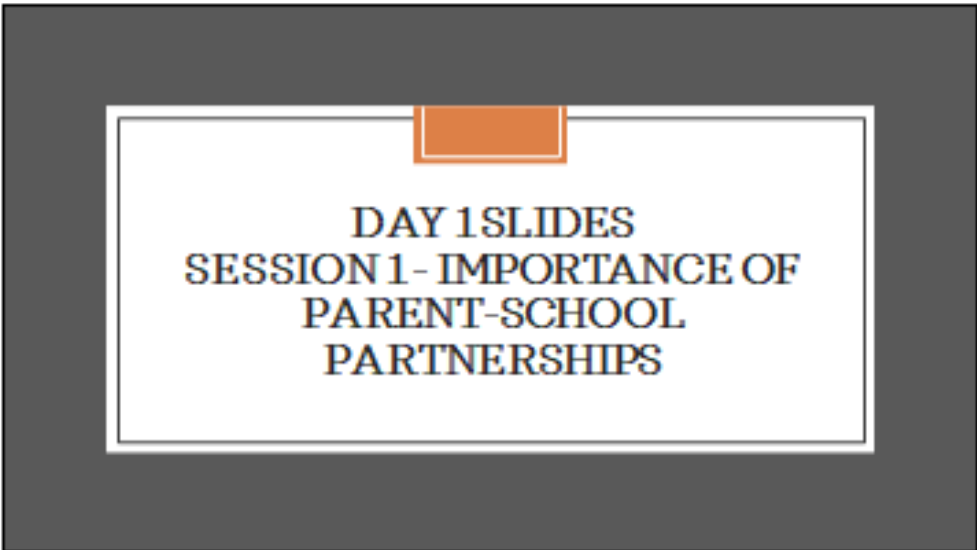
- **Day 1: Understanding Parent-School Dynamics**
- Sessions on partnership importance, effective communication, technology tools, and balancing digital with personal communication.
- **Day 2: Enhancing Engagement and Addressing Barriers**
- Focused on creating a welcoming environment, overcoming barriers, using flexible scheduling, and gathering feedback.
- **Day 3: Implementing and Evaluating Engagement Strategies**
- Practical sessions on creating a communication plan, event planning, policy development, and setting up evaluation mechanisms.

3

## Learning Outcomes


- Define effective communication with parents.
- Identify and address common barriers to engagement.
- Use technology effectively in parent communication

4

The slide features a dark gray background with a white rectangular frame in the center. At the top of the frame is a small orange square. The text is centered within the frame.

DAY 1 SLIDES  
SESSION 1 - IMPORTANCE OF  
PARENT-SCHOOL  
PARTNERSHIPS

5

The slide has a light gray background with a white border. The text is centered and includes a list of points and an activity description.

Discussion Points

- Research findings on how strong parent-school partnerships improve academic performance, behavior, and attendance.
- Insights into how partnerships create a positive school culture and student attitude.
- **Activity:**  
Group discussion: Share experiences and challenges in building strong partnerships. Identify common themes and specific successes.

6

## Effective Communication Techniques

### • Key Points:

- Methods for regular updates (weekly newsletters, monthly check-ins, regular email summaries).
- Tips for clear, concise, and positive language.
- Personalization for diverse parent needs—language options, accessibility considerations, and preferred contact methods.

### • Activity:

Case study analysis: Participants review various communication examples (both effective and ineffective) and discuss what can be improved. Small groups draft messages to model clear and proactive communication.

7

## Technology Tools for Communication

### • Digital Tools to Highlight:

- Parent communication apps (e.g., Remind, ClassDojo) and their benefits for instant messaging and updates.
- Online portals for easy access to academic records, upcoming events, and attendance.
- Email newsletters and automated reminders.

### • Activity:

Hands-on tech practice in small groups: Explore a chosen tool or app, then simulate sending out an update or invitation. Each group shares their experience with the tool's interface and ease of use.

8


## Balancing Digital and Personal Outreach

- **Discussion Points:**

- Benefits of blending digital with face-to-face communication.

- **Activity:** Role-play in-person and virtual parent-teacher interactions.

9



## DAY 2 SLIDES ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS

10

## Session 1- Creating a Welcoming School Environment

- **Strategies:**

- Proactive outreach, inclusive language, and diverse representation.

- **Activity:** Brainstorm on creating welcoming practices.

11

## Session 2 - Identifying and Overcoming Barriers

- **Common Barriers:**

- Work schedules, transportation, language differences.

- **Activity:** Problem-solving workshop for barrier-specific solutions.

12

### Session 3 - Flexible Scheduling and Online Events

• **Key Points:**

• Benefits of offering virtual and flexible event options.

• **Activity:** Design a sample event with virtual participation.

13

### Session 4 - Gathering and Using Parent Feedback

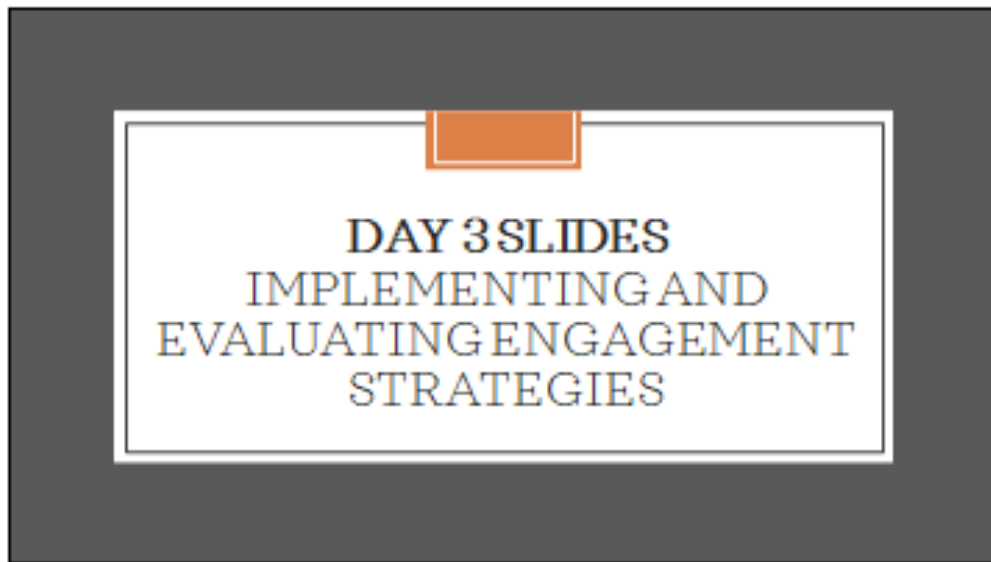
• **Strategies:**

• Survey design, regular follow-ups, and feedback application.

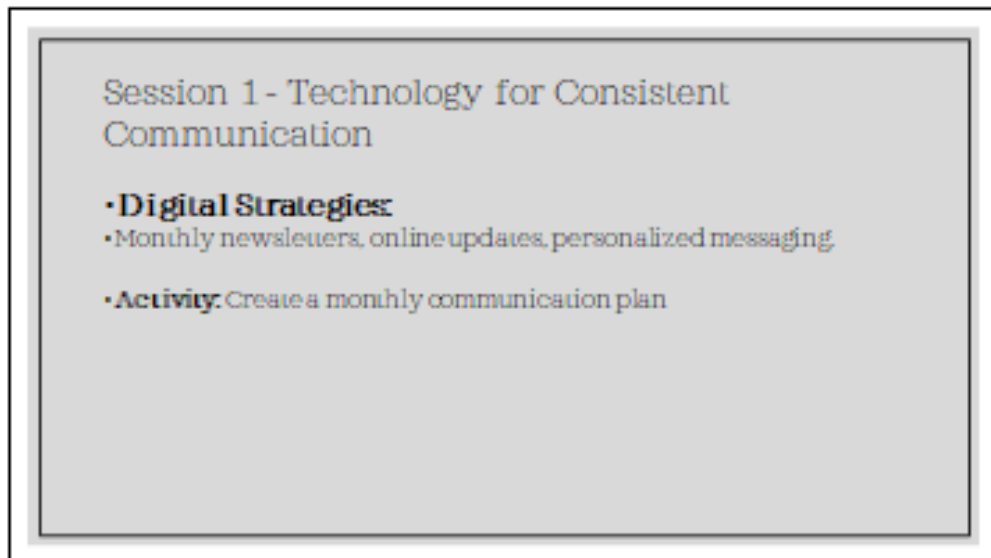
• **Activity:** Draft a sample feedback survey.

14





15



16

## Session 2 - Planning Parent Engagement Events

- **Event Planning Tips:**

- Themes, inclusion strategies, flexible formats.

- **Activity:** Small groups plan a "Parent Engagement Night" event.

17

## Session 3 - School-wide Communication and Engagement Policy

- **Policy Components:**

- Standardize communication practices, and inclusion criteria.

- **Activity:** Draft policy statements for school-wide adoption.

18

## Session 4 - Implementation and Evaluation Plan

### • **Implementation Tips:**

- Monitor progress and regular check-ins.

• **Evaluation:** Parent satisfaction surveys, attendance logs, and feedback forms.

19

## Workshop Wrap-Up

### • **Summary of Key Takeaways:**

- Effective communication and engagement require consistency, flexibility, and a blend of digital and personal approaches.
- Ensuring inclusive, welcoming practices are integral to fostering strong partnerships.

### • **Next Steps:**

- Implement strategies in the upcoming school term.
- Schedule a follow-up session to review progress, share successes, and address challenges.

20

## Strategies Implemented

1. Family Liaison: Hired a full-time family engagement coordinator
  2. Flexible Communication: Implemented a multi-channel approach (text, email, app)
  3. Home Visits: Teachers conducted home visits at the start of each year
  4. Family Learning Nights: Monthly events combining academics and social activities
  5. Parent Leadership: Established a diverse Parent Advisory Council
- 

## Outcomes

- Parental involvement increased from 20% to 75% over three years
  - Student attendance improved by 15%
  - Reading and math scores showed a 22% increase
  - Disciplinary incidents decreased by 30%
-

## Appendix B: Formal and Summative Evaluations

### Formative Evaluation

- **1. Observation Checklist**

**Purpose: To assess participant engagement, interaction, and comprehension during training sessions.**

Observation Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Participants are actively engaged in the session (e.g., asking questions, contributing to discussions).			
Participants are working collaboratively in group activities.			
The facilitator is effectively addressing participants' questions and concerns.			
The content is being delivered clearly and at an appropriate pace.			
Participants are demonstrating understanding of the material (e.g., through discussions or activities).			
Visual aids and materials are used effectively to support learning.			
Participants appear to be motivated and interested in the training content.			

### Additional Comments/Observations:

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- **2. Participant Discussion Guidelines**

**Purpose: To facilitate open discussions that allow participants to express their understanding and challenges.**

**Guidelines for Facilitators:**

- Begin each session with a brief overview of the topics to be covered.
- Pose open-ended questions to encourage dialogue, such as:
  - What strategies do you find most applicable to your role?
  - Are there any challenges you have encountered while applying what we have learned?
  - How can we enhance the content to better meet your needs?
- Allow time for participants to share their experiences and insights.
- Summarize key points from the discussion and highlight any common themes or

concerns.

Notes from Participant Discussions:

- Key insights:

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- Common challenges:

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- Suggested improvements:

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- 3. Quick Polls

Purpose: To gather immediate feedback on specific topics covered during each session.

Poll Template:

At the end of each session, conduct a quick poll using either digital tools (like Google Forms, or Mentimeter) or paper-based responses.

1. On a scale of 1-5, how well did you understand the content presented today?
  - 1 - Not at all
  - 2 - A little
  - 3 - Somewhat
  - 4 - Mostly
  - 5 - Completely
2. Which topic did you find most helpful?
  - Topic A
  - Topic B
  - Topic C
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
3. What areas do you feel need further clarification?
  - Topic A
  - Topic B
  - Topic C
  - None
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. Any additional comments or suggestions for improvement?
  - \_\_\_\_\_

Collection Method:

- If using paper, have participants submit their responses anonymously in a collection box.
- If using digital tools, ensure participants know their responses will be anonymous.

Summative Evaluation for PD

Instructions: Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your responses will help us evaluate the success of the training and guide improvements for future sessions.

1. How would you rate the overall quality of the training?
  - Excellent

- Good
  - Average
  - Below Average
  - Poor
2. To what extent has this training improved your ability to engage with parents?
    - Greatly Improved
    - Somewhat Improved
    - Slightly Improved
    - Not Improved
  3. How effectively do you feel the training addressed strategies for improving communication with parents?
    - Very Effectively
    - Somewhat Effectively
    - Neutral
    - Somewhat Ineffectively
    - Very Ineffectively
  4. Do you feel better equipped to implement new strategies for enhancing parental involvement after this training?
    - Yes, very much
    - Yes, to some extent
    - No, not really
    - Not at all
  5. How relevant was the training content to your professional role?
    - Extremely Relevant
    - Somewhat Relevant
    - Neutral
    - Not Relevant
  6. Did the training provide you with actionable strategies that you can immediately apply in your work?
    - Yes
    - Somewhat
    - No
  7. What aspect of the training did you find most beneficial?  
○ \_\_\_\_\_
  8. What challenges do you foresee when implementing the strategies learned?  
○ \_\_\_\_\_
  9. How could this training be improved for future sessions?  
○ \_\_\_\_\_
  10. Additional comments or feedback:  
○ \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: PACER Interview Protocol/ Instrument

**Parent Focus Group Questions on Parent Involvement and Engagement with School.****Opening questions:**

1. What does your child like about school? What do you like about your child's school?
2. Explain the experiences you have had regarding feeling welcomed in your child's school.
3. If you are satisfied with how often and in what way school staff communicates with you about your child tell me what are they doing that is helpful?

If yes?

What would the school like to do differently?

4. What do you do to prepare your child to do well in school?
5. What do you consider to be the parent or family's role in a child's education?
6. How does the school ask you to be involved?
7. How does this work for your family?
8. What could the school do to help you be more involved?
9. Is there anything else you would like us to know about what is important to you as a family for your child's education?



## Appendix D: PACER Instrument Permission

**PACER Center**

To You

11/11/23



Hello Brie,

Thank you for your email showing interest to use the PACER material. Feel free to use these questions for your own use. Based on your other question, even though adjusting questions on the instrument might affect its reliability or validity, you are allowed to make changes take this into consideration.

Kind Regards,

PACER Center

