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Examining the Impact of Teacher Perceptions of Barriers of Parental Involvement

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Frankie Johnson

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2011

Abstract

Examining the Impact of Teacher Perceptions of Barriers to Parental Involvement

by

Frankie Vanzetta Johnson

MA, Texas Woman's University, 2007

BS, Texas Woman's University, 1978

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Walden University

December 2011

Abstract

One school in a Western United States was recently rated academically unacceptable by the state. That same school had an inactive Parent as Teachers organization, and teachers expressed concerns regarding low parental involvement. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Epstein's model of parental involvement was the theoretical framework for this study. The research questions focused on identifying perceived parental involvement barriers from the perspective of teachers and suggesting viable solutions to address these perceived barriers. This case study involved interviewing 8 elementary school teachers. Data analysis consisted of open, axial, and selective coding. The following themes emerged from the data:(a)Teacher perceptions of parents and barriers to parental involvement;(b)communication;(c)teacher expectations for parental involvement;(d) building effective relationships;and(e)solutions and resources to improve parental involvement. The participants in the study identified viable solutions in order to improve parental involvement and to engage families to provide opportunities for parents and teachers to build relationships. The implications for positive social change include the potential for increased student academic success.

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UMI Number: 3495168

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

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Dedication

First giving honor to God, who without his favor, this doctoral journey would not have been possible, I want to say I owe it all to you; thank you. For my family and friends who had to be put on hold on the back burner, it's done. To my colleagues who inquired and encouraged, I say thank you. In memory of my wonderful parents Frank and Tossie, thank you for life, for my talents, for always being there, and for being my parents; your memory lives on in my heart. RP you will always be the crumb snatcher who stole my heart.

Acknowledgments

In all things I give thanks to God, who was there all the time.

Dr. Godat, what can I say? Thank you does not seem adequate. You were the silent force guiding, keeping me focused, and sane on this doctoral journey. You were a great Committee Chairperson, it's like you were custom made just for me, and you were just what the doctor ordered!

Dr. Li-Chin Hung, my methodologist, who always understood, encouraged, and was very helpful.

Kelli Cronin, my colleague, it's because of you that I started this journey; you told me I could do what I did not know I could do.

Bobby, my rock, who would never let me give up, who listened to my venting, who dried my tears, and who supported me 100%.

Dr. Marion Mouton, my principal, mentor, and friend, who was my captain on this journey.

Jessica Johnson, affectionately known as JJ; never would have made it without you, our paths crossed and now they are intertwined forever.
AC you were the eyes and ears of this paper, I love you.

My sister Carla, I prayed and asked God for a sister like you, thank you.

To my many family and friends, who are too countless to name, but you know who you are, thanks for believing in me, inspiring me, encouraging me, and letting me do my "homework", I'm ready to join the fun now- it's done!

And finally to my grandbaby La Marion, "No, granny doesn't have any more homework!"

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Parental involvement can be a significant factor for improving the academic success of students. Various research studies, including those by Tan and Goldberg (2008), Epstein and Sanders (2006), and Shatkin and Gersberg (2007) have provided insight into the fact that when parents are visible in the schools, involved in the decision-making process, interact with teachers, and help with homework, the value of education transfers from the parent to the child and the overall result is academic success for the child. When parents have positive experiences with teachers, they become empowered and begin to develop relationships that improve parental involvement and increase student achievement (Long, 2007). In addition Reilly (2008) cited that the major reason parental involvement increases student achievement is because parents model positive views of school participation. The time that parents spend with their children in helping with homework and participating at school enhances student performance. Students assume personal responsibility for their education when their parents are involved (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005).

According to Epstein and Sanders (2006), there are five beneficial points that parents should know about parental involvement: parental involvement makes a difference for students, parents do not have to come to school to be involved, informed parents are a school's best customers, everyone working together creates better schools, and the main focus is the children. Parental involvement is more than just visiting the school; it includes parents working with the school, the school working with the parents, and community involvement. However many barriers can influence or prevent parental

involvement from being effective within the school and the home especially teacher perceptions about parents themselves. Lawson (2003) reported that teachers believed that some parents fail to recognize the importance of their involvement in their child's education.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Additionally factors that teachers perceived that hinder parental involvement at ABC Elementary School were also reviewed. Finally strategies that could be used to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement were also explored.

Parents are their children's first teachers; the home has as much influence on learning and behavior as the school. Parents can be helpful not only as teachers at home but also as supporters at school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). For example parents show their support and involvement by attending parent and teacher conferences, having regular contact with the teacher, asking their child about school, asking to see their child's work, and so on (Padgett, 2006). This parental involvement can have a significant outcome on student achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). There is a noticeable need for parental involvement throughout the developmental years during the educational experiences of children. Societies in general and educational researchers in particular have been interested in the positive consequences that parental involvement may have on student achievement (Dessoff, 2009). According to the literature review detailed in section 2 parental involvement enhances children's learning experiences, and increases academic achievement (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Throughout the

educational process some form of parent and teacher collaboration for school age children has been present; however the need to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement is greater than ever as standardized test scores have decreased (Bancroft, 2010), education budgets are being cut (Bartel, 2010), and teachers are faced with larger class sizes (Walsh, 2010).

In an effort to help teachers and schools combat the issues that they are facing the government implemented the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2002). NCLB and other recent legislative reform movements in education have caused the relationship between parents and the school to be affected (Reilly, 2008).Specifically NCLB reflected a viewpoint on involving parents in the education of their children as it outlined requirements for schools, districts, and states to create partnerships between the school and the parents.

According to NCLB, schools are now required to provide opportunities for parental involvement, including parent and teacher conferences, helping parents work with their children, and offering parents' opportunities in the planning and design of school programs. As a result, parental involvement can have a significant impact on the academic achievement of children, which encompasses the home, the school, and the community. Since its passage in 2002 educators have observed the rise and subsequent decline of parental involvement in education (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Therefore educators at ABC Elementary School, which was the focus of the current study, have been working with parents to set new expectations and build relationships that could result in improved parental involvement programs and increased student achievement.

Problem Statement

In a public elementary school, called ABC Elementary School for the purpose of this study, located in the Western section of the United States, there was a lack of parental involvement with the educational experiences during a child's early developmental years. The school community in this study had experienced some of the following critical issues that include low test scores, cultural diversity, at-risk populations, and an inactive Parent as Teachers Association (PTA). Additionally the Texas Education Agency (TEA) rated the 2009-2010 calendar school year of ABC Elementary School as academically unacceptable in terms of reported low student test scores.

The degree to which a lack of parental involvement had on the unacceptable rating given by TEA is unknown. In addition to teacher's perceptions of parents contributing to the lack of parental involvement, the lack of relationship building between parents and teachers is also an area of concern (Bakker, Denessen, & Brus-Laeven, 2007). Teacher perceptions of parents are crucial elements. Perceptions can affect fragmented relationships: these fragmented relationships can impact parental involvement and student achievement. The results from this case study could contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address teacher perceptions of parents as actual barriers themselves for parental involvement in low income schools in order to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

In addition to teachers' perceptions of parents' recent changes within the family structure, economic instability, and improved technologies are factors that affect families

and schools (Capse, Lopez, & Wolos, 2007). These factors can serve as positive and negative implications to parental involvement. Levels of parental involvement are lower in low-income schools than in high-income schools (Smith-Graves, 2006). When an individual is not educated, society becomes burdened as it is faced with an increased high school dropout rate, parents with low educational competency to help their children, and a decrease in the amount of students prepared to enter the work force. In order to promote positive social change, students must be prepared to address academic competencies that transition to advanced education and as a result increase the work force.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative case study investigated the perceptions of teachers in one urban, public school. The participants were drawn from the entire teaching population and interviewed and observed over the 2010-2011 school year. Data was analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Merriam, 2009) and the findings were collected from a focus group interview, face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data. More detail related to the methodology is presented in section 3.

Research Questions

The literature reviewed indicated that parental involvement is significant in the early developmental years of children. Developing relationships between parents and teachers strengthens the parental involvement program. The following qualitative case study used a purposeful sample of eight teacher participants from ABC Elementary School, to answer the following questions:

1. According to teachers, what are the barriers to parental involvement?

2. According to teachers, what are the viable solutions to these perceived barriers to parental involvement?

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. The goal of an effective parental involvement program is to strengthen the lines of communication between the school and home and to build relationships among the parents and teachers (Reilly, 2008). Active parental involvement in school leads to families that are involved in increasing student achievement (Dessoff, 2009). Identifying teacher perceptions of parents as barriers to parental involvement could lead to planning and implementing viable solutions that could significantly improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Constructivism, a learning or meaning-making theory contains learning activities distinguished by active engagement, inquiry, problem solving, and collaboration with others (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction containing collaboration promotes cognitive development. The adult interaction with the child does not only include the teacher, but adults in the community as well.

The role of social interaction, which includes parents and communities collaboratively working together to help children to be successful, is one component of the constructivism theory. Vygotsky's (1978) theory, although incomplete due to his death at the early age of 38, acknowledged that community played a vital role in the process of making meaning of a child's educational process. A child can experience a

vast amount of learning through a skillful tutor, and the tutor is not limited to a teacher in the school setting (Vygotsky, 1978). The results of this research could identify strategies to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

Epstein (1995) developed a parental involvement framework that identified six types of parental involvement, which described practices and activities that foster parental involvement for parents, students, teachers, and the school community in order to implement and develop effective school community partnerships. The six typologies are: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration. Specifically, the parenting framework provides parents with rearing skills to create home conditions to support their children; the communication framework serves to establish an effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication system; the volunteering framework serves to improve and increase parental recruitment, and provide training for family involvement to support children; the learning at home framework provides activities to involve families with their children in the home setting with other curriculum-related activities; the decision-making framework serves to include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy; and the collaboration framework includes the community and coordinates community resources and services for the family.

Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of influence is composed of three elements, school, family, and community, with the student as the central focus; the student serves as the major catalyst that keeps the connection intact. Teachers communicate with students, who in turn relay the information to parents, and

consequently, the family contributes to the community. This theoretical framework creates the social organizations of family-like schools, community-minded families, and community-in-school components that researchers use as the parental involvement framework (Epstein, 1995).

According to Epstein et al. (2003) each of the above components included the family, the school, and the community, educating and empowering all stakeholders, and ultimately benefitting the child. Everyone benefits when school and family involvement occurs within the educational settings (Borba, 2009). The guiding theoretical framework for this research study included the primary source of Epstein's (1995) typology of parental involvement that has been used by many researchers in studies on parental involvement. Further elaboration and discussion of Epstein's (1995) conceptual framework that was the basis of this study is located in Section 2.

Definition of Terms

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): a report that combines a wide range of test and demographical information based on the performance of students in school districts in the state of Texas (TEA, 2009).

At- risk: "a student at risk of dropping out of school" which includes each student who is under 21 years of age (TE Code (TEC) § 29.081. (d), 2011).

Barriers to parental involvement: the reasons that prevent parents from being involved in their child's education. The apparent implication is that barriers hinder parental involvement in negative ways and prevent parents from being involved (Smith-Graves 2006).

Community: the neighborhood where the students' school and home are located; areas that influence student learning and development (Brown & Beckett, 2007a).

Diversity: the fundamental quality of someone or something essentially being composed of many different elements (Conteh & Kawashima, 2008).

Homework: tasks are assigned to students by school teachers and are meant to be carried out during non-school hours (Cooper, 2007).

Parent Teacher Association (PTA): an organization comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators that provides a powerful voice for all children, that serves as a relevant resource for all families, and advocates for the educational rights and wellbeing of every child (Cheung, 2008).

Parent: any adult who plays an important role in a child's upbringing and wellbeing (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Parental involvement: the "participation of parents in regular two-way, meaningful communication that involves student academic learning and other school activities" (NCLB, 2001, para. 32).

Perceptions: the negative or positive attitude of parents or teachers that influence the scope, level, and nature of parental involvement in a child's educational experiences (Lawson, 2003).

Volunteering: the supporting of school goals and educational development in any manner, place or time, not just during the school day and at the school building at no charge (Epstein, 1995).

Assumptions

Assumptions for this case study included the expectations that teacher participants would respond with honest, in-depth answers. The assumption was also made that the teacher participants would candidly respond to the interview questions based on their personal and first-hand experiences of the research. In addition, as the participants were certified teachers, it was assumed that the findings could be generalized to the entire ABC Elementary School certified teacher population, and would not include administrators, school auxiliary support personnel, or teacher assistants. This lack of parental involvement problem impacts students because teacher perceptions of parents can actually hinder parental involvement within the school, the home, and the community, and ultimately hinder the student's overall education. For this reason, it was assumed that certified teachers who did not participate in the study, had similar expectations for parental involvement as those who did participate.

Finally, the assumptions existed that the onetime focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data would be the basic data collection strategies for this qualitative study (Hatch, 2002). I modified the questions to match the knowledge and interest of the interviewees in order to prevent imposing questions that I believed were important and to avoid substituting an ill-formed view of the research topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Limitations

Because the teacher participants consisted of certified teachers at ABC Elementary School, this case study will acknowledge the following limitations:

participants in this case study and the data collection results were not representative of other elementary schools in other public school districts and the results cannot be generalized to smaller or larger populations. The results from this case study only reflected the perceptions and beliefs of the elementary certified teacher population from ABC Elementary School.

In addition, the responses given by the teacher participants may have been influenced in some way. For example, the participants may have been hesitant to honestly answer questions because of the small school community and their apprehensions of research confidentiality. Further, teachers may not have been completely open and wanted to personally admit their lack of support to engage parents or their expectations of the parents.

Scope

The scope of this case study included all certified teachers in one specific school, ABC Elementary School, in the Western United States. One challenge researchers encounter when beginning research is determining who will participate and the number of participants. Because the teacher participants taught in this school community they were able to provide adequate, accurate, and first-hand information to answer the research questions.

Delimitations

Administrators, auxiliary support personnel and teacher assistants were not included as participants in the study. ABC Elementary School served students from prekindergarten to grade 5; therefore teachers in grades higher than grade 5 were not

included. Additionally, including male teachers from other cultures was not feasible as all male teachers in the particular school were African American.

Significance

The data from this case study identified what teachers perceived as barriers of parental involvement. The case study was significant because the data collected from this research could be applied to address the problem of the lack of parental involvement that ABC Elementary School faced, as well as allowing the participants an opportunity to identify and implement strategies for parents, teachers, and administrative staff to build relationships that form partnerships to improve parental involvement. The viable solutions identified from this study can also be beneficial in helping other schools with poor parental involvement to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

There is a need for parents and teachers to establish partnerships that are positive and lead to an increase in parental involvement and student achievement (Knopf & Swick, 2007). The greatest need for parental involvement is the impact on student achievement. According to researchers, parental involvement is an isolated topic that is multifaceted and broad in scope; however, studies have reported that teacher perceptions of parents affect parental involvement and student achievement (Knopf & Swick, 2007; Roper, 2008; Zarate, 2007). Teacher perceptions of parents can be central elements in determining how parents and teachers interrelate with each other, converse with each other, and their expectations of each other.

One major factor identified in teacher perceptions of parents is the lack of communication (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Establishing open lines of communication facilitate creating relationships between parents and teachers that lead to an effective parental involvement program. Positive relationships between parents and teachers form positive perceptions that significantly increase student achievement (Roper, 2008). This study is important because it addressed the significance of teacher perceptions of parents as barriers, which affect parental involvement and student achievement.

Implications

The implications for positive social change occur when parental involvement policies and practices are applied, resulting in student success. As noted, parental involvement in children's education at school and at home during a child's early developmental years is important. When parents develop a relationship with teachers, this contributes to the parent investment of a successful outcome in their child's education and increases the student's academic achievement (Bakker et al., 2007).

When the school takes an interest in the families and the community, it enables the teachers and parents to have firsthand knowledge of family backgrounds represented within the school community, and families feel respected and valued. This relationship forms a collaborative partnership for the school and the community. As stated in this chapter, researchers concluded that when parents are visible in the schools, interact with teachers, and help with homework, the value of education transfers from the parent to the child and the overall result is academic success (Duncan, 2007; Knopf & Swick, 2007; Spera, 2006). Lack of education leads to burdens on society, affects families, and

negatively affects the economic work force (Smith-Graves, 2006). In order to promote

positive social change, students must be prepared to address academic competencies that

transition to advanced education, and as a result, increase the work force (Price-Mitchell,

2009). The result of an effective parental involvement program could increase student

achievement, decrease student dropout rates, and prepare students to become productive

citizens, in order to positively impact society (Carpenter & Ramirez, 2007).

Transition Statement

The purpose of this case study was to examine teacher perceptions of barriers that

impact parental involvement. The theory that drove this case study research and served as

the theoretical framework was Epstein's (1995) theory of overlapping spheres of

influence and typologies of parental involvement. Epstein's (1995) typologies are:

parenting; communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and

collaboration. The typologies included the social organizations of family-like schools,

community-minded families, and community-in-school components that serve to develop

relationships between the parents and the school to improve parental involvement and

increase student achievement (Epstein, 1995).

The first section of this case study included: an introduction to the problem,

problem statement, nature of the study, purpose of the study, conceptual framework,

operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, significance of the

study, and a transition statement. Section 2 is the review of related research and literature

related to the problem statement, summaries of literature that define aspects of the theory,

and literature related to the methods. The content of Section 3 includes: an introduction

of the research design derived from the problem statement, research questions, measures

for ethical protection, the role of the researcher, criteria for participant selection, and data

collection procedures. Section 4 reports the findings to the research questions, the system

used to keep track of the data, patterns, relationships and themes supported by the data,

and a discussion on the evidence of quality. Section 5 concludes with: a brief overview of

the study, summary of the findings, interpretation of findings, implications for social

change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, a reflection on

the researcher's experience, and a concluding statement. The final sections contain

references and appendices.

Section 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to examine teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and to identify viable solutions for these perceived barriers. The present study addressed the lack of parental involvement problem at an elementary school. The source of this case study incorporated the theoretical framework of Epstein's (1995) model of parent involvement. This case study was conducted at a public elementary school, ABC Elementary located in the Western United States. The research design for this qualitative research was a case study approach that used data collected from a onetime focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data. The case study approach was used because the participants were directly involved with the parents and were able to respond based on first hand experiences.

In reviewing the literature for the research topic, the following terms were used: *parental involvement; perceptions; barriers; cultural diversity; case study approach; focus group; qualitative and quantitative research designs; implications of parental involvement in transitioning from elementary school, to middle school, to high school; at risk; immigrant;* and *low-income students*.

The strategy used for reviewing the literature for Section 2 consisted of defining the term parental involvement, discussing the significance of parental involvement, and identifying the foundational framework for the study. Section 2 includes a review of literature that discussed perceptions and barriers to parental involvement, addressed cultural diversity, the impact of parental involvement in transitioning from elementary

school, to middle school to high school, and viable solutions to improve parental

involvement. Walden materials; peer-reviewed journals; additional textbook purchases;

the local city public Library; journal articles; and dissertations assessed through the

Walden Library, Pro Quest, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and

EBSCO Host databases were used to locate information for the research topic.

<div align="center">**Parental Involvement**</div>

The following sections are complied of various studies that comprise the literature

review involving the following topics concerning parental involvement: defining parental

involvement; the significance of parental involvement; teacher perceptions of parental

involvement; barriers to parental involvement; cultural diversity; and the impact of

parental involvement in transitioning from elementary school, to middle school, and to

high school. This section also includes review of literature on viable solutions for

increasing parental involvement and differing points of views on parental involvement.

Defining Parental Involvement

Despite numerous research studies on parental involvement researchers, have yet

to agree on a common definition. The definition of parental involvement covers aspects

of involvement, partnerships, home-school relations, and parent engagement (Epstein &

Sanders, 2006). Parental involvement has been defined as, "Parents' interactions with

schools and with their children to promote academic success" (Hill et al., 2004, p.1491).

Another definition from Daniel-White (2002) defined parental involvement as the parents

as teacher paradigm, whereby the parents are assigned the role being their child's teacher

at home.

NCLB (2002) defined parental involvement as:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication

involving student academic learning and other school activities, including

ensuring –that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;

that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at

school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as

appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the

education of their child. (§9101 (32)

Despite the various definitions, the consensus of the overall meaning describes the

essence of parents and educators building relationships, collaborating, and working

toward the common goal of student achievement. The research reviewed for this study

included parental involvement that encompassed home, school, and community

involvement.

The apparent implications of variance regarding parental involvement differs

from parent to parent in relation to defining parental involvement and how parents are

involved (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Parents tend to view parental involvement as

community-based, while teachers perceive parental involvement as school-based, in

terms of how the process will affect students (Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Efreom,

2005). Parents realize they are able to become more involved with their child's education

when they are provided with opportunities to engage with community-based

involvement. Parental involvement can be more than just visiting the school or helping

with homework. Epstein and Sanders (2006) suggested that educators involve parents as

classroom volunteers, parent tutors at school, parent home instructors for homework, and chaperones on fieldtrips.

Significance of Parental Involvement

According to the literature, parental involvement enhances children's learning experiences, and academic achievement (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Fishel & Ramierz, 2005). The critical element of parental involvement is the parent's belief involving their role in their child's education and the expectations and responsibilities that create the parent and teacher relationship (Datar & Mason, 2008). The need to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement is greater than ever, because of the recent legislative amendments (NCLB, 2002). The purpose of this case study was to examine teacher perceptions as barriers to parental involvement and to identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement, in order to increase student achievement.

The legislative reform movements in education involve the relationship between parents, teachers, and the school. As a result, if the school has a low functioning parental involvement program and poor communication between parents and teachers, the overall result is a disconnection that causes a fragmented relationship, which impacts student achievement.

Parental involvement has a tri-fold effect. The tri-fold includes the student's enjoyment from spending time with his or her parents, the educator's belief that the parents are concerned about their child's education, and the parents' sense of making a difference in the academic life of their child (Flessa, 2008). This results in the stakeholders developing a relationship between the home and the school as a support

system that results in success for everyone (Flessa, 2008). Building relationships between

parents and teachers helps to promote effective parental involvement and increase student

achievement. This relationship helps to create a positive school environment, prevent

misunderstandings, establish empathetic parents and teachers, and provide ways to

address conflicts, and solve problems (Duncan, 2007). As suggested by Smith-Graves

(2006), Reilly (2008), and Epstein and Sanders (2006), parents involved in their child's

education establish a connection between home and school, which results in successful

student achievement. These students attend school regularly, show improved behavior,

adapt to school, and have better social skills (Dabrusky, 2007). When parents are visible

in the school, interact with the teachers, and help with homework; the value of education

transfers from the parent to the child, and the overall result is academic success (Hoover-

Dempsey et al., 2005).

Perceptions of Parental Involvement

The local demographic information for ABC Elementary School offers insight

into the many challenges faced by teachers of low-income and culturally diverse families.

Perceptions create barriers that are a challenge for educators (Lawson, 2003). The

literature indicates teachers tend to have negative perceptions about parents, related to the

lack of involvement, which impacts parental involvement. This case study examined

whether teacher perceptions impacted parental involvement. Other studies have targeted

parents' perceptions of educators and reported on how this influences parental

involvement. Quicho and Daoud (2006) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the

myths about parental involvement in Hispanic families. The researchers reported that

Hispanic parents felt that teachers perceived them as obstacles in their child's education,

teachers did not keep their promises to students in terms of rewards for turning in work,

and teachers were impatient with their children. The findings also revealed that the

parents did not think the teachers respected them, their children, or their culture (Quicho

& Daoud, 2006). Parental perceptions are revealed in parental practices and parental

involvement (Dabrusky (2007). Parents who perceive the school as supportive and open

to communication are more likely to engage in parental involvement and help their

children to achieve academic success (Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki, & Mindnich,

2008).

In one study, African American parents expressed the desire to be involved but

complained about the inconvenience of the meeting times at school (Roper, 2008). The

African American parents' skepticism was the result of their perceptions of teachers'

unfilled promises, negative experiences when dealing with teachers, and the teacher's

unrealistic expectations. Cooper's (2007) study highlighted the fact that African

American mothers possibly believed that teachers did not care about their child's

schooling, and; therefore, the teachers were reluctant to serve their children. Cooper

(2007) stated that African American mothers wanted educators to acknowledge them as

caring and nurturing parents and recognize their child's talents, abilities, and potentials.

In past references, teachers have labeled African American women as being irrational,

combative, and threatening (Johnson & Staples, 2005). Some educators perceived that

staff intimidated African American parents, or the parents possibly had poor school

experiences and were reluctant to work with teachers. Roper (2008) reported that African

American parents were perceived as uninterested or uncaring about their child's education and therefore did not get involved with the school. O'Bryan (2006) cited the need for teachers to identify and reevaluate the negative perceptions associated with African American women.

Roper's (2008) phenomenological study reported on parent perceptions and voiced their experiences with teachers at their children's urban charter school. Parent groups were labeled as entitled because the parent's actions of competition caused the focus to shift from the students to the parent issues. This situation negatively affected the overall school climate. On the other hand, the working parents voiced a disconnection to the school culture, primarily because they felt the school did not include them in many activities. As has been noted, positive relationships between parents and teachers form positive perceptions that significantly increase student achievement (Roper, 2008).

Often, teacher perceptions can hinder parental involvement within the school. A major factor identified in teacher perceptions of parents is the lack of communication (Knopf & Swick, 2007). In addition, when open lines of communication are established, the lines facilitate collaborative relationships between parents and teachers that lead to an effective parental involvement program (Dessoff, 2009). Bakker et al. (2007) reported that teacher perceptions of parents affected pupil achievement and parental involvement. Marschall's (2006) study reported lower parental involvement for minority, low-income parents, compared to that of White parents. This was primarily due to the difference of income and educational levels of the White parents. The researcher also stated that teacher perceptions were influenced by their limited familiarity with the parents and the

lack of efforts to communicate with parents. Theodorou (2008) cited that parents from a higher socioeconomic background demonstrated a behavior of entitlement in collaboration and participation, in that they felt their children deserved special treatment, they believed their children were more superior than the other students, and they expected the teacher to cater to them. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experienced difficulty in their efforts to participate because of preoccupations with work due to financial issues.

DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho's (2005) study highlighted one common notion among teachers of low-income parents, which was that the parents did not value education. When teachers have low expectations of parents, the less likely parents are to be involved (Zahn, 2006). In studying teacher perceptions, Lawson's (2003) study from teacher interviews reported that teacher perceptions were organized around three central themes: teachers' beliefs and attributions, teachers' lack of ownership and withdrawal in the school reform process, and parents' involvement as defined by teachers. Teachers often believed that some parents failed to recognize how important their involvement was in their child's education (Lawson, 2003).

Just as some studies reported teacher's negative perceptions about African American parents, there are also studies that revealed negative perceptions toward Hispanic American parents. Quicho and Daoud (2006) collected data from interviews and observations with teachers in two low performing schools in California with high Hispanic American student enrollment. Their findings revealed that teachers perceived Hispanic American parents as unrealistic, unwilling to volunteer, and unsupportive of the

school's homework policy. Teachers referred to Hispanic American parents as unskilled and unprofessional. Language was also a major barrier that prevented effective communication for parents and teachers. Quicho and Daoud's (2006) study and the present study both suggest the possibility that teacher perceptions may result in the lack of relationship building efforts and stereotyping cultural misunderstandings.

Regner, Loose, and Dumas (2009) sought to examine the influence of student perceptions of parent and teacher involvement on student achievement. French, junior high school students were administered questionnaires to access their perceptions of parental and teacher academic involvement and how it influenced their achievement goals. The findings indicated that the students did not believe the monitoring from their teachers influenced their academic achievement. However, the students felt that parent involvement was directly related to their mastery goals, but was not related to their performance goals. Accordingly, students upheld different perceptions of parental and teacher involvement in relation to reaching their academic goals, which emphasized the importance of providing parental and teacher academic socialization support (Regner et al., 2009).

Msengi's (2007) study relates to the present study because it explored the topic of perceptions of African American adult family members, their children, and teachers. The purpose of this mixed method study was to determine whether the teachers and the participants shared an understanding of family beliefs concerning the importance of family intervention in reading. Msengi's (2007) study described the various perceptions of African American adults and teachers concerning ways to increase student reading

scores. The study compared the students' reading levels, family reading practices, perceived barriers, and family decisions focused on reading practices at home. Interestingly, the results showed patterns of agreements and disagreements among the teachers and parents based on cultural issues, lack of communication, and differing expectations. The perceptions revealed that African American adults and students felt the reading scores were on level whereas teachers believed the reading scores were below level. Msengi (2007) believed the results were attributed to poor communication and a lack of shared understanding of the expectations.

In reviewing literature that addressed challenges involved in parental involvement, Ravet's (2007) case study described various ways in which parents, students, and teachers handled behaviors that interfered with learning in the primary classroom. The researcher focused on identifying factors that caused classroom disengagement, how student and parent perceptions impacted this disengagement, and how classroom disengagement affected student success. The aim of the study was to examine how students perceived their disengagement in relation to how parents and teachers perceived them. According to the data results, three common themes emerged; perceptions of surface behavior, the perception of student feeling state, and explaining student behaviors. The surface behaviors were not directly witnessed by parents, but were based on reports from the teachers and parents' general understanding of the students.

Perceptions of student feeling state were defined as the student, teacher, and, parents' emotional dimension of pupil disengagement. Based on student, teacher and parent perceptions, surface behaviors were identified as detailed actions of disconnection.

Student behaviors were based on student experiences and personal influences. The results indicated that teachers attributed family background as a key explanation for the student feeling state toward the teachers. Finally, parents expressed two other major causes of disengagement: student relationships with their peers and poor teacher relations with students. Overall, the researcher stated that parents, teachers, and students shared a general lack of understanding in regard to perceptions of disengagement in the primary classroom.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Many barriers can influence parental involvement in the school and the home. Identifying barriers of parental involvement enabled me to strategically plan and efficiently implement programs to involve the ABC Elementary School community. Several researchers (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009) investigated this notion and identified four common barriers to parental involvement (a) parents lack of time to be more involved, (b) parents not knowing what to do or how to help their child, (c) parents not understanding the importance of partnering with the school, and (d) the language barrier. Other research on barriers included the qualitative study of Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008), which identified barriers for Hispanic parents as language and the inadequate efforts of the school to provide parents with school information. In addressing barriers to parental involvement, Swick (2009) discussed the negative stereotypes in dealing with homeless parents of young children. This article included strategies for educators to support, empower, and enable homeless parents to develop positive and nurturing parenting skills.

Harris and Goodall (2008) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the relationship between parents and teachers, barriers to parental involvement, and student achievement. The researchers pointed out the fact that there is a major difference between involving parents in school and engaging parents in learning. Harris and Goodall (2008) identified the following barriers: work commitment, lack of time, child care difficulties, demands on the parent's time, and work restrictions. The results reported that many social and economic factors create barriers that prevent parents from participating. Harris and Goodall's study supports the present study's research on how perceived barriers can influence parental involvement.

Kim's (2009) literature review is grounded in Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital and reproduction, which is defined as society's class structures being reproduced through the educational systems. The research was limited to quantitative and qualitative studies on parental involvement in public school systems. Kim's literature reviews identified several barriers of parent involvement for immigrant parents; lack of time, lack of money, inadequate transportation, low interest, and lack of knowledge on how to support the school. Like the present study, the results of Kim's study suggested that identifying barriers can help to develop viable solutions to possibly improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

In addition, Theodorou's (2008) ethnographic study described the following barriers that Greek parents encountered when attempting to become involved in their child's education. Teachers perceived that Greek parents had inadequate educational backgrounds, poor aspirations, and did not want to be involved in their child's education.

Because of these perceived barriers, teachers often ignored immigrant parents by excluding them from activities, decision-making opportunities, and avoided communicating with them. Teachers attributed the student's lack of academic achievement to these perceptions of the parents. In addition, the study of Smith et al. (2008) identified barriers of Hispanic parents in parental involvement. The participants were 15 Hispanic American parents with minimum or limited English comprehension. The purpose of the study was to identify major barriers for greater Hispanic American parental involvement. Results for this qualitative study listed inhibitions as language, which encompassed poor communication between teachers and parents, parents not being informed of school operations and policies, and parents' reluctance to question authority or advocate for their children. Often parents would use their children as translators and some teachers were hesitant to conference with parents.

Hispanic American parents expressed a responsibility to prepare their children to learn by teaching them respect, helping with homework, and ensuring their children attended school and behaved (Smith et al., 2008). The participants felt the teachers were the authorities of knowledge and power. Smith et al.'s study supports the present study's research on how barriers prevent parental involvement and perceptions form these barriers, which influence student achievement. The participants expressed similar statements in regards to the parent's lack of involvement due to language barriers, and inadequate educational backgrounds that prevented them from helping their children.

Among these challenges, researchers have studied the impact of barriers for parental involvement, and ways to recognize culturally diverse issues and engage families

(Conteh & Kawashima, 2008; Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Smith et al., 2008). Many barriers can influence and prevent parents from becoming involved with their child's education. Identifying these common barriers equips educators with tools to plan interventions to improve parental involvement programs, and help students to be successful.

Cultural Diversity

Currently, school populations are more diverse than ever (Joshi et al., 2005). Differences in perceptions about how parents from diverse populations become involved in their child's education, suggests that cultural diversity is essential for understanding parental involvement. Denessen, Bakker, and Gierveld (2007) case study with principals from multiethnic schools in the Netherlands explored school practices and policies in reference to parental involvement. The interviews examined two major topics: the school experiences of ethnic- minority parents, and the school perspectives and policies regarding ethnic- minority parental involvement. Results from the case study indicated that although principals emphasized the importance of parental involvement, it remained a low priority in the schools. The participants expressed frustrations in getting ethnic-minority parents involved. The schools did not have defined goals for ethnic-minority parental involvement, but felt communication between school and parents was important. One major difficulty in dealing with ethnic-minority parental involvement revealed the fact that staff lacked proper and sufficient skills to deal with parents from minority cultures (Denessen et al., 2007).

Generally low-income students are classified as being at-risk of not achieving. Smith-Graves (2006) examined parental involvement of low-income families. The research setting was an old elementary school that the district demolished and replaced with a new building. During the construction phase of the new school an advisory group was created to provide school and community support. The advisory group recognized the many challenges the families in the community faced. Some of the challenges the families were confronted with were low income subsidized housing and the school reported 99% of students received free lunch. One of the major contributions from the advisory group was a cooperative facility that served the local families in the school community with resources that enabled parents to become in engaged in their child's education.

Class backgrounds, race, and economic status can be factors that affect parent involvement (Jetter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). Although the general statement is that parental involvement is an effective way to increase student achievement, there are some cautions against it. Cultural diversity creates barriers that impact parental involvement and the school community, and it can present many challenges for all involved. An effective parental involvement program embraces and supports the diverse population of the school community. Oftentimes, educators encounter diverse cultural issues in terms of how parents define parental involvement. Some cultures may view parental involvement as the teacher's responsibility and some may view it as a shared role with the teacher. Parents need to be informed on specific roles of parental

involvement, which can lead to developing relationships to ensure student success (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007).

Low-income and at- risk students often experience an academic disadvantage when there is low parental involvement in the school and the home (Brown & Beckett, 2007b). Schools that involve diverse cultures share experiences and network with other schools and the community, which helps increase the involvement of diverse parent groups (Denessen et al., 2007). Effective parental involvement programs embrace and support the diverse population of the school community. As suggested by Cooper and Crosnoe (2007), economically disadvantaged parent input is essential in the academic success for their children. Like the present study, the results from the following studies imply that teachers must be made aware of their attitudes towards parents of ethnic-minority and low-income groups, and how their attitudes can affect parental involvement. In many cases ethnicity factors can help to identify and evaluate areas of need in order to positively influence parental involvement.

DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho's (2005) quantitative study focused on the secondary pre-service and in-service teacher participants' views of parental involvement within a diverse school population. The survey was theoretically based on the work of researchers Banks (1997), Bennet (1999), and Nieto (2000) that focused on multicultural issues. The survey included 17 demographic questions and 20 multicultural curricular, cultural pluralism, and social structural equity items. DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho found that the majority of the participants indicated their attitudes towards working with diverse schools were positively influenced after taking cultural awareness courses. The

participants from this study expressed an increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation of other cultures. DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho supported the importance in examining the topics of perceptions and barriers to parental involvement. Despite the findings of the DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho study, the researchers reported that some of the participants continued to believe that parents were responsible for the lack of value placed on their child's education which resulted in low student achievement.

Fields-Smith (2005) conducted a historical study on the education of African Americans before and after the landmark case of Brown's 1954 study. Fields-Smith concluded that schools have a responsibility to communicate with parents and build home and school relationships in order to acknowledge and respect cultural differences. Building a school culture forms relationships, maintains collaboration among stakeholders, and recognizes diversity, which are all key factors that affect the school leaders and the entire school community. Parental input is important in designing and implementing programs that include activities for low-income families. A viable solution for an effective parental involvement program is for schools with diverse cultures to network with other schools by sharing their cultural experiences in order to increase the involvement of diverse parent groups (Denessen et al., 2007).

Impact of Parental Involvement in Transitioning

Although most of the literature has focused on parental involvement on the elementary level with the primary grades, parental involvement is usually noticed to decrease as student's transition from elementary school, to middle school, to high school. Despite the fact that parental involvement generally decreases as student's age, it is still

positively associated with achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Active parental

involvement during the elementary years allows for a smoother transition for students

when they enter middle school and high school (Caspe et al., 2007). Generally parents

believe they cannot help their children with academics because of challenging subject

content and the fact that students rotate to several classes (Crosnoe, 2009). For example,

Caspe et al. (2007) examined the family involvement link to student academic success.

Their results reported that elementary students whose families were involved reported

smoother transitions to middle school and high school and resulted in academic success.

Students with high rates of parental involvement expressed positive associations with

education, family support, and achieved personal goals. Establishing parent school

partnerships creates learning communities based on parent and teacher competencies and

knowledge that generates new knowledge and innovations for students. These parent

school partnerships enable students to be successful, for parents to build relationships,

and for parent involvement to support the students (Mitchell-Price, 2009). In addition,

Cripps and Zyromski (2009) provided insights into various research articles related to

adolescents and parental involvement in middle school. Mitchell-Price (2009) and Cripps

and Zyromski (2009) research suggested that perceived parental involvement was critical

for the psychological wellbeing of adolescents. Cripps and Zyromski also suggested

implementing parent education in-service for parents of middle school students to

develop personal and social skills to improve student academic success.

Along with reviewing the impact of parental involvement in transitioning from

middle school to high school, Chen and Gregory's (2009) quantitative study sought to

determine the results of low achieving student parental involvement. The survey addressed the following factors: high grade point averages, advanced academic involvement, and teacher relationships. Parental involvement generally declines by the time a student leaves the elementary level and enters high school, and several positive factors are considered in regards to parental involvement. Some of the factors may involve students taking advanced classes, parents' inability to help their children with school work, and poor communication between parents, teachers, and students. Additionally, students whose parents are involved perform better, complete homework assignments, have better attendance, and the home and school relationships promote mutual systems. These students positively relate to connecting school to home learning (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009).

Viable Solutions for Increasing Parental Involvement

The following review of literature provides an integrated and critical essay on the most relevant and current published knowledge on viable solutions for parental involvement. Two major themes addressed are the recent legislative mandates in education, and the importance of creating school community partnerships. Most recently, under the guidelines of NCLB (2002), schools and school districts that receive Title1 funding were required to create and implement parent involvement policies and activities that encourage parental involvement. Along with the increase in policies relating to parental involvement in schools, there has been an increase in parental involvement research. Reynolds (2009) cited that the extent to which parents are actually engaged under the NCLB, mandate remains unclear. Generally this research paints a positive

picture of parents being involved. Parent involvement is positively related to children

learning, and correlated with student attitudes and social behavior (Harris & Goodall,

2008; Theodorou, 2008). Parental involvement can have a significant effect on student

success.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) have studied the importance of parental involvement

in creating home-school partnerships, improving student academic achievement,

developing school governance, and establishing teacher-parent collaborations. The

following elements are important for an effective parental involvement program. The

program must create channels of communication, provide an inviting school climate,

establish efforts to create and build relationships, and promote opportunities to share

teacher expectations. Districts need to provide diversity training to educate and

familiarize staff with the changing demographics in school communities. Teachers and

parents must work together to build relationships that support student achievement.

Although, it may be important to address ethnicity factors to improve parental

involvement, there is also a need for schools to identify and implement strategies to

connect home and school. The following literature review investigates the impact of

building home-school connections through homework practices. The purpose of Conteh

and Kawashima's (2008) qualitative study examined how parents created their identity in

relation to their child's school experiences and supported learning out of school. The

authors suggested that educators support various and diverse ways that students from

multiple cultures learn at home. As noted, parental involvement programs are effective

when parents work directly with their children at home with materials and instructions provided by teachers.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) conducted a study to explore the preparation for teachers and administrators to establish family, school, and community partnerships. The study was based on a sample of 161 schools in the United States and examined the courses and content offered to educators as well as the school leader projections for the future of the student body. The survey results of this study revealed that leaders must become active change agents and build teams within their school to guide educators to helping families and communities to plan and implement effective parental involvement programs. Some educational leaders cited instructional leadership as the main factor that ensured student success, but most leaders are faced with the overload of managerial demands (Brown & Beckett, 2007a). One important strategy that educators can implement to promote parental involvement is to familiarize themselves with the families of the school community they serve and to value the families that are represented. Effective parental involvement contributions include building relationships and establishing communicative skills that are derived from helpful resources that increase student achievement (Cheung, 2008).

Nettles and Herrington (2007) discussed the effects of school leadership on student achievement and reported that the casual relationship between principal behaviors and student achievement remains unclear. In addition, for parents and teachers building relationships, leaders can build a culture that develops and supports professional learning communities of practice that promotes parental involvement. Marshall and Olivia (2006)

wrote that educational leaders are the primary people responsible for delivering and practicing social justice and equity for all students, but the responsibility does not fall solely with educational leaders. Nevertheless, they should be the visionary forerunners to implement plans that ensure that all students are valued and successful. Successful leaders influence successful students.

In addition, effective leaders establish networks and resources that enhance communication, teamwork, and collaboration skills (Richardson, 2009). These skills are important in developing relationships with parents to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement. A parental involvement program that orients and trains parents will help to maximize and improve the effectiveness of the program, leading to student achievement. Although it may be that parental involvement's key purpose is student achievement, it should promote the types of parental involvement that will be most effective for increasing student success, rather than for general involvement (Schwartz, 2010). However, for a leader to develop a community of practice that promotes parent involvement and increase student achievement, the leader must examine the manner in which parents and teachers interact with one another. Parent and teacher perceptions are crucial elements that can affect their fragmented relationship and parental involvement within the school and home. When parents work with educators to set expectations for their children and build relationships the result is student success (Joshi et al., 2005). Parental involvement in the decision-making process is a way for parents to have a voice in their child's educational experiences and to exercise leadership.

According to Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) educators need to plan activities to encourage parental participation to ensure that their contributions are productive to student success. In order to counter balance parental involvement and parent contributions, educators need to implement a contract with parents that describe what parents can expect from the school and what the school can expect from the parents. This contract can serve to avoid situations where parents who are perceived as entitled and overly involved create problems in the school. This problem takes the focus away from the student and causes parental involvement to become parent focused. Denessen et al. (2007) reported that parents want teachers to communicate their child's expectations with them in order to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement. Educators must establish a positive school environment that foster ongoing communication, opportunities to volunteer, and effective parent committees that lead to improving parental involvement and increasing student achievement.

Uludag (2008) conducted a mixed method study with preservice teachers enrolled in elementary education classes. Preservice teachers are defined as college undergraduates. The purpose of the study was to examine preservice teacher's opinions of parental involvement of elementary school children. The research questions dealt with several issues. First, Uludag addressed the opinions of preservice teachers about parental involvement in elementary schools, and examined the significant differences of preservice teacher opinions of parental involvement at various points in their elementary education program. Next, the questions evaluated the adequate utilization of parental involvement strategies, and identified specific elementary courses that addressed parental

involvement. Finally, the participants were asked to describe preservice teacher parental involvement experiences that were useful during their education courses. The overall results of the study suggested a need for elementary education courses to provide essential knowledge, skills, and practices to equip preservice teachers in order to effectively develop and improve parental involvement practices. Family values are important and vary from culture to culture. An important element of preservice teacher training would provide training on helping teachers to understand family values and traditions in order to improve parental involvement at school and home.

Joshi et al. (2005) focused on helping teachers understand family values, beliefs, and practices in order to create a productive learning environment. Some research questions focused on the teacher's definition of parental involvement, culture, and classroom practice teachers used in working with families from different cultures. The research questions also focused on describing the extent of teacher awareness of cultural beliefs and identifying important influences on student education. The findings of the study revealed that teachers perceived the following barriers affected parental involvement: other time commitments, parents struggling to provide basic needs, difficulty in comprehending the language, the educational constraints of the parents, and the parent's lack of knowledge of the school culture. The results from Joshi et al.'s case study support the present study's research on how teacher perceptions of barriers impact parental involvement because of similar barriers identified in this study. The findings of Joshi et al. helped to pinpoint a viable solution that required districts to provide culturally sensitive diversity training for staff development in order to build relationships and

improve parental involvement of specific ethnic groups represented by the families in the school community.

The following research includes contrasts of differing points of view on parental involvement. Several researchers have provided results from studies that concluded that parental involvement is significant in improving student achievement; however, other researchers disagree with these findings. According to Taub (2008), the lack of parental involvement is not detrimental to student success. The researcher stated the best formula for prompting student's success was to define a balance between challenge, support, and model parent support without over supporting the child. Oyserman, Brickman, and Rhodes's (2007) 2-year follow-up randomized clinical trial study reported that low parent school involvement negatively influenced student achievement. The study results from Pnevmatikos, Papakanakis, and Gaki (2008) indicated that Greek parents believed their child's school performances improved because the parents actively collaborated with the teachers. However, the Greek parents believed their involvement with homework support proved less effective in relation to their child's academic success. In contrast Epstein (2003) stated that homework establishes the developmental foundation in creating home-school partnerships. Tam and Chan (2009) stated that homework is often regarded as a necessary and important component of building home-school relationships within the Chinese culture.

Richardson's (2009) study examined the principal's perceptions of parental involvement and the parent's role in the school process. The purpose of the quantitative study was to examine several principal perceptions of parental involvement at various

levels including elementary school, middle school, and high school in terms of the

principal's role and the role of parental involvement in the school process. The researcher

evaluated three components of school characteristics (a) the role of the school, (b) the

role of the principal, and (c) the impact of parental involvement. The results from the data

reported that principals were not receptive of parental roles in the school processes of

hiring teachers, evaluating teachers, and involving parents with the decision-making of

school finance and policy governance. Although principals wanted parents to be involved

in their child's education, they did not want parents empowered with assisting with the

school process (Richardson, 2009). This study does pertain to the present study because it

focuses on the importance of principals supporting the parent role for improving parental

involvement, including parents in school decision-making opportunities, and increasing

student achievement.

Unlike the Richardson (2009) study, Shatkin and Gersberg (2007) addressed the

positive influences that parental involvement can have on the school community. The

researchers concluded that the most important factor in a successful parental involvement

program was principal leadership. Principals who are effective leaders and build

collaborative teams have successful parental involvement programs. For example, the

principal participants in the Richardson study did not include parents in decision-making,

school governance, or policy activities within the schools. On the other hand, the

principal participants in the Shatkin and Gersberg study believed that parents were more

likely to be involved when there was a common agenda that included organizational,

technical, and political support. The principals wanted the parents involved in the school governance issues.

Literature Related to the Theoretical Foundation

Strategies are often the dispositions teachers must possess to create and maintain effective positive relationships with parents and educators (Swick, 2009). The educator's initial contact with parents should be positive and teachers need to create positive channels of communication with parents. Educators work with families to establish relationships, make positive contact with families, use a variety of consistent means of communication, and develop meaningful interactions, which share expectations and accomplishments with parents and students. Parents connect to their child's classroom through a two-way network that provides opportunities to continually communicate and monitor their child's attendance and academic progress (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Padgett (2006) wrote that in order to increase parental involvement educators must first identify why parents are not involved. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that there are three reasons why parents get involved in their child's education. Their research stated that parents have a personal construction of the parental role and feel it is their responsibility to be involved. Secondly, parents express a sense of personal efficacy for helping their children to succeed in school. Finally, parents acknowledge the teacher's request to be involved and are compelled to commit to participate.

The theoretical foundation used for this case study was Epstein's (1995) typology framework of parental involvement as a primary source. The typology described practices and activities that foster parental involvement for parents, students, teachers, and the

school community to implement and develop home and school community partnerships. The six typologies are parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration. The following literature helped to substantiate the conceptual framework for this study.

Parenting provides parents with rearing skills that foster supportative home conditions. Brown and Beckett's (2007a) case study explored the challenges African American leaders are confronted with when involving parents of at-risk students in their educational experiences. The focus of the study addressed the disruptive behaviors of at-risk students, which stemmed from family factors that affected the learning environment. In the early 1990s Cincinnati Public Schools experienced a dramatic increase in student expulsions, which lead the district to implement a District-Wide Code of Behavior Program. The District-Wide Code of Behavior Program incorporated resources that included parent associations, home-school connections, and a disciplinary advisory board that facilitated meaningful communication efforts. Through the collaborative efforts of the school district and the District-Wide Code of Behavior Program, suspensions decreased and academics increased. The researchers concluded that in a district where parents, students, and teachers viewed themselves as unified members of the same community and worked toward a common goal overall discipline and academics did improve (Brown & Beckett, 2007a).

Communication establishes effective school-to-home and home-to-school contact systems. Dabrusky (2007) found high parental perceptions within all six dimensions of Epstein's parental involvement framework. Communication rated highest, and

collaboration was the lowest in how parent's perceived parental involvement operated in a school community. When parents and educators collaborate and build relationships, it improves parental involvement and increases student achievement.

Volunteering is designed to improve and increase parental recruitment and provide training for family support in order to support students. Reilly (2008) reported that parents and teachers have different ideas about what parental involvement entails. Parental involvement includes working with the school, the school working with parents, and community involvement. Dessoff (2009) suggested that educators involve parents as classroom volunteers, parent tutors, and parent instructors who help with homework. Parents can chaperone on fieldtrips and participate on decision making committees. Traditional ways to get parents involved are attending parent and teacher conferences, open house activities, eating lunch with their child, and attending school programs. Teachers can create homework notebooks to communicate daily with parents. According to Tan and Goldberg (2008) parental involvement encompasses visibility within the school, helping with homework, participating in extracurricular educational activities, and interpersonal involvement.

Learning at home provides activities that involve families with their children in learning activities at home using curriculum related activities at home as evidenced in Tam and Chan's (2009) study that analyzed the homework diary entries of Hong Kong students. Their case study administered questionnaires to Hong Kong parents with students enrolled in primary schools. The purpose of the study was to examine the outcome of parental involvement in homework within the Chinese sociocultural context.

The findings revealed that parental involvement of homework within the Chinese culture was considered very important in developing home and school connections. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) conducted research on the effects of parental involvement with student homework. Their study reported that when parents helped their children with homework the parents took on the role of the teacher. The parents' involvement and beliefs in helping their children meet the expectations of the teacher and their involvement, helped to raise the student's academic scores.

The aim of Brown and Beckett's (2007b) case study focused on the efforts of European American teachers and African American parents to build a home and school connection for at-risk students. The participants in this study had to overcome barriers of socioeconomic class and ethnicity issues. The home and school connection enhanced a school community that immersed at-risk students, parents, and teachers in a total home and school learning community. The researchers stated that their research is an ongoing research project with elementary school and middle school students who are at-risk of academic failure because parental involvement can be a school and community effort supported by parents and educators. Forsberg (2007) wrote that Swedish teachers and parents negotiated responsibility by designating teachers as the education experts and parents as the rearing experts. This home and school connection allowed parents and teachers to establish effective levels of parental involvement to increase student achievement.

Decision-making includes family participation in school decisions, governance, and advocacy. Shatkin and Gersberg's (2007) case study examined the role of schools

empowering parents and leaders to build collaborated school based councils. The researchers stated when educators provided parents limited influence and limited opportunities for collaboration, parents were less likely to be involved. Long (2007) wrote that when parents assume active leadership roles and act as mentors for other parents, this encourages parents to establish partnerships, and build relationships that result in academic success for students. When parents work with educators to improve the academic achievement level for their children, a relationship forms and parents become involved with decisions made on behalf of the school they have entrusted with their children.

Collaboration coordinates community resources and services for the family. Bradshaw, Zumda, Kellam, and Ialongo (2009) developed an intervention program called the Family-School Partnership (FSP). The purpose of the program was to improve the collaboration between parents and teachers through workshops for teaching behavior management skills in order to establish effective and enduring partnerships between parents and school staff. Major components of the workshops focused on training teachers and parents with home and school learning connections and effective communication activities. Therefore, the key words that best explain the significance of parental involvement are *collaboration* and *relationship*.

Qualitative Case Studies

This study used the qualitative case study design. Qualitative research is best suited for this research design because the researcher does not simply learn about a selected topic, but also learns what is important to the participants (Rubin & Rubin,

2005). Qualitative case studies explore the search for meaning and understanding

because the researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and data

analysis (Merriman, 2009).This particular case study was *exploratory* in nature because

the research questions focused mainly on *what* questions (Yin, 2009). An additional

important feature of case studies is the bounded system (Merriman, 2009). In addressing

the boundedness of the research topic the researcher must determine how restricted the

data collected will be and limit the number of participants interviewed to qualify as a case

study. Hatch (2002) wrote that organizing a small number of participants allows the

individuals to go deeper into the topic. For this case study I interviewed a total of eight

participants.

Hatch (2002) described the qualitative research design of interviewing as a key

that opens the door in developing meaningful structures based on the participants'

experiences and makes sense of the participants' world. Qualitative research allows an

individual to understand the world from the perspective of those who live in it. The

teachers who have been purposefully selected for this case study currently work at ABC

Elementary School and are able to provide first hand experiences and personal responses

to the interview questions. I selected a case study design in order to conduct a focused

interview (Yin, 2009) that explored the social phenomenon of parental involvement at

ABC Elementary School.

Previously in this section several case studies were reviewed that studied parental

involvement. These studies included the work of Smith et al. (2008), who conducted

individual and focus group interviews with Hispanic American parents that identified

barriers for Hispanic American parents for parental involvement. Additionally, Zarate

(2007) used focus group interviews to gather data for the case study. Smith -Graves

(2006) used interviews, observations, and document reviews to conduct a case study to

explore parental involvement among low-income families. Denessen et al. (2007) used a

case study approach to explore school practices and policies in regard to parental

involvement. Similarly, Harris and Goodall (2008) used in-depth case study data to

explore relationships between parental engagement and student achievement.

In addition, Brown and Beckett's (2007a) case study relates to the present study

because it suggests the possibility of educational leaders practical efforts, to plan and

implement programs that integrate home, and school connections that serve to improve

parental involvement, and thus increase student achievement. Cooper's (2007) case study

outcomes are equally important in reference to the present study, in relation to the role of

educators identifying and reevaluating the negative perceptions of African American

mothers and their involvement in their child's education. Ravet's (2007) case study

relates to the present study in regard to parents, students, and teachers improving

relationships .The results implied that teachers must develop relationships with students

and parents in order to minimize classroom disruptions, to improve parental involvement,

and increase student achievement.

In addition to using case studies to explore parental involvement, others were

successful using various research designs. Instead of conducting interviews, Cheung

(2008) conducted telephone surveys with parents and children to evaluate the benefits

families received from the PTA in relation to student performance. Theodorou's (2008)

ethnography study examined the culturally specific nature and current practices of parental involvement of immigrant parents. Hill and Tyson's (2009) metaanalysis examined the existing research on parental involvement of middle school parents and students. Msengi (2007) used survey questionnaires and interviews to collect data to investigate the perceptions of African American families and teachers in their role to increase student achievement. Reynolds's (2009) qualitative case study examined how African American middle class parents whose children attended middle class schools conceptualized parent engagement. Reynolds asserted that African American middle class parents' experiences are often overlooked in professional literature. This case study analyzed the parents' personal experiences, which provided them with a venue to voice their input.

The basic concept of Carpenter and Ramirez's (2007) study was to examine the dropout behavior of European American, Hispanic American and African American students. The researchers administered questionnaires to students, parents, and teachers to collect data on the student's educational progress, student motivation, academic difficulty, and school climate. The results of the study revealed one common predictor for African American and European American students despite suspensions was parental involvement. The Hispanic American and European American students identified three common predictors: time spent on homework, gender, and family compositions. The research results suggested that school leaders and policy makers develop dropout prevention polices based on individualized practices. Jetter-Twilley, Legum, and Norton (2007) conducted a study to determine if socioeconomic status and race made a

difference in parental and community involvement. Parental involvement was measured by the percentage of students on Free and Reduced Meals and PTA membership and attendance was used to measure community involvement. The results of the study revealed that schools that lacked an active PTA had the lowest parental involvement participation and lowest student test scores.

Joshi et al.'s (2005) quantitative study is similar to the present study in regard to identifying how teacher perceptions impact parental involvement. The case of DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho's (2005) study applies to the current study because the focus of their study helped to enlighten the impact of teacher attitudes towards ethnic-minority and low-income parents. One study in particular, Smith et al.'s (2008), relates to the present study because it focuses on how barriers prevent parental involvement and perceptions form these barriers.

In line with reviewing research from a global perspective, the following studies focused on teacher perceptions and barriers to parental involvement. The research covered the above stated perspectives from the school communities in Israel with Addi-Raccah and Ainhoren (2009), in Egypt with Abd-El-Fattah (2006), and in Greece with Koutrouba, Antonopoulou, Tsitsas, and Zenakou (2009). The questionnaire results from Addi-Raach and Ainhoren's (2009) study revealed an established school governance system in operation that influenced teacher's attitudes toward parents; whereby, both parents and teachers were empowered, and positive attitudes were found in schools with partnership governance. The survey results from the Greek teacher participants in Koutrouba et al.'s (2009) study were in favor of establishing teacher-parent

collaborations to benefit the students and the school community, but rated parental involvement in Greek schools poor and infrequent. In 2006, Abd-El-Fattah administered the Parental Involvement Scale and Achievement Goal Questionnaire to 255 first year high school students in Egypt to assess whether their achievement goals were related to parental involvement factors. The results of the study revealed that at-home and at-school parental involvement had indirect effects on student academic achievement levels. The fact these studies took place outside of the United States reveals the global need to address educational issues related to parental involvement and student achievement.

All of the above mentioned studies and researchers used a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collections to report studies of various bounded systems (Merriman, 2009). Although, the studies varied in specific data collection methods, all of the studies examined bounded systems (Merriman, 2009) that included groups of people focused on various aspects of parental involvement and student achievement.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated that qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but learning about what is important to those being studied. The case study design helped me to understand the problem and answer the research questions for the present study (Creswell, 2003). For this case study, literature was reviewed that related to classroom teacher perceptions as barriers for parental involvement. I also consulted literature pertaining to perceptions relating to barriers, the importance of developing home and school connections, the role

of the leader in assessing and implementing parental involvement programs, and identifying viable strategies and interventions. Additionally, literature was presented that discussed challenges as perceived by teachers in dealing with culturally diverse, immigrant, and at- risk school populations.

Yin (2009) explained that case studies rely on direct observations of the events being studied and interviews the person involved in the event. Hatch (2002) wrote that organizing a small number of participants allows the individuals to go deeper into the topic. This case study used eight purposefully selected teachers from ABC Elementary School. The first method of data collection was a onetime focus group interview session with four purposefully selected participants from ABC Elementary School. The next data collection method was individual face-to-face interviews with four purposefully selected participants from the ABC Elementary School. The total number of participants for this case study was eight. The researcher selected a case study design to explore an in-depth description of the social phenomenon of parental involvement at ABC Elementary School (Yin, 2009). Qualitative case studies explore the search for meaning and understanding because the researcher serves as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriman, 2009). The results from this case study were significant because the collected data can be applied to address specific parental involvement problems at ABC Elementary School. Section 3 presents further elaboration of the research methodology that was used in this study.

Section 3: Research Method

The purpose of this case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. The problem statement for this qualitative case study focused on the lack of parental involvement at ABC Elementary School. The review of the literature has indicated that parental involvement is significant in a child's education and studies have reported that teacher perceptions of parents affect parental involvement and student achievement (Knopf & Swick, 2007; Roper, 2008; Zarate, 2007). As previously stated, teacher perceptions can be crucial elements in determining how parents and teachers interact and communicate with each other. In this study I examined the perceptions of teachers, school environment, potential barriers identified by teachers that impact parental involvement, and viable solutions suggested by participants to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

Parental involvement can be a significant factor for building parent and teacher relationships and increasing student achievement. The past two decades have been filled with policies encouraging parental involvement in education. The nation is pushing schools to increase parental involvement; NCLB (2002) created legislation to increase parental involvement in schools. Overall, building a working relationship between parents and teachers is an important element in developing an effective parental involvement program aimed at improving parental involvement and increasing student achievement.

The goal of an effective parental involvement program is to strengthen the lines of communication between the school and the home and to build relationships among the

parents and the teachers (Reilly, 2008). As the teachers at ABC Elementary School had voiced concerns in regard to the lack of parental involvement, the inactive PTA program, and the fragmented parent and teacher relationships, the purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the impact of teacher perceptions of parents as barriers to parental involvement and identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

The choice of research design was a case study, which involved a onetime focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews via email, and reviewing unobtrusive data. This case study design was appropriate for this research study because the case study helped me to gain insight into the participants' personal and first-hand experiences with parents and also to identify perceived barriers to parental involvement. Creswell (2003) defined the case study as an approach the researcher uses to explore one or more individuals in-depth and collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures.

This section includes: the design of the study, the research questions, context of the study, ethical protection of the participants, role of the researcher, population and sample, data collection procedures, data analysis, and methods to address validity and reliability that were utilized in this case study.

Design of the Study

A case study was selected for this research because it provided, "direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the event" (Yin, 2009, p. 11). When researchers conduct case studies, one challenge they face is determining how many participants to use because the more participants the researcher

studies, the less depth the study will have (Creswell, 2007). The most important conception of qualitative research understands the phenomenon of interests and experiences from the participants' points of view (Merriam, 2009). In conducting a qualitative case study, the researcher "listens to hear the meaning of what the interviewees are telling them" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.13). A major benefit in conducting a qualitative study is, "that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). The participants for this case study were able to provide first hand experiences because they were directly involved with the parents at the research site.

I purposefully selected eight certified teachers currently employed at ABC Elementary School to participate in this case study research. For this qualitative case study, I conducted a onetime focus group interview with four participants, which included semistructured questions. The next step involved individual face-to-face interviews with four participants. The face-to-face interviews also consisted of semistructured questions, which allowed the participants to explain their personal perspectives on the issues as stated in the research questions. The semistructured questions were developed by me and were modified based on the focus group and face-to-face responses.

The participants received follow-up questions electronically that centered primarily on specific solutions that addressed the problem of parental involvement at ABC Elementary School. This process was conducted within the three week data collection period, after the interview process. Participants were asked to respond to the

email within a 2 day period. The unobtrusive data in the study consisted of a compilation of sign-in sheets and photographs from Family Night activities, and sign-in sheets from parent visitations and sign-in sheets for parents volunteering at the school. Additional unobtrusive data consisted of reviewing records from the PTA program, and Parent as Teachers program.

The results from this qualitative case study research contributed to the body of knowledge needed to identify what teachers perceived as barriers that affected parental involvement at ABC Elementary School and provided suggestions of viable solutions to improve parental involvement. The benefits of this study enlightened the participants' awareness on the impact of their perceptions to parental involvement.

Qualitative research was best suited for this study because I learned about a selected topic and gathered input from the perspectives of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The qualitative research design of interviewing serves as a catalyst that enables participants to share personal experiences and make connections (Hatch, 2002). I initially conducted a onetime focus group interview to build relationships, which allowed participants an opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with me and the research process (Hatch 2002). The paradigm outlined for this case study was a semistructured interview design (Merriam, 2009). This design allowed for specific information to be obtained from the participants as guided by a list of semistructured questions that had been developed be me for the study and focused on particular issues of parental involvement. The data collected from the onetime focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up questions was combined and used for this case study. In

addition to the designs listed, data from Family Night activities, parent school visits during the day, PTA, and Parents as Teachers program was included and reviewed.

The data collected from the interviews allowed the opportunity to collect first-hand and personal experiences from the participants as it related to the participants' perceptions of barriers that affect parental involvement and answered the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Research designs that used categories with closed-ended questions, forced choices, or survey Likert-scales would not have been effective in helping me to gain insight into the participants' personal and first hand experiences with parents or allowed participants an openness of exchange (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The interview transcripts from focus group, individual face-to-face and follow-up interviews identified relationships within the school community and subculture, which allowed me an opportunity to look for major categories from the data. I analyzed the interview transcripts to look for key words, major themes, indexes of behavior and beliefs, and compiled a list of major and minor categories from the data (Janesick, 2004) and inserted data units, using open, axial, and selective coding. The data collected from the unobtrusive data was used to, "provide the physical evidence of how participants operate in their settings" (Hatch, 2002, p. 117). The unobtrusive data in the study consisted of a compilation of sign-in sheets, photographs from Family Night activities, and sign-in sheets from parent visitations, and sign-in sheets of parents volunteering at the school. Additional unobtrusive data consisted of reviewing records from the PTA program, and Parent as Teachers program.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement and identify viable solutions to these barriers as "qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspective of those living in it" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). The participants' views were examined using the following research questions, which gave voice to this study. In this case study I examined the following questions through participant interview transcripts:

1. According to teachers, what are the perceived perceptions and barriers to parental involvement?

2. According to teachers, what are viable solutions to these perceived barriers to parental involvement?

Context of the Study

The central phenomenon being studied was the lack of parental involvement at ABC Elementary School and the teachers' perceptions of parents as barriers to parental involvement. This case study was conducted at ABC Elementary School located in Western United States, with eight purposefully selected teachers from the school as participants. The researcher's rationale for selecting a purposeful sampling strategy was that the participants' first hand experiences with the parents at ABC Elementary School were three-fold: it aided the researcher in understanding the problem of parental participation, it answered the research questions, and it helped to identify viable solutions.

The larger context for this case study research focused on the following factors: ABC Elementary School was located in the Western United States and, according to the TEA 2009-2010 published AEIS report for the 2009-2010 school year, 87.7% of ABC Elementary school population was economically disadvantaged, 51.1% was at risk, and 17.7% was Limited English Proficient (LEP). Of the student population, 21.1% was Hispanic American, 5.2% was European American, and 67.2 % was African American. The AEIS reported that 78.1 % of the schools' teachers were African American, with varying levels of teaching experience: 60.7% had taught for 1-5 years, 21.4% had taught for 6-10 years, and 10.7% had taught for 11-20 years.

Ethical Protection of the Participants

Measures were taken to carefully protect the rights of the participants in this study. The participants were initially informed at a staff meeting of the researcher's intent for this research study, that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time from the study. Participant consent signatures, authorizing permission to participate and to be audio taped were sealed and securely filed. Additionally, participants received a sealed copy of their consent letters. Approval for this case study was acknowledged by the Director of Accountability and Data Quality-Research and Evaluation of the ABC Elementary School district and the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Walden University IRB approval # 03-30-11-0126855). I used pseudonyms for the district and the participants as an ethical code to protect the privacy of the participants.

The participants purposefully selected to participate in the interviews received a consent letter requesting their participation in the study (see Appendices A and B). The form contained a statement of why the participants were selected, disclosed the researcher's identity, described the purpose of the study, permission to be audio taped, and listed the procedures and possible risks and benefits of participation. The researcher's contact information and the Walden University Representative information were provided. Consent letters were delivered to participants in sealed envelopes and to ensure confidentiality and privacy, participants were not identified in any printed documents by name. The results of the study were provided to all participants upon request in sealed envelopes.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher for this case study was described in terms of the researcher's current professional role at the research site. I have worked at ABC Elementary School, the research site, for the past 3 years in a nonsupervisory role as a behavior specialist, the equivalent of a special education transition teacher. My nonsupervisory position did not affect the relationship with the participants and the research, nor interfere with the performance of the participants in the case study research. Hatch (2002) suggested that building a rapport and relationship with participants is important. I have built relationships with the parents and teachers of ABC Elementary School in order to decrease discipline referrals and provide strategies for teachers to maintain classrooms that are productive to learning. I have worked with students in all of

the participant's classes at one time or another and this relationship did not affect data collection.

Instead of eliminating researcher biases it is important to identify them and examine how they shape the data collection and impact the analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009). My biases of parental involvement centered on the recollection of my early grade school experiences within the school community. When I grew up it seemed we lived by the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." The action of this proverb was active and present in my community. Families engaged in activities focused on the family as a unit. Based on my informal observations and interactions of the parents, the teachers, and the school community at ABC Elementary School there is a noticeable lack of parental involvement and a decrease in student achievement. I began to sense a need of how to address the lack of parental involvement and to identify interventions that could possibly address this problem. From the literature that I reviewed I gained a deeper insight into the significance of parental involvement and the factors that impact parental involvement.

This case study included participant meanings (Creswell, 2007), which involved focusing on "learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). This process does not include the researcher's meaning or literature related to the topic. Qualitative researchers focus on understanding how people think and why they think as they do, which requires the researcher to ask questions to understand the participant experiences.

Additionally, the inductive process was used. The inductive process allows the researcher to collect data to build concepts rather than testing hypothesis (Merriam, 2009). Based on the data collected from the interviews, I was able to build categories and identify themes that emerged from the participant responses and develop narratives that represented the meanings that focused on the topic. Finally, the data collected from the sign-in sheets and photographs were evidence of parents visiting the school and families participating in Family Night activities that focused on family and school interactions.

As has been noted in conducting qualitative case studies, the researcher serves as the primary source for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). The literature review for this case study presented information that parental involvement is significant and essential in the early development of children during the early years. The purpose of this case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of parents as barriers to parental involvement at ABC Elementary School.

Population and Sample

In conducting qualitative case study research the sample is usually purposeful and small, and the researcher spends a considerable amount of time with the participants in the setting (Merriam, 2009). With this in mind, utilizing a smaller participant case study provides adequate opportunity for the researcher to, "identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis" (Creswell, 2007, p. 128). The criteria for selecting participants were specified and appropriate for this case study. The primary population for this case study originated from the 29 teachers employed at ABC Elementary School. The participants for this study were purposefully selected because, "selecting the right

participants and building working relationships with them can make or break a qualitative

study" (Hatch, 2002, p. 52). The major eligible criterion for participants in this case

study was participants had to be certified teachers currently employed at ABC

Elementary School in grades prekindergarten to fifth grade. There were eight teachers

purposefully selected to participate because a case study should not include, "more than 4

or 5 studies in a single study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 128). There were no income

requirements to participate. Teachers were informed that their participation was

voluntarily and that their identity and responses would be kept confidential. I used a

focus group interview and face-to-face group interviews for this case study and did not

use a pilot study for this study.

   I had direct access to the information and analyzed the data collected from the

focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews with

certified teachers from ABC Elementary School as participants. The classification of

certified teachers did not include support, auxiliary, or administrative staff at the school.

Creswell (2007) stated the primary advantage in using focus groups permits the

interviewees to supply the best information to the questions, and the face-to-face allows

participants to respond willing, to speak freely, candidly, and honestly during the process;

and follow-up via email were used to clarify, or extend participant responses. The

participants were appropriate for this study because they work at the school, and therefore

have firsthand knowledge and experience in dealing with the parents and students at ABC

Elementary School. In addition, the participants provided input that identified their

perceived barriers to parental involvement and gave suggestion of viable solutions for these perceived barriers.

I balanced the justification for the number of participants who were certified teachers that were currently employed at ABC Elementary School by purposefully selecting eight teachers from the staff roster and obtaining their permission to participate and be audio taped during the interviews. The participants voluntarily answered semistructured questions developed by the researcher that focused on parental involvement issues at ABC Elementary School.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures are explained in detail. Analysis of the data was conducted concurrently while the data was being collected. As stated previously, my goal in this case study was to examine the impact of teacher's perceptions of parents as barriers for parents becoming involved in their child's education. A qualitative case study design approach was used to conduct the research with a onetime focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews that derived data from the participants' first-hand and personal experiences with parents at ABC Elementary School. I used formal interviews with semistructured questions, which lead the interviews, and also permitted me to ask probing questions. The in-depth interviews allowed the participants to state details in response to the questions and voice their opinions (Yin, 2009). In addition, the semistructured questions developed were used "to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell, 2003, p.188). The semistructured interview questions I developed centered on defining parental

involvement, identifying teacher expectations, and addressing specific areas of parental involvement.

The first method of data collection consisted of purposefully selecting four certified teachers from ABC Elementary School to participate in the onetime focus group interview. I informed the participants of the purpose of the research and the procedures at a faculty meeting and issued consent letters to obtain permission to participate and be audio taped. I initially conducted a onetime focus group interview to build relationships and allow participants an opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with me and the research process (Hatch 2002).

The onetime focus group interview was conducted after school to not interfere with classroom instructional time or participants' planning time. The interview lasted approximately one hour. The interview was formal (Hatch, 2002) because the research process was lead with guiding questions that allowed for additional probing questions to be used as needed. The participants voluntarily answered interview questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix C). Once I collected the interview data, I immediately transcribed the interviews into a transcript. The transcript reviews were given to the participants to use member-checking strategies to ensure the accuracy and validity of my interpretation and the written transcription of their own responses.

For the next method of data collection I purposefully selected four different certified teachers from ABC Elementary School to participate in individual audio taped face-to-face interviews. I informed the participants of the research procedures and obtained their permission to participate in individual audiotape interviews. The

interviews were conducted after school in order to not interfere with classroom instructional time or the participant's planning time. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. The participants were audio taped and voluntarily answered the interview questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix D). Once I collected the data, I immediately transcribed the interview and issued copies of the transcript reviews to the participants to use member-checking strategies to determine the accuracy and validity of the findings.

"The most important sources of case study information is the interview" (Yin, 2009, p. 106), however, unobtrusive data was also used. Unobtrusive data consisted of a combination of parent sign -in sheets, photographs from Family Night, information about the PTA program and the Parents as Teachers Program. Hatch (2002) cited that, "photographs that have been taken by participants or collected by institutions are another valuable kind of unobtrusive data" (p. 118). Family Night events are held at the school three times a year, where the teachers share information, provide hands on activities, and familiarize the family about selected topics such as (e.g. reading, math, or science). The events are designed to present hands on activities for the student and family to use to enrich the subject content areas. Once the families sign in, they are assigned a rotation schedule for these activities. Photographs from Family Nights are posted on the district website and around the school building.

The visitor sign- in sheets are set up in the main office of the school for parents to sign-in upon entering the school before they enter the classrooms. This sheet serves as a way to keep a record of parents that visit the school to pick up their children for early

dismissals, attend parent conferences, or volunteer at the school. I reviewed data that reflected photographs of families interacting with curriculum enriched activities after school from the Family Night activities. I also viewed the bulletin board posted in the main hallway that detailed the PTA officers and various activities that listed opportunities for parent involvement. The Parent as Teachers Program has brochures available in the main office describing the components of the program offered to the parents and sign-in sheets recording parent involvement. There is an incentive posted for PTA membership but none listed for the other programs.

Follow-up questions were used after the interview, "where concepts need to be clarified and where the implications of themes need to be examined" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.176). Accordingly, follow-up questions were used to provide, "sufficient information on ideas introduced by your interviewee" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 176), to supply me with additional information for thoroughness.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis should occur simultaneously in a qualitative study during the research process (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In conducting qualitative case study research the following procedures suggested by Merriam (2009) are essential for data analysis: organizing, editing, interpreting, and presenting. The data analysis for this study involved using the following strategies: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Merriam, 2009). The process of open coding consisted of, "assigning codes to pieces of data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 179), axial coding

consisted of "grouping the open codes" (Merriam, 2009, p. 180), and selective coding involved developing a "core category" (Merriam, 2009, p.200).

I immediately transcribed the interviews and provided transcript reviews for the participants to member-check to ensure validity and accuracy for interpretation of the data. Once the transcript reviews were member checked by the participants, "to determine whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell, 2003, p.196), I used open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify, classify themes, and patterns. This process permitted me to promptly locate themes or concepts within the transcript reviews, insert definitions where needed, place labels and codes next to the data units to match themes or concepts, and record the findings to answer the research questions. Each individual transcript was coded using this procedure and compared to each other. I reported the data with a qualitative narrative, "using the wording from participants" (Creswell, 2003, p. 197), which permitted the reader to interpret the participants' responses. The summation of the data was reported in a qualitative narrative detailing each participant's responses.

The final step in the data analysis involved using a methodological triangulation approach (Denzin, 2006). The methodological triangulation approach consisted of analyzing multiple data sources from the focus group interview, face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data to combine the collected data sources from several different participants and the school in order to address the research questions. I examined the evidence from these sources to identify a logical theme, patterns, or relationships.

The photographs were used as evidence to substantiate family attendance at Family Nights and also provided a visual of families interacting with hands on activities and with staff. As Merriam found, "Photos alone can tell the story of what the photographer thought was important to capture, what cultural values might be conveyed by the particular photos, and so on" (2009, p. 124). The photographs were taken by the participants because, "Participant generated photos can then be analyzed by the researcher or used by the researcher with participants in the photo elicitation method" (Merriam, 2009, p.146); to be used as spoken data. The photographs, sign-in sheets, brochures, and bulletin board were analyzed as spoken data.

I triangulated the data from the focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data to, "build a coherent justification for themes" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). In implementing thick rich description I was able to, "transport the readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).These strategies listed above in the data collection were integrated in this qualitative case study to support the reliability and validity of the study.

Validity and Reliability

In addition to conducting research, it is important and also necessary that measures for ethical protection are equally adequate to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. Merriam (2002) cited that "a major concern in all research is the validity, trustworthiness, or authenticity of the study" (p. 422). Three strategies to ensure validity and reliability for qualitative research suggested by Merriam (2009, p. 234) were (a)

internal validity or credibility are directly associated with congruence between the

findings and reality, (b) reliability or consistency are directly associated with replication

from the results, and (c) external validity or transferability are directly associated with

comparing, contrasting and applying the findings to other situations.

Equally important, validity and reliability are directly associated with collecting,

analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data and there are a range of strategies to establish

validity and reliability research.

     This qualitative case study on parental involvement at ABC Elementary School,

involved a number of strategies to create a quality research study, that " contributes

knowledge to the field that is believable and trustworthy" (Merriam, 2009, p. 234). The

reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative case study depended on the researcher as,

"the individual investigator" (Merriam, 2009, p.234). The opening strategy of

triangulation involved internal validity for this case study by validating data from,

"different data sources of information" (Creswell, 2003, p.196). Triangulation strategies

for a case study suggest that the, "conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate

if is it based on several different sources of information" (Yin, 2009, p. 116).

The next strategy, member checking,

> is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting
>
> the meaning of what participant say and do and the perspective they have on what
>
> is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and
>
> misunderstandings of what you observed. (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111)

The third strategy, thick rich description provides to, "transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The final strategy used in this study required the researcher to clarify bias in regards to the study, "this self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers" (Creswell, 2003, p.196).

The researcher plays a critical role in qualitative research as the "primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p. 412). I believed it was important "to study a phenomenon that you are *really* curious about, that you care about, that you are passionate about" (Merriam, 2002, p.423). This doctoral journey originated with the concept of producing a qualified case study that acknowledged the validity and reliability of this study through triangulation of different data, member checking for accuracy, using thick rich description, and clarifying the researcher's bias (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2009).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement at ABC Elementary School. According to Bakker et al. (2007), teacher perceptions of parent's impact parental involvement and student achievement. This case study focused on the teacher perceptions of parents and identifying the barriers that prevent parents from being involved at ABC Elementary School. The data collection included the responses from a focus group interview of four participants and four individual face-to-face interviews, along with reviewing unobtrusive data. The significance of this case study research enlightened the

participants' awareness in relation to how teacher perceptions influence and serve as

barriers that impact establishing effective parental involvement programs and contribute

to identifying viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Section 4: Results

This section clearly describes the process by which the data from eight certified teachers at ABC Elementary School was generated, gathered, and recorded. The themes describe findings supported by the data, and evidence of quality is supported by the data from this qualitative case study. The data collected included a focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews. Unobtrusive data was also used for this study. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed. The research data was coded to establish emerging themes within each case.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. The data collected was used to identify barriers as well as analyze the relationships between parents and teachers, the teacher perceptions of the parents, and the level of parental involvement at the school. In addition, viable solutions to improve parental involvement were drawn from the data. Barriers that presently interfere with parental involvement were identified, teacher perceptions and teacher expectations were discussed, and viable solutions were proposed.

The following research questions were used to gather data from the focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data.

1. According to teachers, what are the barriers to parental involvement?
2. According to teachers, what are the viable solutions to these perceived barriers to parental involvement?

Procedures

The following procedures were used to collect data for this case study. Before conducting the research, I submitted a proposal and application for review and acceptance to the Director of Accountability and Data Quality-Research and Evaluation of the ABC Elementary School district and the Walden University IRB. Based on the acceptance and approval of the proposal and application, permission was granted by the district and Walden University to conduct research. I proposed to conduct a structured focus group interview and face-to-face interviews that would not interrupt instructional or planning time for the participants. After participants consented to participate, the consent letters were signed and the time and place was selected.

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants for this research. The two major criteria for selection were that participants had to be certified teachers and currently employed at ABC Elementary School. Data collection and data analysis were done concurrently during the research process. Member checking was used to access the participants' credibility and findings of the interpretations and thick rich descriptions were used to express the findings which created a component of shared experiences collected from the data. Member checking involves the process of "taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Thick rich descriptions enable the reader to "transfer the information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). A focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data were used to collect

data. The procedures for the focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews are provided below. The unobtrusive data is also discussed in this section.

Focus Group Interview

In this section qualitative data collected from a onetime focus group interview with four participants is detailed. The focus group interview was used because, "the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, and when time to collect information is limited" (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). All participants were purposefully selected certified teachers currently employed at ABC Elementary School at the time of the interview with experience ranging from one to 20 years. Administrative or auxiliary staffs were not selected to participate in the study. Participants were asked six open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) designed to obtain responses that relate to Epstein's (1995) typology of parental involvement framework. The questions focused on topics such as identifying teacher expectations from parents and teacher perceptions of parents, negative and positive aspects of parent conferences, parental involvement impact, and building relationships. The focus group interview allowed the conversations to follow the flow of questioning.

The participants did not object to signing the consent letter and received a sealed copy once they were signed. All interviewees agreed to meet after school to participate in the interview process in order to not interfere with classroom instruction or participant's planning time. The participants appeared comfortable with the interview setting, the

interview process, and with being audio taped. Participants received a copy of the

interview questions to review during the interview process. The interview lasted less than

one hour, was audio taped, and immediately transcribed. The data collection process for

the focus group was conducted over a one week period. To ensure confidentiality letters

were randomly assigned to each participant.

Member checking strategies were used to determine what the participants felt

were accurate. Transferability decisions were based on making use of thick rich

descriptions. Participants received copies of the transcript review in sealed envelopes to

make comments or corrections and returned them to the researcher within a two day

period.

Interviews

The qualitative data collected from four individual face-to-face participant

interviews are detailed in this section also. Four teachers were purposefully selected to

participate in the individual face-to-face interviews. All of the participants were

employed at ABC Elementary School at the time of the interview and were classified on

the school roster as certified teachers with one to 20 years of experience. The purposeful

selection did not include administrative or auxiliary staff at ABC Elementary School.

The individual face-to-face interviews were conducted on a designated date and

time, after school selected by the participants. All interviewees selected the time and date

to meet after school to participate in the interview process in order to not interfere with

classroom instruction or participants' planning time. The participants did not hesitate to

sign the consent letter. The participants appeared comfortable with the interview setting,

the interview process, and with being audio taped. Participants were provided with a copy

of the questions to view during the interview process. To ensure confidentiality, letters

were randomly assigned to each participant.

Participants were asked nine open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005)

designed to elicit personal responses and experiences that related to the overlapping

spheres of influence according to Epstein's (1995) framework typology for parental

involvement. The questions focused on defining parental involvement, describing

examples of parental involvement, discussing building relationships, and identifying

barriers and proposing solutions to impact parental involvement.

Each participant received a sealed copy of the transcript review to member check

for accuracy and validity. Once this was done, the transcript was returned to the

researcher within a 2 day period. Member checking and rich thick descriptions were used

to provide trustworthiness, credibility to the data, and enhance the validity and reliability

of these interviews (Creswell, 2007).

The participants received follow-up questions electronically that centered

primarily on specific solutions that addressed the problem of parental involvement at

ABC Elementary School. This process was conducted within the 3 week data collection

period, after the interview process. Participants were asked to respond within a 2 day

period to the email. The follow-up questions enabled me to, "gain clarity and precision"

(Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.14). The follow-up responses were an expansion to the original

suggestion of implementing a Parent Club that addressed the specifics of who would be

responsible for the implementation, identifying necessary resources to provide for the

parents, and what role the PTA would assume to efficiently address the lack of parental

involvement problem at the school.

Unobtrusive Data

The unobtrusive data consisted of a compilation of sign-in sheets and photographs

from Family Night activities, as well as sign-in sheets when parents enter the building for

visitation, parent-teacher conferences, early dismissal, or volunteering at the school.

Information from the PTA program and the Parents as Teachers program was also

included in the unobtrusive data collection. Hatch (2002) cited, "Unobtrusive data

provide insight into the social phenomenon under investigation without interfering with

the enactment of that social phenomenon" (p. 116). Unobtrusive data does not interfere

with events that are going on in daily life and were not the responsibility of the

researcher.

I reviewed the sign-in sheets and photographs in order to confirm the attendance

and engagement of families at Family Night. The participants provided photographs that

were posted on the school website and posted throughout the school; these photographs

were "basically prompts for verbal data" (Merriam, 2009, p.146) that allowed me to

validate the collected data. The sign-in sheets provided records of an accurate number

count for Family Night attendance and for parents visiting the school during hours of

operation. Parent visits during the school hours were typically for parents picking up

students for early dismissals or to address behavior concerns of their children.

PTA officers were elected at the onset of the school year, but the PTA was

inactive at the time of the study and the only information collected about them was

posted on the bulletin board; there were only two records of meetings that had been held during the school year. This bulletin board also posted membership incentives for parents with the most volunteer hours completed at the end of the year. At the time of the study there were four entries totaling eight volunteer hours.

The Parents as Teachers program is an outreach effort directed toward parents in the school community of preschool aged children. The staff members have meetings every other week and make home visits. The program offer parents the following resources for medical, employment, educational, and reading readiness. I reviewed the sign-in sheets to gauge the attendance for these activities. Attendance total varied with each meeting and included the preschool aged child, the parent, and, if the parent was expecting, that child was counted as well. This data served to represent resources presently in place that the school offers parents.

Tracking Data

The focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews were coded using a category construction process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Merriam, 2009). The audio taped focus group interview and individual face-to-face interviews were immediately transcribed. The analysis consisted of finding and refining intricate categories (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 207) such as themes, concepts, or events. Themes were defined as summary statements, concepts were words, and events were occurrences that have taken place. Case study notes and raw data (Hatch, 2002, p.112) were used to record the researcher's interpretations and bias during the interviews.

The first step of category construction consisted of open coding notations, or bits of data, that were "interesting, potentially relevant, or important to the study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). The next step consisted of grouping the open codes, which is often called axial coding. The final step in this analysis was selective coding, which extracted the core categories from the data. The follow-up interview questions were used to "encourage the interviewees to expand on what he or she has said and that the researcher feels is important to the research" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 13). Based on the construction used for this study five common themes were identified from the eight participant responses. The themes are (a) teacher perceptions and barriers, (b) communication, (c) teacher expectations for involvement, (d) building effective relationships, and (e) solutions to improve parental involvement. The five common themes are discussed in section 5.

Findings

The findings for this study were collected from a focus group interview, individual interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data over a nine week period from, March 2011 to June 2011. The support for this research study included a onetime focus group interview and four individual face-to-face interviews that lasted less than an hour, and follow-up interviews via e-mail. The unobtrusive data was also reported in this section. This research examined the impact of teacher perceptions as barriers to parental involvement at ABC Elementary School. The overall research design was lead by the following research questions:

1. According to teachers, what are the barriers to parental involvement?

2. According to teachers, what are the viable solutions to these perceived barriers

to parental involvement?

The focus group interview questions (see Appendix C) and face-to-face interview

questions (see Appendix D) were created by the researcher and were based on the above

stated research questions. The participants' responses were based on their personal

experiences with the parents at ABC Elementary School, which are correlated to the

research questions. The identifiers for the eight participants are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Identifiers

FGPA	Focus Group Participant A
FGPB	Focus Group Participant B
FGPC	Focus Group Participant C
FGPD	Focus Group Participant D
FFPA	Face-to-Face Participant A
FFPC	Face-to-Face Participant B
FFPD	Face-to-Face Participant C

Note: These initial identifiers were assigned to the participants for the focus group
interview and individual face-to-face interviews to provide confidentiality and ethical
protection during the research process. Participants were not identified in any printed
documents by name.

Based on this research study, five themes emerged from the eight participants that

were related to parental involvement issues. There were two themes that aligned with

Research Question 1 and three themes aligned with Research Question 2. Table 2 details

the alignment of the two research questions and the five themes that developed from the

analysis of the data collected from the participant interviews.

Table 2

Themes

Research Question	Themes
1. According to teachers, what are the perceived barriers to involvement?	1. Teacher perceptions and barriers 2. Communication 3. Teacher expectations for involvement
2. According to teachers, what are the viable solutions to these perceived barriers?	4. Building effective relationships 5. Solutions to improve parental involvement

These themes were created from a coding system after collecting data from the participant responses during the focus group interview and individual face-to-face interview questions. Additional data collected involved follow-up questions, and unobtrusive data that consisted of sign-in sheets and photographs from Family Night activities, and sign-in sheets recording parent visits during school hours.

Theme 1: Teacher Perceptions of Parents and Barriers to Parental Involvement

The first theme, teacher perceptions of parents and barriers to parental involvement, was derived from participant responses to the following face-to-face interview questions/prompts:

Prompt 1: In a few words define what parental involvement means to you.

Question 2: What are some examples of how parents demonstrate involvement in their child's education?

Question 3: Can you provide some examples of when a parent was too involved?

Question 6: How do teacher perceptions impact parental involvement and student

achievement?

Question 8: What do you feel are factors or barriers that possibly prevent parents

from being involved?

The theme also emerged from the following focus group questions and prompts:

Focus Group Question/Prompt 4: Describe some of the various options that you

offer parents to be involved.

Focus Group Question 5: As the demographics change for this campus, how has it

affected parental involvement?

The prompt, in a few words, define what parental involvement means to you,

provided the following responses. The participants' definitions of parental involvement

were varied, yet all focused on some aspects of parents contributing through

participation.

(FFPA) It means taking an interest in what your child is doing, whether it is

academics or extra-curricular or just being involved with some of the parental programs

we have here at this school.

(FFPB) Parental involvement is very important, especially in the kindergarten

setting. Parental involvement helps the student learn more, helps with teaching, and

supports behavior and academics.

(FFPC) I think parental involvement is two-fold. I think that student's parents

that are involved with their education would be helping their student's progress outside of

the school curriculum is one part of parental involvement, and is determined by how far

the parents want their child to go. It's helping at home, finding educational strategies to use at home, checking on what the child is doing at school and pushing them to the next level. Another part of parental involvement is, if the teacher calls the parent and asks something of the parent and the parent tends to be irresponsible. So, that is the two-fold, one independently without school involvement and one where the school does ask something of the parent and the parent responds.

(FFPD) I think involvement means taking an active part in a child's education. It means what that looks like to me ,is helping with homework, supporting the school, supporting programs that the school has, and making sure that a child has what he or she needs to be ready for school. You know sending them with a readiness; I think involvement includes all of those things.

Responses to question 2. In response to the question, "What are some examples of how parents demonstrate involvement in their child's education?" participants commented with the following responses:

(FFPC) I think when you send something home to have signed, say the behavior folder or homework, that's an example of parents being involved and communicating. They know something is happening on a daily basis in the classroom.

(FGPB) We have the student behavior chart they have to sign every day, the homework chart they have to sign every day, and this allows the parent to assist their children with their every day homework. It allows letting them know what they're reviewing over in class for that week, and personal letters, notes referencing additional assistance that a parent can provide after school.

(FGPD) Also, I write personal notes positive notes throughout the year to let the parent know how their child is doing, something good or just to engage the parents more. If necessary, I write a note about a concern.

(FGPA) Because they had to come to get the report card, so I've met more parents then, than I have from requesting a conference. The problem was that the ones that did come, they don't come anymore. They were I guess irate, or they were mad that they had to come up here.

(FFPD) One of the things I notice is that helping with homework. Making sure they are read to in Early Childhood is a lot of what we do. It's just really asking the parents to read a book nightly. It's a great way for parents to get involved. Because it lays the foundation and so when parents are willing to do that, we have listening books and a lot of activities that we do with books. So parents help us out by reading at home and journaling and just supporting what we're doing at school. Communication is making sure that parents have a home school connection.

(FFPB) Signing the communication folder daily, coming in and asking questions about the report card and requesting conferences is a way to communicate.

(FFPA) One way is by parents making contact with the teachers rather than waiting for the teacher to contact them, showing their face, letting the teacher know they are available, helping with homework, turning things in on time, just showing up, and being available.

Responses to question 3. When asked, "Can you provide examples of when a parent was too involved?" the following statements were derived from the conversations:

(FFPD) I had an experience where a parent was doing the homework for the child. You know one of the things as a teacher you get to know your students. You know who your learners are, what they are capable of doing, you know what they can do, and what they can't do. And when parents perhaps, do the homework for the child, or you know send back perfect work then you know the child hasn't had a chance to do it himself. I know the hope is for perfection, but the hope with homework for me is to make sure that you know what they are doing at school and what we need them to do when they are here. So, I never anticipate you know that homework be perfect when it's returned to school. But a lot of times you see where big brother or sister, the parents have gotten them to help, or they may have stepped in themselves. That would be an incident perhaps of doing too much. Let them move at their pace, and let them discover things they can do.

(FFPB) I had a parent that was coming to school every day, she was always making sure that she helped her child and I could never get a feel of what the child knew.

(FFPA) Last year we went on a district fieldtrip and parents were not invited, and this parent went anyway. She found fifty thousand things wrong on the fieldtrip and reported them all to the principal. You know she like, how she was perceiving things, you know really weren't true. You know she really didn't know the background of it and I felt she was a little more involved than she should have been. She did not have a complaint against me, it was the other teachers, things she was saying she saw other teachers doing.

Responses to question 6. When asked, "How do teacher perceptions impact parental involvement and student achievement?" the following perceptions were identified from participant responses:

(FFPA) I do believe that some of the parents are, and I hate to use this word, are intimated by what we represent, or what they think we represent. Everywhere, it's been like this in Title One schools, it's the same in low economic schools. They just kind of stray away, and they don't know how to help their own child.

(FFPB) I know my first year my parents wouldn't come to the school; they would be like whatever you want to do is fine. So, with that type of attitude I wasn't able to get the support I needed at home. They felt that anything that went on in the classroom, they could only learn in the classroom, which isn't always true. Because what I teach, they can also teach; parents are their child's first teachers.

(FFPC) I think there is a stigma in a lot of lower income schools when they say parents are not involved. But my perception is I have had some good experiences. I never know what's going on at home, so I try not to get a negative perception. When I request a parent conference, they don't always show up, but I know the majority of my parents work, and I guess their performance is typical to the stigma that is attached to lower income schools.

(FFPD) I think the perceptions of the teacher are key, both to student achievement and to the involvement of parents. I have a philosophy where I tell my parents my door is always open and literally it is. I keep my door open, because I welcome parent

involvement and I think as a symbol of illustration of that open door, it suggests or it sends out the message that, you're welcome here.

(FFPC) For me, I really don't judge parents until I meet them, and then I still don't judge them. I try not to gather a preconceived thought about a parent, or after meeting with them, I try not to be judgmental. My time with a parent is not that long, minimum 20 minutes, contact at most a few times a year, an hour. I never know what's going on at home, so I try not to get a negative perception, my perception is the parent is parenting.

Responses to question 8. Barriers to parental involvement were identified through the next question, "What do you feel are factors or barriers that possibly prevent parents from being involved?" Participants commented:

(FGPC) Because if they don't, I hope this is not a myth, but you know, if you don't really support education it can probably be hard to really enforce your child to work. If you don't feel education is important, you probably won't put as much focus into education as long as D is passing, then that's good enough.

(FFPA) They have to work. They have other children, just pressure of life and maybe that feeling of just being overwhelmed. Maybe those are factors, you know just situations.

(FFPB) Their lack of education; communication with the teacher or administrator. Other barriers could be some parents have to work during the day and are not able to be involved or they work at night and can't attend night meetings. They may not have access to technology, online access or e-mail.

(FFPC) Definitely in a modern age, I believe that it's work that both parents have to work. And that's been like that for a while. Those factors are definitely a part of parenting, and that affects parenting.

(FFPD) I think sometimes their education itself can be a barrier. Sometimes as perceptions we have problems having the parent come into our classroom. I think it has to be an open door. I think it does take a village to raise a child. I think we have to work together and sometimes I think we as educators may suggest to parents that we don't really want their help and I think that's the worst thing we can do.

Responses to focus group question/prompt 4. When prompted with, "Describe some of the various options that you offer parents to get involved," which was asked to uncover the barriers that teachers feel possibly prevented parents from actively taking advantage of the options the school offers, a few of the comments were:

(FGPD) I think maybe sometimes parents may feel embarrassed, thinking maybe they don't know enough to approach the teacher. I have heard that before, parents come to me and say, "I don't have a college education, so sometimes I feel like I don't know enough to converse with you." They don't feel free to come to us.

(FGPB) Not even college; there are some parents that don't have a high school education. They didn't graduate from high school, so you know they're like well, "I don't know what to do and I don't want to come up there", they just kind of shy away.

Responses to focus group question 5. Answers to the question, "As the demographics change for this campus, how has it affected parental involvement?" centered on the following perceptions: fragmented relationships, parents not being

supportive, parents not knowing how to help their children, and parents not being adequately prepared to help their children. Initially, their perceptions were identified and further discussions involving the impact of these perceptions are provided:

(FGPA) Earlier we discussed the fact that some of our parents are not high school or college educated and if you have a neighborhood of more people who are not educated this can affect parental involvement also.

(FGPD) I have asked several of my students, "Is there anyone that can help with homework?" Their replies are; "No, they're working, or they worked late, or they are asleep." You know sometimes something as simple as getting a permission form signed for a field trip or behavior sheet signed, the students will tell me the parent was sleep or busy. So I think as maybe as economically the country is still trying to rebound from the recession that we see a lot of that and maybe that explains parents not providing school supplies. I don't know in terms of racial demographics, I know our school is becoming more and more Hispanic/Latino. That there is more need to have staff on site that can communicate with some of those parents. So I feel like we have a good core at our school right now. If we need someone to translate they can. It would be good maybe to have more, you know you can't force a teacher to take another language, but you know it would be helpful if you could get someone who is Bilingual to help. So the demographics we are experiencing right here affects parental involvement.

Summary of the face-to-face question 8, "What do you feel are factors or barriers that possibly prevent parents from being involved?" seemed to enlighten the fact that some of their perceptions of the parents could themselves be barriers that possibly

impacted parental involvement. Based on participant responses, the critical issue of lack

of parental involvement in fact existed at ABC Elementary School. However, it was

revealed that for the most part the participants had not previously identified the specifics

or considered the impact of their perceptions on the parents being involved. Parents

feeling intimated by staff, the parents lack of educational competencies to adequately

help their children, work, and lack of ongoing communication between parents and

teachers summarized the barriers that participant's identified as the factors linked to the

lack of involvement at ABC Elementary School.

Theme 2: Communication

The second theme, communication, emerged from several interview questions,

specifically from the focus group question 3, "What do you like most or least about

parent conferences?" Participants in the lower grades (prekindergarten) have a mandatory

parent conference twice a year to issue report cards; however, the upper grades (second

through fifth) do not have this in place. The participants who were teachers in the upper

grades (four from the focus group and two from the face-to-face group) agreed that parent

conference guidelines were in need of improvement. Participants from the focus group all

agreed they wanted parents to attend parent conferences but that parents often show up

for conferences unannounced resulting in teachers not being prepared and classroom

instruction is interrupted. In answering the question, some of the subsequent responses

were as follows:

(FGPD) What I like most from having parent conferences is I find out some

jewel or tidbit of background information that's very helpful in regards to their child.

What I like least is that parents come to the classroom and they expect to have a parent conference right in the middle during the instructional day. I think there should be some expectations, we're all professional, college educated, and there should be some process where the parent contacts the teacher in advance in order to prepare and not interrupt instruction.

(FGPB) I like parent conferences because it gives the parent an opportunity to really sit down and really go over the child's work samples. A lot of times we send home papers, but the parents don't really look at them. You ask the parent to sign them; they may just sign them, and not really pay close attention to it. At the parent conference I pull out those papers and say, "Okay, these are the papers I sent home", and when they see the grades, they're like, it's kind of like an eye opener, "Wow, I didn't really realize that this is what my child was doing, this is what I was signing?" or they comment, "You know I really need to pay more attention to make sure they do what they are supposed to do." It's something about parent conferences they see everything right there, it drives it home.

(FGPA) When you're face to face, you know it's harder for them to ignore what you're talking about, or just pass over it. A parent conference is the only time you get to show them what their child is actually doing. I like it that they want to see how their child is doing, but there does need to be some sort of professional calling or setting up a time to come and meet with me , because it's a distraction for the kids and the teacher when they show up announced.

In addition, participants shared the following supplementary means of communicating with parents as being helpful and effective: behavior and homework

charts, personal letters, notes referencing additional assistance that a parent can provide after school, writing positive notes throughout the year to let the parent know how their child is doing or if they have a concern, and positive phone calls (praise calls) home.

Additionally, the majority of the participants concurred that communicating with parents daily through student journals was an opportunity to notify them of daily occurrences, homework, and behavior. Although communication was not directly addressed in the focus group interview, one participant commented with the following in regards to communication:

(FFPD) In our conferences we've had a time this year to actually sit down with every parent in a parent and teacher conference, something we've not done in a very long time. But it gave me the opportunity to share one on one with each parent. I believe it takes a village to raise a child; to train and develop a child. It takes all of us working together and we have had such a wonderful atmosphere in the classroom. Parent involvement is not only important when there is a problem. But in daily day to day communication, sending a daily communication folder home, so if a parent has a question they can jot it down and I'll respond back. Keeping the lines of communication open, talking about celebrating the good days as well as the more difficult ones and realizing we're in this together.

During the interview, participants expressed the importance of ongoing communication with parents and the benefits of how parent and teacher relationships help students. On the whole, all four of the participants from the focus group interview and the four individual face-to-face interviews replied that the behavior folder or homework

folder was the primary tool used by the school to communicate daily with the parents.

Participants shared that some examples of communicating with parents were sending

homework home daily in the homework folder, throughout the school year teachers send

home positive notes, make positive phone calls home, and conduct parent conferences.

Communication is a topic that bridged all themes that emerged from the study, and was

considered by all participants from both groups to be a critical component for the end

result of a successful parental involvement program. There were no additional themes

that emerged from data collected from the research or interview questions.

Theme 3: Teacher Expectations for Parental Involvement

The third theme, teacher expectations for involvement, derived from the following

questions:

Focus Group Question 1: What do you want from the parents at ABC Elementary

School?

Face-to-Face Question 4: In what ways is your school receptive to parental

involvement?

Face-to-Face Question 7: Does parental involvement make a difference with

student achievement?"

Responses to focus group question 1. Answers to "What do you want from the

parents at ABC Elementary School?" were as follows:

(FGPC) I would like more parental involvement after the student leaves the

classroom, and also for parents to assist their kids on a daily basis.

(FGPD) I concur with that. I'd like specific involvement. I'd like the parent to ask their child, what they did today, and if their child said "nothing", ask more questions, ask about homework, see if they have any homework, and try to provide homework assistance. If the parent does not know how to help them, then provide some kind of communication to the teacher and get help for the child for their homework.

(FGPB) I would like for parents to be a little more involved in the classroom, like maybe homeroom parents, to be there for some kind of support and not just on certain holidays.

(FGPA) I agree with that. There used to be when I was in school, there were always parents or several parents who rotated and were always helping out. Not just like holiday parties. You know they would know what the homework situation was, or what the routine for homework was. A lot of times it might be easier for a parent who has had some sort of falling out with the teacher or you know is deterred from communicating with the teacher for any reason, to be able to go to another parent and see what the homework is, then there's not that barrier there for that student. The can still have somebody else to go to get that information from.

(FGPB) You know, long time ago, they use to have homeroom parents who would see if the teacher needed anything, or if there was something they could to help the student. Students were used to their parents being a part and volunteering at the school, so there wasn't a disconnection between the classroom and home. I would like to have more involvement in the school day as well.

(FGPC) I agree with everyone and I would also like for the parents to provide school supplies for their students and not just believe that they're only supposed to provide school supplies for the first semester of school. One pack of pencils and one package of paper are not going to last for every six week period of school.

(FGPD) I would like to second that, because I experience so many times where my students don't have pencils or they don't have paper and it's almost like an expectation from the parent for the teacher to provide it. I refer back to the old days, my teacher always told me, you come to school with an open mind, ready to learn, paper and pencil prepared every day.

(FGPC) Even though we as teachers supply this every day, it would be great if the parents understood that it is important and the parents should supply the supplies for their children as well as. Not only when we have Christmas and Easter parties and holiday parties, because they can bring a hundred cupcakes which I would know some have spent $25, but if they could just buy, like a package of pencils for $2 that would be wonderful.

(FFPD) I think that if I think my perspective of what my parents can do, what kind of support they can give affects the outcome and then it affects my children. If I have high expectations they will step up to the plate and have high expectations also. I believe that my parents are supportive and so it's like a self-fulfilling prophesy, if we speak that. You know statics can present something to us as very different in terms of what our parents are doing. But I chose to speak life, life into my classroom, life into my children, life into my parents that have been assigned to me and I think that makes a difference.

Responses to face-to-face question 4. When asked, "In what ways is your school receptive to parental involvement?" Participants had the following replies:

(FFPB) Our school is very open to parents. We encourage our parents to come and support us with our Family Nights and our classes for parents. Our school has a program for parents with children who are not school age, and they meet during the day. (When asked as a follow-up to their response if a lot of parents attend the program, the response was: FFPB responded, "No, I just heard that we had one at our school").

(FFPC) I think my school is receptive to parents, they, meaning the parents aren't as receptive. Hm, I never thought about it until now. I just sort of felt like it's the norm some will come and some won't.

(FFPD) I really think perhaps, in most instances, especially like the, parent meetings in the day, then numbers seem a bit low. But there can be a lot of reasons for that. Not everyone has the pleasure of taking off at midday; you know to come up to the school for a meeting. But I think the average number is perhaps maybe 20 parents. I've asked and it isn't a bad number. I've seen a time when it was much, much less. So, Family Math Night the numbers were really good. I think the approximation was 300, plus I've seen the time when that number was less than 20. So, I know we're making significant gains in that area. In terms of behavioral intervention when there was a problem with a student and we had to draw the parent in, I think most cases in our school the parents are concerned about their children.

(FFPA) I've been to Family Nights and we do have a lot of parents that show up, and especially ones that I don't expect to show up. You know because I don't see them or

hear from them. Because if I call them, it's call me back and them they don't answer. They don't show up for parent conferences or when there's a concern, but they come to Family Night.

Response to question 7. The question, "Does parental involvement make a difference with student achievement?" Explain why or why not. This is significant under this theme, because it examines the relevance of teacher expectations on the impact of parental involvement and on student achievement. Responses were as follows:

(FFPA) It does, even with my own child. My own child was experiencing difficulty in Math at the beginning of the year and the teacher told my husband and me that she was not doing very well, she could not add, and I'm looking at this lady thinking, "What is she talking about?" I had taught her to multiply the past summer at home. So my husband and I decided to start our own lesson plans. This past semester she made a 93. So you know I think that parents taking an interest and helping their children in what they are doing makes a difference.

(FFPD) Absolutely, I think a lot of things we perhaps may take for granted, goes a long way. Reading a book nightly to your child exposes them to enriched literature, helps to increase their vocabulary, helps to increase their comprehension and understanding of the world around them, and helps to make real world connections. So that seems like a simple step and a lot of people don't think it's very important, but it makes a major impact on their future success. In fact, research says that children who are read to nightly will read a lot quicker than those who aren't.

(FFPB) The more the parent is involved, the more the child knows that someone cares and the more the child wants to do. If they know someone cares about their education, they will try to do better.

(FFPD) And not just seeing the mom, but dad, a lot of times we just see mom. I know that there is an investment and so you know that even now, it's important, grades are important, achievement is important and there's accountability. There's an expectation that we set, the standard early on.

(FFPC) It makes a world of difference. I can tell whose parents are involved in their child's education, basically by a lot of times, by how far the student is when they come into my class. If I say that I'm going to have to speak with your parents, judging from the way the child reacts to that statement. You can also tell from the respect level a kid has and the educational process, that's reflective of the parents as well.

(FFPD) I think it does. Well, I know it does. A lot of times we as parents don't realize the significance of our involvement and how showing up at a function goes a long way.

Summary. In the process of responding to the interview questions, participants focused on their expectations from the parents and the importance of parental involvement for the students at ABC Elementary School. Accordingly, four of the four focus group participants discussed individual expectations from the parents. One participant coined the phrase, *specific involvement*. Specific involvement included the parent asking their child questions about their day at school, inquiring about homework

assignments, the parent helping with homework, and parents being available to support the teacher.

Equally important, the four participants from the individual face-to-face group willingly shared personal reflections when discussing teacher expectations, school receptiveness, and the impact of parental involvement that were aligned with this theme. The participant responses to this theme were conclusive among both interview groups. There were no additional themes identified from addressing the research or interview questions.

Theme 4: Building Effective Relationships

The fourth theme, building effective relationships, emerged from the following questions:

Focus Group Question 6: In order for parents to be involved why is it important to have a relationship with parents at ABC Elementary School?

Face-to-Face Interview Question 5: Why is it important to build a relationship with your student's parents?

Responses to focus group question 6. In the final analysis, all eight participants agreed that building relationships was a major component of an effective parental involvement program and the following focus group responses to the question, "In order for parents to be involved, why is it important to have a relationship with parents at ABC Elementary School?" are detailed below:

(FGPD) Hopefully from that first contact, you are saying to the parent, if your child makes an unwise decision that you have their support. If you have a really strong

relationship with the parents, that's very powerful in you know it's almost like, "I'm going to call your parents," and it straightens them out, problem solved.

(FGPB) If you have a good relationship with the parents, it just opens the door for communication. You can talk to the parents about really good things; you can also talk to them when things are not so good. So they're more open to your suggestions, they may ask, "What can I do?" because they know you really care.

(FGPA) It's also important to have that relationship because, it's just like everyone said; it opens the door for so many different things. If you only contact your parents, you know when something is going wrong or until you need supplies, you don't have a relationship. They are going to be less willing to listen to what you have to say. Because they haven't heard from you all year, and all you're doing is telling them bad things, you haven't opened the door to build a relationship.

(FGPD) Yes ,exactly and if you have a parent conference and they tell you from this day forward, if Johnny or whoever makes, says, or does something inappropriate and you know they are not doing the right thing just call me, right away. That's a very powerful thing, especially when the child knows that this information exists.

 (FGPC) It's very good to try and form one, if they're willing to open up. In some cases I think it may be an intimidation factor .because you maybe, you don't look like you have as much knowledge as they think you're supposed to have. I'm not for certain, yeah, if they're willing to open up to you about their background. It's good to have a relationship because you can address some questions about why the child does not understand basic information or even teach them some basic social skills.

Responses to face-to-face question 5. Responses to "Why is it important to build a relationship with your student's parents?" were:

(FFPA) Well, because that's the best way to help them. If I'm on the same page as the parents and the parents understands where I'm coming from, we can work together to do what benefits their child. You know if we are on two different sides, or one doesn't know what's going on, then you know, where's the success?

(FFPB) It's important to have a relationship with the parents because it helps me to communicate, discuss, dialogue good behavior, bad behavior, academic progress, what's going on in the classroom, and if I need help with anything.

(FFPC) I think it's more holistic, knowing that you are with their child for eight hours a day. It's very important to build a relationship with parents, to let them know about progress, know things that parents can help with at home, and to foster the kid's education.

(FFPD) There's an adage that says people don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care. I really think that's a very true statement in that as a parent, I'm not impressed with genius but it does make my heart feel good when I know that you care about my child. So I think if we don't let parents know truly how much we care then it can affect how much we can impart to them, and they become unsupportive to what they do at home, and that's going to be a problem.

Summary. Based on these findings, the following viable solutions were derived from the participants in this study to address the lack of parental involvement problem at ABC Elementary School: scheduling conferences to minimize classroom interruption

which also allows teachers time to prepare in advance, providing resources for parents to help with homework, utilizing an open door that creates an inviting and welcoming classroom, building relationships between parents and teachers, ongoing communication involving parents and teachers, and continuing to enhance and enrich Family Night activities to get parents involved and informed about what goes on at school and what the school has to offer. The four face-to-face participant responses were unanimous on the following comments voiced: parent and teacher collaboration benefits the child, helps to foster the child's education, builds a support team, and establishes a partnership.

Three of the focus group participants responded to the importance of building an effective relationship with the parents at ABC Elementary School. However, the following themes were entwined with relationships, communication, teacher perceptions, and barriers. One participant, FGPB stated, that "if you have a good relationship with parents, it just opens the door for communication" and another participant, FGPC, responded by saying. "It's very good to try and form one, if they are willing to open up, in some cases I think it may be an intimidation factor." No additional themes emerged from the research or interview questions.

Theme 5: Solutions and Resources to Improve Parental Involvement

The final theme, providing resources to improve parental involvement, was addressed in the following questions:

Face-to-Face Question 9: What would be a viable solution for the parental involvement at ABC Elementary School?

Focus Group Question 2: What could you offer parents through a Parent Club?

Responses to face-to-face question 9. In providing resources to improve parental involvement, participants shared the following comments for the question, "What would be a viable solution for the parental involvement problem at ABC Elementary School?"

(FFPA) I think that just contacting them, keeping in mind that this is going to be positive. You know not saying, that so and so is doing this or that and the other. You know, just saying, "Hey how are you doing?" I was just calling to say that your child is doing well. You know, just having more praise calls, and extending the invitation. You know, because sometimes, people aren't involved because they are not invited. You know you have to invite them and then again create that environment of positive success, that you're welcome. I don't think it's the whole solution, but I think it's something that we can do to improve the situation as far as parents not being involved.

(FFPD) In fact, my first year of teaching I had a child that I didn't understand, he had been moved on and was having difficulty. I began to research the issue because I wanted to help that child, and I discovered the child was dyslexic. I took some training courses so I could be more effective in helping him, and found out that his mother was dyslexic as well. We were able to tap into some resources the school district provided for the family. So I think that just because you know sometimes when a child or family is having difficulties, sometimes if we plug into the problem and seek resources being offered by the school we can assist families.

(FFPC) I think once again, education on health, what the kids consume. I know it's kind of a hot topic nowadays. But if kids are eating healthy, if they are getting enough sleep, and they are going to the doctor and being treated for illnesses, that's a possible

solution. Another possibility is being able to spend more quality time; quality time with the parents in the evening, time for homework, something like this seems to round the child's growth in a good way.

(FFPD) I think to continue programming. Somebody once said that you continue to do a thing even if you don't understand it. I think sometimes programming or concepts people just don't understand. Keep offering it up and making it more inviting. I've seen our parents night grow, because we keep plugging in and maybe making it creative, adding elements of surprise, fun and food, you know just ministering to the family, the whole body. I think if we continue to do things like that they will keep coming and the numbers will continue to grow.

(FFPB) I think maybe having educational training for the parents at night, throughout the day and on Saturdays when parents are off, after school because some of them work different hours. Maybe they can have access to online classes at the school, the public library or at home.

(FFPD) So, we make learning meaningful; we make it fun, applicable, even connect it to home. I think that also, you know if I think I can do a thing if you equip me in giving me some knowledge in knowing how to do it well, then I can be more effective in helping my child at home. Sometimes some of our parents need assistance and they may ask you "What can I do at home to help move little Johnny from a to z?" So, I think that providing programming whether the numbers are large or small, is just to put the resources out there.

When responding to face-to-face question 9, the topic of Family Night surfaced frequently. Some of the following comments were:

(FFPB) We encourage our parents to come and support us with our Family Nights.

(FFPA) I've been to Family Nights and we do have a lot of parents that show up, and especially the ones that I don't expect to show up.

(FGPB)But having the different Family Nights is a great way to get them involved and for parents to experience some of the academics we teach daily.

(FGPD) It's a school thing definitely, because it's a good way for them to get involved. A lot of times I know on our campus we showcase technology. I don't think the parents realize the technology we have here at our school that engages us even further, that's definitely a big plus.

(FFPD) We have programs at night. Just last night, we had Family Math Night, which is a time for parents to come and see what their children are learning and come and get hands on experience in the different areas of math.

Responses to focus group question 2. When asked, "What could you offer the parents through a Parent Club?" The participant responses were the following:

(FGPB) We could offer them guidance as to ways to help their child with homework. We could or maybe have resources available for anything that's going on at home as well. A Parent Club would be another means of getting all of the parents involved in getting the help they need with certain things, like types of homework they

don't understand and maybe someone else could help them. That would be a part of the club.

(FGPA) Homework help for those parents who may not understand the new ways that skills are being taught in school, or the strategies that students are suppose to use at home. This organization should stress the importance of parental involvement by reminding parents that they are their child's first educator, and the schools are not the only means of education and influence. The responsibility of implementation would be the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), administrators and teachers. All staff should be involved if only making suggestions to the PTO for things that need to be addressed, or ideas and resources that can be given.

(FGPC) Educational tools that will allow them to assist their children with their class work or homework. The school could provide monthly incentives to the parents, and the PTO can address the problem more efficiently by weekly follow-up contacts.

(FGPD) A Parent Club could serve as an excellent outlet for a support group where participants could share out and even benefit from visiting speakers on parenting issues. Some topics that could possibly be addressed are effective parenting and disciplining with love and logic.

Summary. Each of the four focus group participants suggested viable solutions to address the lack of parental involvement concern at ABC Elementary School. Focus group question 2 asked the participants "What they could offer the parents through a Parent Club?" and answers varied from guidance for helping with homework, resources for parents, and opportunities for parents to be involved. The four individual face-to-face

participants offered suggestions to face-to-face question 9, "What would be a viable

solution for the parental involvement problem at ABC Elementary School." A summary

of the responses were: offer educational training for parents; offer online resources from

home, school, or the public library; continue hosting Family Night activities; and provide

resources to connect home to school. There were no additional themes that emerged from

the data collected from participant responses from the research or interview questions.

Summary of the Themes and Findings

The five themes were aligned with the two research questions in order to help the

researcher answer the two questions that led this case study. Themes 1, 2, and 3 aligned

with research question 1, and themes 4 and 5 aligned with research question 2.The two

research questions and five theme alignments are explained in detail in section 5 under

the Interpretation of Findings heading. The participant responses created the themes that

enabled me to answer the two research questions.

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Discrepant Cases

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Merriam and Associates (2002) suggested that researchers include negative or

discrepant data when reporting their findings. Within this qualitative case study, when

conducting the focus group interview and face-to-face interviews participants were

encouraged to speak openly, freely, and honestly, which allowed the conversations to be

in-depth and open. Upon examining the raw data collected from the focus group

interview, and face-to-face interviews, coding the transcripts, and themes that emerged,

there were two discrepant cases found in the face-to-face interview transcript. When

asked during the face-to-face interview about, "In what ways is your school receptive to

parental involvement?" (FFPA) replied, "I'm new here."Also, during the face-to-face interview when asked, "Can you provide examples of when a parent was too involved?" (FFPC) answered, "I have not had that experience." These differences within the data increase the creditability for the reader (Creswell, 2003), but do not impact the overall data analysis. The differences among the data can be explained because separate questions were used for both interview sessions, but they were similar in style.

Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Based on the data collected from the focus group interview and individual face-to-face interviews of the eight participants, five universal themes were identified. The data collected from the focus group interview and individual face-to-face interviews did not yield different themes because the question styles were similar in nature and collectively focused on parental involvement. These identified themes related to the two research questions: teacher perceptions and barriers, communication, teacher expectations for parental involvement, building effective relationships, and solutions and resources to improve parental involvement. The following patterns, relationships, and themes are described and supported by the data. The themes identified in this study intertwine in addressing the lack of parental involvement problem at ABC Elementary School. It is apparent that there is possibly a disconnection between school and home, based on student test scores, evidence of fragmented parent and teacher relationships, and disjointed channels of communication. Examples of this data were discussed in the previous theme subtopics.

As a result, participant responses provided support for the five identified themes in the findings section and did not identify additional themes. Three identified essential pattern correlations aligned with the two research questions. Based on the types of interviews conducted, focus group, individual face-to-face, and follow-up, the themes emerged from the data collected during the coding process.

Teacher Perception, Barriers, and Expectations for Involvement

Participants in the face-to-face interviews were asked how teacher perceptions of parents impacted parental involvement and student achievement. One participant (FFPD) stated that "perceptions were key in student achievement and parental involvement." One participant stated that "an open door signifies to the parent that you are welcome, and gives the impression that we are working together." The teacher's perceptions were based on direct and personal experiences with parents in this school community. The participant responses characterized a general sense of disconnect between the classroom and home. Some participants from the focus group and face-to-face group stated the belief that possibly parents were intimidated by them, or what they thought teachers represented. This perception served as a major barrier to parents being involved, along with parents having to work and parents lack of educational competency.

Teacher expectations for parental involvement were discussed within both interview groups. The essence of teacher expectations emerged from the focus group question 1, "What do you want from the parents at ABC Elementary School?"and face-to-face question 4, "In what ways is your school receptive?" and face-to-face question 7, "Does parental involvement make a difference in student achievement?" For question 1,

participants responded that they wanted more parental involvement in the classroom, help with homework, providing school supplies, and more visibility in the school. Participant FFPC stated that, "parental involvement is positively reflected in a student's academic progress and respect level." Two face-to-face participants shared personal experiences in being involved with their child's education, which confirmed their belief in parental involvement.

In responding to question 4, regarding school receptiveness, participants for the most part stated positively that their school was receptive, but believed that parents did not always respond. Parents were often no shows for parent conferences or did not actively participant in programs offered by the school.

The responses from the participants are in agreement that teacher perceptions of parents and the parent barriers are associated with teacher expectations for involvement. Teacher perceptions were expressed through their expectations for involvement. Teacher expectations for involvement were commonly communicated through word of mouth or flyers sent home with students.

Communication and Building Effective Relationships

Communication resonated throughout most of the interview sessions. In discussing communication there were negative and positive associations. There were instances of a lack of communication, written communication, and ongoing communication. From the focus group interview, and face-to-face interviews, most questions alluded to requiring some means of communication. The participants expressed the need for parents to contact them and also for them to contact parents in order to

communicate specifics about homework, behavior concerns, school events, volunteering at school, requesting school supplies, or to provide assistance for parents in helping with homework.

Participants expressed the various options used to communicate with parents, sending home the homework folder, behavior folder, personal notes or letters, and praise calls. The essential means of communicating with parents was through parent conferences; however, an issue that the upper grades participants sometimes experienced was parents showing up unannounced wanting to conference. This situation often interfered with classroom instruction and prevented teachers from being prepared.

In examining the patterns between communication and building effective relationships, it became apparent that parent-teacher and teacher relationships are fragmented. In order for there to be an effective parental involvement program, teachers must communicate their expectations to parents and parents must be equipped with the necessary skills to be able to help their children. Based on the findings, one major issue that was addressed was concerning parent conferences. In order to create a parent conference system that positively affects the students, teachers need to consider barriers and perceptions that were discussed in the study. Creating successful channels of communication besides the homework folders may result in building relationships.

One suggestion from the findings that will be addressed in Section 5 discussed developing a system to schedule conferences, which would inform parents of the importance of conferencing with teachers and the advantages of scheduling in advance. The combined connection of parents and teachers productively communicating can result

in building effective relationships that lead to improved parental involvement programs and increase in student achievement. By scheduling conferences in advance parents will be able to understand how interruptions affect instruction and permits the teacher to be prepared. This statement is suggested so that parents and teachers can continue to build relationships, and keep the channels open for ongoing communication, in order to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement at ABC Elementary School.

Some key terms derived from this theme were communication, support, and fostering the student's education. Building relationships are components that provide support for the parents and the teacher in order to establish ongoing communication, which fosters the educational process, improves parental involvement, and increases student achievement.

Building Effective Relationships, Solutions, and Resources

The participants agreed that building relationships with parents was a possible solution and critical component of an effective parental involvement program. The participants all spoke favorably of how relationships impact parental involvement and student achievement. Several aspects identified that could impair building parent and teacher relationships were: parents showing up unannounced to conference with teachers, parents not feeling comfortable talking with teachers, teachers not creating inviting classrooms, and teachers or parents not keeping the channels of communication open.

One participant (FFPD) suggested that teachers make learning meaningful, fun, and applicable to a home school connection, where students are able to share with their

parents memorable things they did in school, and get parents interested as well. Possible solutions to improve parental involvement suggested by the participants were as follows: continuing to host Family Night in order to engage parents, which informs them of what students are learning at school; highlighting the school's technology programs that are available; scheduling parent conferences to avoid classroom interruptions, which allows teachers adequate time to be prepared; and encouraging parents to spend quality time with the family.

Another participant, FFPA, identified the following solutions to improve the parent-teacher situation at the school: positive contacts, praise phone calls, construct classroom atmospheres that are inviting, and create an environment of positive success. This participant stated that these are not the whole solution, but it is something teachers can do to improve the situation.

In addition, participants proposed to continue providing programming that provides essential resources for parents. Resources that were recommended were online classes that can be accessed at the school, the home, or the public library. Also discussed was the possibility of creating a Parent Club that would offer assistance with homework as well as provide resources for not only school matters, but home or personal matters as well. For example, the Parent Club would provide resources to parents to equip them with the necessary skills to help with homework, offer educational tools, organize support groups, and provide visiting speakers to discuss parenting issues. The follow-up responses that were sent via email stated that the PTA could be responsible for implementing the Parent Club and parental involvement resources would be tailored for

parents represented within the school community. FGPB was the only participant who suggested having Homeroom Parents that serve as volunteers that assist the teacher and communicate with other parents to home and school.

Evidence of Quality

This case study followed procedures to assure accuracy of the data of trustworthiness, member checks, and triangulation and the appropriate evidence occurs in the transcripts presented in Section 4. To assure the accuracy of this qualitative case study, the focus group interview and face-to-face interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed using the coding process. The core strategies used to create this quality study were member checking (Merriam, 2009) and thick rich description (Creswell, 2007). The data were gathered and analyzed based on the participant responses and review of the literature in section 2 of this study. The district granted permission to conduct the focus group interview and face-to-face interviews with participants from ABC Elementary School. Before consenting to participate, participants were informed of the nature of the study, the procedures involved in the study, the necessary measures taken to ensure confidentiality, and that their participation was voluntary, each participant signed without hesitation. My nonsupervisory role at ABC Elementary did not affect the relationship with the participants, the research, or interfere with the performance of the participants in this case study research. Eight participants were chosen through purposeful sampling. The participants were certified teachers currently working at ABC Elementary School with 1 to 20 years of teaching experience.

Member checking (Merriam, 2009) and thick rich description (Creswell, 2007) were used to assure accuracy and validity of the research. The data were collected from focus group interview and individual face-to-face interviews that were audio taped. Next, the audio tapes were immediately transcribed by the researcher in order to classify general themes and to identify discrepancies. Participants received sealed copies of the transcript review to determine the accuracy of the findings. The triangulation analyses consisted of data collection from the focus group interview transcripts, the face-to-face interview transcripts, and the follow–up responses. The multiple data collected from these sources yielded similar results which identified the five themes.

Unobtrusive data was reviewed in accordance with Research Question 2 to aid in providing solutions to address the lack of parental involvement problem. Suggestions were made to continue with Family Night activities in order to provide families with hands on activities that enrich the curriculum, and possibly incorporate additional activities. Further review of the unobtrusive data provided the following results: teachers agreed that Family Night was effective in getting parents involved with academic content such as math, reading, science, and physical fitness, and providing enriched curricular hands-on activities. The photographs provided the visuals of attendance and families interacting with the hands on activities. The sign-in sheets recorded the attendance numbers, which reflected an increase from the Reading Night to the Science Night and Math Night activities. Attendance increase was attributed to adding food to the event.

The PTA did not meet regularly, but there were elected officers and a bulletin board posted in the main hall way that detailed various activities for parental

involvement. The Parents as Teachers Program provided campus based resources and home visits for parents of preschool aged children. Classes were held every two weeks on the school campus and were usually small in number; the sign-in sheets reflected attendance that varied from 5 to 24 per class session (this total included the child, the parent, and if the parent was pregnant; the unborn child as well). In this program the teacher conducted activities for parents to use at home which included developmentally interactive activities for preschool age children. The program also provided the following resources for the parents: medical, educational, employment, and monthly reading materials.

The office sign-in sheets include an area where parents could identify the reason for the visit to the school. The primary reasons for parent visits were to volunteer, for parent conferences, or to pick up their children for early dismissal. Records indicted a higher number of visits for early dismissals, and fewest came in to volunteer. Often the parent conference consisted of the parent being contacted by the school because of a discipline concern, and not for academics.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement, and identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement. Focus group, individual face-to-face and follow-up interview responses were used to answer the research questions stated at the beginning of this section. The participant responses from focus group interview and face-to-face interviews were similar in comparison to the topics and identified five themes related to parental

involvement. These findings implied that focus group interview and face-to-face interview responses were similar and supported the findings. Specific barriers identified by participants were: parents' inadequate educational competency levels, work, parents being intimidated by staff, parents embarrassed to help for help, poor communication between parents and teachers specifically in reference to parent conferences, and undeveloped relationships that resulted in parents not feeling welcomed or being invited to participate.

The findings for this study discussed in Section 5 are relative and reflective to the literature review in Section 2. Further discussions in Section 5 will include the interpretation of findings, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Overview

As noted, parental involvement in children's education at school and at home during the early developmental years is important. There is a need for parents and teachers to establish partnerships that are positive, and lead to an increase in parental involvement and student achievement (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Parental involvement with school and home connectors can be associated with successful student achievement. Researchers concluded that when parents are visible in the schools, interact with teachers and help with homework, the value of education transfers from the parent to the child and the overall result is academic success (Duncan, 2007; Knopf & Swick, 2007; Spera, 2006). Based on the findings from the literature review in Section 2, there is a noticeable need for parental involvement throughout the developmental years of a child's educational experiences.

The purpose of this case study was to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. Points of interest were perceptions, barriers, relationships, and viable solutions. The problem identified for this study was the lack of parental involvement at a local elementary school, ABC Elementary School. The areas of concern were focused on the following facts: the school was rated academically unacceptable based on student test scores, the PTA was inactive, and teachers expressed concerns regarding low parental involvement. Equally important to this study was the initiative to identify teacher perceptions of barriers that prevented parents from being involved in their child's education and propose possible solutions.

A qualitative approach was used because it is an extension of ordinary conversations. This type of research gives the participants a voice, provides an opportunity for them to share their experiences, and give examples that explain their answers in regards to the issue at hand (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Eight participants were purposefully selected to participate in this study. The unit of analysis for this case study focused on parental involvement and the data collected identified themes and patterns as defined by the initial research question (Yin, 2009). The primary tools for collecting data for this study were focus group interview, individual face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews, and unobtrusive data. Each interview session, focus group and face-to-face was audio taped, and immediately transcribed. A typed copy of the transcript review was given to each participant to check for accuracy. The following strategies were used to analyze the data, triangulation from different sources, member checking to provide credibility to the data, and thick rich description to relay the findings.

The focus group interview and face-to-face interviews were used to identify teacher perceptions and possible parent barriers that impact parental involvement at ABC Elementary School. There were two guiding research questions that were used for this qualitative case study. The follow-up questions were used to clarify participant responses, and the unobtrusive data aided in providing insight into the social phenomenon of the study. The unobtrusive data also served as the spoken data for the study.

The five main themes developed from the data collection and analyses that correlate with the research questions for this study are: (a) teacher perceptions and barriers, (b) communication, (c) teacher expectations for involvement, (d) building

effective relationships and solutions, and (e) resources to improve parental involvement. From these five themes, three patterns emerged. The first pattern was the connection between teacher perceptions and barriers and teacher expectations for involvement. The participants identified possible parental barriers that prevented parents from being involved with their children and examined their perceptions and expectations. The second pattern was the association between communication and building effective relationships. Various issues concerning communication overlapped into other themes, but the participants felt that it was a critical component in building relationships. The third pattern was the link between building effective relationships, solutions, and resources to improve parental involvement. The participants commented on the importance of parents building effective and collaborative relationships in order to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement. Further examination of the themes and patterns will be discussed in the interpretation of the findings.

The seminal source for this case study was Epstein's (1995) theoretical foundation of typology framework of parental involvement. This typology described practices and activities that foster parental involvement for parents, teachers, and students. These practices and activities help to develop and implement home and school partnerships. The data collected from this case study research is in accordance with Epstein's (1995) conceptual parental involvement framework. The framework includes the following typologies: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. The literature review in section 2 supports the inclusion of parental involvement to increase student achievement.

Compared to previous studies, the solutions for this study are not new, but they are specific to this study. Because of the recent legislative mandates from NCLB (2002) schools have guidelines in place to implement effective parental involvement programs. Often insufficient funding hinders the operation of programs. Students are still being left behind and some parental involvement programs are not operating to achieve student success.

Interpretation of Findings

The qualitative case study results in section 4 developed from focus group interviews, individual face-to-face interviews, and follow-up interviews. Five essential themes were derived from data collection and analysis of the data, and patterns emerged from within and across the cases. Data collection and analysis were done concurrently during the research process. An interpretation of the eight participant responses that relate to the two leading research questions are as follows.

Research Question 1

"According to teachers, what are the perceived barriers to parental involvement?" In order to answer this research question, the participants were initially asked to identify perceived barriers that impact parental involvement. Many barriers can deter parents from being involved in their child's education. The participants listed the following barriers, work, parents' inadequate educational competency, lack of ongoing communication between parents and teachers, and parents being intimidated by teachers. The fact that participant's belief that parents did not seek help, and therefore help was not offered from the participants, is significant for change. These barriers can affect building effective

relationships and impact parental involvement. The issue of teachers' perceptions of parents being intimidated, shying away, and not reaching out is critical in regard to tearing down those walls and replacing them with channels of communication and creating foundations to build relationships.

Face-to-face interview questions asked participants to define parental involvement. Researchers have conducted studies for years on parental involvement and continually strive to be in agreement on a common definition. Huntsinger and Jose (2009) stated that parents and educators' views, opinions, and definitions of parental involvement are varied and different. This variance is obvious due to parent views in relation to teacher views of parental involvement. Parents typically describe parental involvement as community-based, while teachers on the other hand describe parental involvement as school-based (Overstreet et al. ,2005).The participants in the individual face-to face interview sessions used the following phrases to define parental involvement: parents taking an interest, parents being involved at the school, helping with teaching, helping at home, and supporting programs at school

As stated, parental involvement is significant to student achievement. The study of this research extends the work of other researchers. My research is similar to Joshi et al.'s (2005) in that both studies examined teacher perceptions. However, this research extends those ideas by directly obtaining data from the participants but did not include classroom practices. I examined different factors from an insider's perspective to conduct this research. The responses emerged from the participants first hand personal and ongoing experiences with the parents at ABC Elementary School. Bakker et al. (2007)

reported that teacher perceptions affected parental involvement. The findings from this

case study indicated that the participants did not believe their perceptions impacted

parental involvement but believed identified parental barriers prevented parents from

being involved. The findings of this research are similar to Harris and Goodall's (2008)

study that reported various social and economic factors can affect parental involvement.

Zahn (2006) stated that teachers low expectations of parents results in low parental

involvement. The possible expectations from the participants shared the belief that

parents at ABC Elementary School wanted to be involved with their child's education but

possibly did not know how to help them. The viable solutions were generated from

participant suggestions in compliance to equipping parents with skills to help their

children. In section 2, the results of Lawson (2003) were shared that state that teachers

did not believe parents realized the importance of their involvement in their child's

education. However, the findings from this qualitative case study reported that the

participants acknowledged the parents willingness to help their children but lacked the

educational competency to help their children.

From Section 4, theme 1 correlated the impact of teacher perceptions and barriers

to parental involvement. According to the literature from Section 2, Bakker et al. (2007)

stated that teachers' perceptions of parents have an effect on parental involvement and

student success. Another significant statement is that when teachers are not familiar with

the families represented within the school community, teacher perceptions impact parents

being involved, and sever communication connections (Theodorou, 2008). As a result of

identifying teacher perceptions, educational leaders can plan interventions to include

whole family involvement. Parents who perceive the school as supportive and open to communication are more likely to engage in parental involvement and help their children to be successful (Holloway et al., 2008).

In Section 4, theme 2 communication was voiced throughout several responses. Specifically, the participants stated that ongoing communication with parents consisted of sending homework folders or behavior folders home daily. Other forms of communication listed in the data were positive phone calls, praise calls, notes home, and parent conferences. In addressing parent conferences some of the major issues collected from the data dealt with parents showing up unannounced for conferences during instructional time, parents as no-shows for conferences, and parents not returning phone calls. Therefore, based on the data collected, communication was identified as a barrier that impacted parental involvement when parents did not sign and return the homework or behavior folders, did not return phone calls, and did not show up for scheduled conferences. In reference to the data, participants suggested scheduling parent conferences in order to avoid classroom interruptions, distractions, and permit teachers to adequately prepare for conferences. Teachers identified solutions to promote effective communication systems with the parents. Their suggestions were to continue using the communication systems in place with the daily homework folders. The participants also acknowledged that the system could be improved by utilizing a sign in sheet, where parents can schedule conferences in advance.

In reference to the theoretical foundation for this study, Epstein (1995) stated that communication creates successful connections between home and school. As mentioned,

not only is communication essential between parents and teachers but it serves as a major factor in building and improving parental involvement and increasing student achievement. Participants commented that the channels of communication were often disconnected because parents did not return phone calls or did not show up for scheduled parent conferences. This lack of communication impacted building effective relationships and prevented parents from being involved. Dabrusky (2007) reported that parent's perception of school operation rated communication higher than other typologies within the framework. The participants realized that in order to effectively communicate with the parents, the recommended solutions focused on improving the channels of communication in order to effectively increase parental involvement, and student achievement within the school community.

Theme 3 emerged from Research Question 1, which identified teacher expectations in relation to parental involvement. Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) stated that economically disadvantaged parental participation is important in the academic success for children. The participants shared expectations of specific involvement that included helping with homework, communicating with the school through the homework or behavior folders, being accessible for the teachers, visibility within the school during school hours, participating in Family Night activities, and attending parent conferences. The data collected supports establishing ongoing communication, and providing various opportunities for parents and teachers to acknowledge their expectations to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement.

Research Question 2

"According to teachers what are the viable solutions to these perceived barriers to parental involvement?"

Participants provided useful ideas for a proposed Parent Club to address parental involvement. They provided some of the following suggestions, providing resources for parenting skills, assistance with homework, educational tools for parents, support groups, and visiting speakers. The participants requested more parental involvement from parents during school, after school, helping with homework, volunteering, visibility in the school, and providing school supplies. In addition, participants from both interview groups suggested improvising and improving Family Night activities as a viable solution to improve parental involvement.

With ongoing channels of communication, parents and teachers can began to seal fragmented relationships and bind together for the common cause of improving parental involvement and increasing student achievement. Parent school partnerships allow students to be successful, for parents to build relationships, which also allows for parent involvement to support students (Mitchell-Price, 2009). Providing resources and proposing solutions that specifically address barriers, communication, and perceptions may possibly aide in planning, preparation, and implementing programs that significantly diminish the lack of parental involvement problem and considerably increase student achievement at ABC Elementary School.

In reviewing the literature in Section 2, the following themes emerged and are discussed below: teacher expectations of involvement, building effective relationships,

and solutions and resources to improve parental involvement. As stated, the implementation of NCLB (2002) focused on parents being involved in their child's education. The Act requires schools, districts, and states to build partnerships between the parents and the school. Schools should provide opportunities for parental involvement that include parent-teacher conferences, parents working with their children, and offer opportunities for parent's participation in decision-making.

Theme 4, Section 4 discussed building relationships. According to Vygotsky's (1978) constructivism theory, the role of parents and teachers support educating children in the course of building relationships between parents and teachers, and through educating parents and the community to increase student achievement.

One research article (Forsberg, 2007) discussed how Swedish parents assumed the responsibility as the rearing experts and teachers were the educational experts. Many parents may believe that teaching is the teacher's job, but they must realize they play an important role in their child's education as well. As teachers examine their expectations of parental involvement they are able to identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement. One important strategy that educators can implement would be to familiarize themselves with the families of the school community they serve and value the families that are representative of the school community (Cheung, 2008). When compared to other studies, the solutions listed here are not new but are specific and exclusive to ABC Elementary School. Based on previous research, educators have included parent input in selecting programs to improve parental involvement. Unlike the program Bradshaw et al. (2009) developed that aimed to include parent and teacher input,

this case study involved soliciting responses from teachers employed at ABC Elementary School; parent involvement was not included in identifying solutions. According to Pomerantz et al. (2007), educators need to plan activities that encourage parental involvement in order to ensure their contributions are productive to student achievement.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change are clearly grounded in Section 1 and the outcomes are presented in Section 4. Societies in general and educational researchers have long been interested in the positive effect that parental involvement may have on student achievement. Various research studies including those of Tan and Goldberg (2008), Epstein and Sanders (2006), and Shatkin and Gersberg (2007) provide insight into parents being visible in the schools, being involved in the decision-making process, interacting with teachers, and helping with homework. These factors lead to the value of education that transfers from the parent to the child, and the overall result is student success. Based on the findings from the focus group, individual face-to-face and follow-up interviews the participants did not believe their perceptions impacted parental involvement, but assumed the identified parental barriers hindered parental involvement. The participants expressed statements that acknowledged that they believed some parents were intimidated by them and some were not educationally competent enough to help their children. The findings from this study imply that as the ABC School community begins to review and evaluate some of the possible underlying factors that affect parental involvement, this will permit them to plan, implement, and evaluate the implementation of an effective parental involvement program.

The following barriers were identified, parents working, parents being intimidated by staff, lack of ongoing communication between parents and teachers, and parents' inability to help their children because of their lack of educational competencies. The participants in this study indicated that parent and teacher relationships were fragmented. The participants' responses from the interviews stated their perceptions that some parents seemed to be intimidated by what they represented, or the parent's lack of educational competency caused them to shy away from communicating with teachers in an effort to help their children. This resulted in a fragmented relationship between the parents and the teachers which included a lack of effort to communicate between the parents and teachers. Participants concurred that the school should continue hosting Family Nights at the school to get parents involved. Family Nights provide academic enrichment activities for hands on learning, quality time, and opportunities for parents and teachers to build effective relationships. One participant's solution included making learning meaningful, fun, applicable, and establishing a home to school connection.

The literature review in Section 2 points out that recent change within the family structure, economic instability, and the lack of access to improved technology can be factors that affect schools and families (Caspe et al., 2007). Today's traditional family roles have switched to the roles that are more nontraditional. Some families in the ABC School community have experienced extreme economical circumstances or have been affected by the economy shift which has resulted in grandparents or extended family members caring for school-aged children. These factors can result in negative or positive implications for parental involvement. The parents in this school community might

eventually benefit from a Parent Club, because of the potential resources that would be available to equip them with necessary transitional skills that would enable them to successfully help their children.

This study will serve as the catalyst to ignite the trend for improving parental involvement to increase student achievement. The results from this study provide the implications for social change to build parent and teacher relationships that lead to student success. This will prepare students with successful employment skills for income gains within the work force; equip parents with necessary skills to help their children, which will positively promote social change within the school community. Successful students will benefit socially, financially, and emotionally, thus positively impacting the future.

Recommendations for Action

The staff at ABC Elementary School was informed of the results at the conclusion of this study. The purpose of sharing the results was to inform the staff of the identified problem, and the results can serve as a catalyst in implementing strategies to improve parental involvement and increase student achievement within the school community.

The results from this study can be a part of a joint effort to assist other schools in the school pyramid that may be experiencing the same or similar problem with parental involvement. Other schools can benefit by presenting the study's results at district in-service for training staff on examining their own perceptions, aid in identifying how those perceptions potentially impact parental involvement, and assist in planning viable solutions to improve parental involvement to increase student achievement. Additionally,

the results from this study can be submitted to educational institutions of higher learning to provide collegiate preparation for preservice teachers in dealing with identifying teacher's perceptions and examining the impact of these perceptions on parental involvement and student achievement.

The importance of my contribution allows me to serve as an active agent in developing and implementing parental involvement programs to increase student achievement within the district in accordance with the Parent Engagement Department.

Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations for further study are listed below:

This case study can be repeated at ABC Elementary School using a quantitative study design with different questions. This method would employ using a survey to incorporate statistical data to complement the existing data.

Using parents as participants, this case study can be repeated utilizing a qualitative design with focus group or face-to-face interviews, with different questions. This information would provide the parents perspectives on parental involvement.

This case study can be conducted using a quantitative survey design with more than one school in this area pyramid. The study could invite additional schools to participate and involve a much larger sample. With the increase in size, more staff and parents would become more accessible to validate the above findings of this study.

Reflection

Although it may seem that parental involvement is significant in a child's education, educators have observed the rise and decline of parental involvement in

education. Parental involvement is positively related to student success, and is connected to student attitudes and social behavior (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Theodorou, 2008).

My motivation for studying parental involvement centers on my recall of how teachers and parents interacted positively during my early years in grade school. The entire community was involved in raising and disciplining the neighborhood children. Families were a closed unit, which included activities that involved the family as a complete unit. As a result, active parental involvement in school leads to families that are involved in increasing student success (Dessoff, 2009).

The unit is fragmented and disconnected like a broken circle. Children come home from school to empty residences, single parents are the independent providers for the family, and the economy has most families in survival mode. In particular, some cultures may view parental involvement as the teacher's responsibility, and some may view it as a shared role with the teacher. Parents need to be informed of specific roles and expectations involving parental involvement which lead to developing relationships that ensure student success (Green et al., 2007).

Some factors that contribute that to the lack of parental involvement could be teacher perceptions, and parent and teacher relationships (Bakker et al., 2007). Often teacher perceptions can hinder parental involvement within the home and school, which can affect student achievement. Parents who perceive the school as supportive and open to communication are more likely to be engaged with parental involvement and assist their children in achieving academic success (Holloway et al., 2008). With this in mind, the literature review of parental involvement helped to develop my personalized

advanced scholarly study and examine the impact of perceptions as barriers to parental

involvement and identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Conclusion

Studies have reported that teacher perceptions can affect parental involvement.

Therefore, teachers and parents can work to build relationships that will foster unity and

focus on increasing student achievement. Parents are a child's first teachers and can be

helpful as teachers at home and supporters at school. Overall, building a working

relationship between parents and teachers is an important element in developing an

effective parental involvement program. Schools that address diverse cultures share

experiences and network with other schools to help increase the involvement of diverse

parent groups (Denessen et al., 2007). The data collected from the focus group interview

and face-to-face interviews helped to analyze the needs and areas of concern and propose

viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Parental involvement has significant effects on the academic success for children

and encompasses many areas within the school, home, and community. In conclusion,

parents and teachers need to build relationships and collaborate in planning, solving,

exploring, and developing programs that improve involvement and increase student

achievement. Collaborative parental involvement benefits students, parents, and

educators throughout the course of education (Epstein, 2006).

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Appendix A
Focus Group Interview

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research case study on parental involvement. You were chosen for the study because you are a certified teacher at ABC Elementary School. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Frankie Johnson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. The researcher is in a non-supervisory role and it will not affect the relationship with the participants, the research or interfere with the performance of the participants in this case study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in an audio taped focus group interview
- The focus group interview will be after school
- The interview time limit is 25 minutes

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at ABC Elementary School or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
To reduce the potential risks of confidentiality disclosure the interview will be audio taped and participant signatures will be securely filed. In addition, participant identity will not be disclosed at any time during the study. The interview will be conducted after school so that data collection will not take instructional time away from students.

The benefit of being in the study is that participants will become aware of how teacher perceptions of barriers impact parental involvement. The participant may develop an awareness of how to develop relationships with parents and identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for being in the study.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 817 615-6211 or email fvjohnson87@ sbcglobal.net .If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB 03-30-11-0126855** and it expires on **March 29, 2012.**

The researcher will give you a sealed copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature   _____

Researcher's Written or Electronic*Signature   _____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix B
Face-to-Face Interview
CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research case study on parental involvement. You were chosen for the study because you are a certified teacher at ABC Elementary School. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Frankie Johnson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. The researcher is in a non-supervisory role and it will not affect the relationship with the participants, the research or interfere with the performance of the participants in this case study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of teacher perceptions of barriers to parental involvement.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in an audio taped face-to-face interview
- The face-to-face interview will be after school
- The interview time limit is 25 minutes

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at ABC Elementary School or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
To reduce the potential risks of confidentiality disclosure the interview will be audio taped and participant signatures will be securely filed. In addition, participant identity will not be disclosed at any time during the study. The interview will be conducted after school so that data collection will not take instructional time away from students.
The benefits of being in the study are that participants will become aware of how teacher perceptions of barriers impact parental involvement. The participant may develop an awareness of how to develop relationships with parents and identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Compensation:
You will not be compensated for being in the study.

Confidentiality:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 817 615-6211 or email fvjohnson87@ sbcglobal.net .If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210.

Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB** Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB 03-30-11-0126855** and it expires on **March 29, 2012.**

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Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent _____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature _____

Researcher's Written or Electronic*Signature _____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or

any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix C

Parental Involvement: Focus Group Interview Questions

Number of Participants: _____   Researcher: _____

Date: _____   Site: _____

Key Questions:

1. What do you want from the parents at ABC Elementary?
2. What could you offer the parents through a Parent Club?
3. What do you like most/least about parent conferences?
4. Describe some of the various options that you offer parents to get involved?
5. As the demographics change for this campus, how has it affected parental involvement?
6. In order for parents to be involved why is it important to have a relationship with parents at ABC Elementary?

    Closing Question

7. Am I representing your thoughts accurately?

      Thank you for your time.

Focus Group Demographics

Appendix D

<u>Face-to-Face Interview Questions</u>

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. My name is Frankie Johnson and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. The topic of my doctoral study is how teacher perceptions of parents impact parental involvement.

Researchers have reported that parental involvement is essential to student success. Parental involvement transfers from the parent to the child and results in academic achievement. Do the teacher perceptions serve as barriers and impact parental involvement?

<u>Define the term:</u>

1. In a few words, define what involvement means to you?

<u>Examples of the term:</u>

2. What are some examples of how parents demonstrate involvement in their child's education?
3. Can you provide examples of when a parent was too involved?
4. In what ways is your school receptive to parental involvement?

<u>Background/Personal Reflections:</u>

5. Why is it important to build a relationship with your student's parents?
6. How do teacher perceptions impact parental involvement and student achievement?

<u>Parental Involvement Impact:</u>

7. Does **<u>parental involvement</u>** make a difference with student achievement? Explain why or why not.
8. What do you feel are factors /**<u>barriers</u>** that possibly prevent parents from being involved?
9. What would be a **<u>viable solution</u>** for the parental involvement problem at ABC Elementary?

Again, thank you for your time.

Date of the Face-to-Face Interview: _____

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EDUCATION:

Walden University, 2011
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Ed.D. Teacher Leadership

Texas Woman's University, 2007
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Professional Certification:

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Elementary Self-Contained, 1-8th   1978

Early Childhood Education-handicapped, Pk-6th   1978

Generic Special Education, Pk-12th   1978

EXPERIENCE:

FWISD
Ft. Worth, TX
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Spec Ed Teacher   1979-1979