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African American Parent Perceptions of Barriers to Parental Involvement

Avis Foley
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Avis Foley

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

African American Parent Perceptions of Barriers to Parental Involvement

by

Avis Foley

MA, Troy University, 2008

BS, Purdue University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

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Abstract

Parental involvement in schools has been linked to student academic success and dropout prevention. However, some parents are disenfranchised by the educational system because they do not know how to become involved in the schools. The purpose of this study was to identify the barriers to parental involvement in a rural school district with increased dropouts and low academic success. Epstein's framework provided structure to analyze the ways parents participate in schools, classify the barriers, and organize suggestions for improvement. The research questions focused on African American parents' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement by using a focus group, interviews, and a questionnaire. A qualitative research design and case study interviewing approach identified barriers to parental involvement. The sample consisted of 20 African American parents of middle and high school students. Data analysis included coding and categorizing themes. Findings revealed 4 specific barriers to parental involvement that included (a) unclear understanding of parental involvement, (b) inadequate school communication, (c) ineffective school leader support, and (d) communal disintegration. In addition, most parents identified varied teacher conference times as the most effective influence in promoting parental involvement. The project stemming from this doctoral study is the beginning of an ongoing parent engagement network that will utilize the educational network platform Edmodo to aid parents in implementing effective parental practices. The potential for social change includes increased academic success, improved behavior, and increased esteem among students as a result of active parental involvement.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my God. I hope that you are proud of the person I have become during this very challenging journey. You have been my strength, guidance, and source of peace the entire way. My doctoral journey has reaffirmed my belief that God has plans for my life that I cannot even begin to imagine! I will live up to my purpose.

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Section 1: The Problem

The lack of parental involvement in schools is recognized on local and national levels. For years, government legislation has encouraged school systems to promote parental involvement; however, parental involvement is still a concern among administration and educators. Bower and Griffin (2011) stated that although parental involvement is thoroughly analyzed and discussed on various platforms, “schools continue to struggle with increasing parental involvement with students of color and students of low socioeconomic status” (p. 77). Unfortunately, parental involvement drops significantly when students enter the middle and high school years (Gonzalez-Dehass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). Research indicates that weak parental involvement may create a loss of productivity among all stakeholders (Chen & Gregory, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). As students decline academically and regress behaviorally, examining parental involvement is necessary.

The Georgia Department of Education recognizes and understands the need for parental involvement and requires implementation in schools. The Department of Education implemented the Parental Involvement and Parent Engagement Program to improve parental involvement on various levels. Despite the program, the parental involvement deficit is one of the most intricate issues that remain in education today. I used the following questions to lead the project study:

1. What are the perceived barriers to parental involvement in schools that African American parents identify?

2. What are recommendations to break down barriers to African American parental involvement?

Parent engagement is an essential element in the educational process. The scarcity of parental engagement could potentially lead to adverse effects. The research study will investigate perceptions of African American parental involvement in Lane School District (a pseudonym) to discover barriers to parental involvement. Suggestions will be made by parent participants to take steps to identify barriers and restore parental involvement. As a result, students will gain the support needed to succeed. Qualitative research will be used to gain insight on barriers to African American parent participation. I collected data using interviews of African American parents and questionnaire responses to answer the research questions. In Section 1, I define the problem of the lack of parental involvement, provide reasons for the study, state the importance of the study, provide a literature review, and present implications to improve parental involvement for the future.

Definition of the Problem

Despite the benefits associated with parental involvement practices, research supports the notion that parent engagement should be implemented in all stages (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Although intervention programs have been implemented, the process by which these structures are carried out is hazy (Hill & Craft, 2003). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act supports partnerships that improve parental involvement and participation by providing support for parenting practices, information, and programs that aid parents in supportive education (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Negative outcomes such as low academic achievement and behavioral issues

(Epstein, 2001; Mackell, 2011) can result from a lack of parental involvement. The negative implications of the lack of parental involvement support the need to examine the details associated with parent involvement.

Numerous research studies, including those conducted by Villano (2008) and Epstein (2011), have linked parental involvement to numerous positive outcomes including grade advancement, dropout rate decline, improved graduation retention, and higher levels of academic attainment. When parental involvement is employed effectively, relationships among stakeholders and school climates will flourish (Epstein, 2011; Hornby & Witte, 2010).

Chen and Gregory (2009) explored the effects of parental involvement in relation to grades, behavior, and relational outcomes. The results of their study revealed that parents who placed expectations on their children were engaged academically when they were students themselves. How a parent views education will critically affect the learning process for the student (Chen & Gregory, 2009). Considering this outcome emphasizes the importance of addressing parental involvement. The problem this study addressed centered on barriers to parental involvement as described by African American parents. Research clearly emphasizes the lack of participation in urban school settings by African American parents (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

Researchers such as Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, and Cabrera (2012) concentrated on the assumed discrepancy among African American parents and non-African American parents. Several studies focus on parental involvement among various cultures but researchers have “rarely explored the perceptions of African American parents” (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008, p. 144).

Previous research indicates that some factors contributing to low parental involvement among African American parents include socioeconomic status and lack of interest (Brandon, Higgins, Pierce, & Brandon, 2010). Family structure and school relationships also significantly influence the level of involvement (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Various positive outcomes associated with parental involvement have been linked to improved attendance rates, conduct, and children's self-efficacy (Hornby & Witte, 2010; Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). Because of the positive outcomes, means to amplify parental involvement should be conceived to aid in student growth. Parental involvement plays a significant role when exploring how African American students best succeed (Mackell, 2011).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Lane School District (pseudonym) is an urban school district in north Georgia. The schools in this county serve working-class families. The community of the research site for this study is a predominantly middle-class, suburban environment outside a major metropolitan southern U.S. city. The community's population is more than 267,000. The demographics of the district are 68% African American, 24% White, 5% Asian, and 1% American Indian. The median household income is \$40,606, lower than the state average of \$49,179. An estimated 24% of the community's residents live below the poverty level and only 18% have earned advanced degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The school system is located outside a large southern U.S. city and has a student population of 51,757 students. The school district is predominantly African American. The demographics of the school system are 71% African American, 17% Hispanic, 5%

Asian, 4% White, and 3% multiracial (Georgia Department of Education, n.d).

Approximately 13% of parents in this district are unemployed and 82% of students qualify for free lunch. This African American population of parents and guardians represents diverse socioeconomic and family compositions.

Specifically, the local problem revolves around a lack of parental involvement as evidenced in Parent Teacher Association (PTA) attendance and evidence from school leaders and counselors. One of the key ways a parent becomes involved is through the school's PTA. The PTA serves as a resource for both families and communities. In addition to being a voice for all children, the PTA is devoted to making sure families, students, teachers, administrators, and community leaders have tools to promote the educational success of children and parental involvement in schools. Tasha Scott (pseudonym), Lane School District Council PTA president, stated that during the 2011–2012 school year, the school district under study experienced declines in the elementary, middle, and high school PTA membership. Scott also stated that the 2011–2012 school year, PTA parental membership had 4,741 members. In the 2012–2013 school year, PTA membership decreased by 52% (2,278 members). Several schools in the district currently have no PTA membership (A.S., personal communication, December 18, 2012). The decline in PTA membership involvement supports the idea that parental involvement should be studied. The PTA has strengthened family involvement in schools for decades and can aid in organizing volunteer opportunities, holding school fundraisers, and participating in several activities that support children and teachers (Padak & Rasinski, 2010). Educational resources such as the PTA can open doors for parents to promote student academic achievement.

I also spoke with six parent liaisons from both the middle and high school levels in Lane School District and all reported that no official record of attendance is kept for parent volunteering, student program nights, parent/teacher conferences, or any parental involvement activities because attendance numbers are so low. Contact details are needed to reach the parents effectively. Personal communication from administration, counselors, and parent liaisons also demonstrates the need to investigate parental involvement in the school district. One assistant middle school principal in this district expressed concern regarding the importance of parental involvement:

Parental involvement within this school district is not up to par. The lack of participation poses a potential problem for all students. It is important that barriers are identified so students will begin to receive the necessary support to achieve academic goals. Parents play an active role in the educational process and until light is shed on as to why they aren't as involved, our students will suffer. The district needs to implement more creative ways to involve parents (i.e., podcasts and video conferencing). This will aid the parents who want to be an intricate part of the school but their work schedule will not allow it. (M.S., personal communication, December 1, 2011)

The assistant principal's words may suggest that some parents want to be involved but do not understand how they can become effective and efficient. When an administrative leader attempts to address these perceived barriers, parental roles can be established and realized.

Although the role of parent liaisons is to work with the schools and the communities to encourage parental involvement, further evidence exploiting the lack of

parental involvement in the Lane School District is suggested in this quote from a parent liaison in the school district:

As the parent liaison, I have noticed that parent participation has varying numbers depending on the location and reason or issue being levied in the media (i.e., school violence, scandals). Such issues as loss of school accreditation, school closings, and new superintendent hiring/firing are mostly concerns of the parents. The attendance at these events is marginal. (J.B., personal communication, December 6, 2012)

The role of a parent liaison is to provide support resources for parents to actively transition into the role of effective parental involvement. Parents are also educated via workshops and newsletters on how to become involved. Liaisons are unable to provide the support needed if parents are not involved. The parent liaison serves as a bridge between school leaders and parents to ensure parents are provided with the tools needed to guarantee student success. Parental involvement is beneficial if parents have access to the tools needed to thrive in education.

The teacher's role in the educational process is critical. Teachers enhance school learning by encouraging healthy and productive relationships among both students and parents. Teachers serve as the direct link that establishes communication between stakeholders and parents. One high school English department chair in the school district provided her thoughts on why parental involvement is a big issue in the district:

Parental involvement is a huge issue in this district. The lack of involvement leads to declining attendance, decreased student achievement, increased behavioral problems, and a lack of pride and trust in the schools. Schools are a part of

communities. They play an integral role for the success of its stakeholders. It should be a place that is respected and appreciated; instead, parents distrust schools. In some cases, parents do not trust schools because their own experience was not positive. (T.W., personal communication, January 15, 2013)

Counselors are an essential part of the educational process and are professionally trained to work with families to enhance school and home partnerships. In addition to the various local school leaders recognizing this as a concern, the lead counselor for this district also addresses this issue. One of the lead counselors in the school district stated, “As a parent myself, it saddens me when parents aren’t as involved. They play a vital role in their child’s success and should take the necessary steps to fully understand the role they play” (D.T., personal communication, December 2, 2011).

Research has suggested that low parent engagement has influenced the increase in the dropout rate and decrease in the graduation rate in the school district (Georgia Department of Education, n.d). During the 2009–2010 school year, 4.6% of high school students dropped out of Lane School District schools; during the 2010–2011 school year, 5.3% of students dropped out. Information for the remaining school years was not available because Georgia officials failed to count thousands of high school dropouts. This is an alarming fact that needs to be addressed in the district.

The African American student graduation rate in the district during the 2010–2011 school year was 51.5%. During the 2011–2012 school year, the African American graduation rate improved to 55.7%. The graduation rate during the 2012–2013 school year was 56.6% and increased to 61.6% of African American students during the 2013–2014 school year (Georgia Department of Education, n.d). While the graduation

rate for African American students has increased slightly compared with rates in previous school years, this increase could be higher if parents are involved. All of this evidence suggests the need for further exploration if these outcomes are a result of low parent participation in Lane School District. Effective parental engagement could decrease the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate. Barriers to parental involvement need to be identified to take steps to mediate the lack of parental involvement. The ongoing issue of parental involvement in Lane School District needs resolution to most effectively improve the learning experience for students. Researchers Blondal and Adalbjarnardottir (2009) investigated the relationship among parenting practices and student academic outcomes. Because of varying styles and negative outcomes, parental involvement should be examined.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Professional literature includes studies related to parent participation barriers, parent participation practices, and the effectiveness of parent participation. Parent engagement is a key focus linked to the academic achievement outcomes of students (Altschul, 2011). Title I, Section 1118, of the No Child Left Behind Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act address minimal parental participation. The No Child Left Behind Act details parent engagement as a meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including:

- Assisting their child's learning.
- Being actively involved in their child's education at school.

- Serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.
- Carrying out other activities such as those described in Section 1118 of the ESEA Section 9101(32). (U.S. Department of Education, 2003)

Several studies (Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, & Talib, 2011; Epstein, 2008; Hoang, 2007) applauded the reinforcement of parental involvement in schools.

Encouraging parents to actively participate is challenging but produces positive outcomes such as academic and social competency (Hill & Craft, 2003), enhanced grades (Jeynes, 2005), and increased graduation rates (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). Unfortunately, parent and school relationships diminish from primary to secondary education (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Despite the identified advantages of parental involvement, poor relationships continue to remain among African American parents and schools (Brandon, 2007).

In this section, I highlight possible factors contributing to the limitation of parental involvement. DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duhane (2007) identify schools, socioeconomic status, and parent intimidation as factors that affect parental involvement. Positive outcomes associated with parental involvement include an increase in student confidence and self-efficacy (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Identifying parent perceptions of barriers to parental involvement could lead to developing solutions that improve parental involvement.

More specifically, African American parental involvement is extensively debated in education (Banerjee, Harrell, & Johnson, 2011; Bartel, 2010). Numerous factors

influence the degree of parental involvement among African American parents. These factors can include (a) parent intimidation, (b) lack of knowledge of the educational system, and (c) inadequate meeting times (Koonce & Harper, 2005). Language impediments, stress, and socioeconomic factors negatively affect parent participation (Rovai, Gallien, & Stiff-Williams, 2007). Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, and Efreom (2005) found that when analyzing factors that affect African American parent participation, parents with consistent educational goals and positive perceptions of education were more likely to participate.

Despite identified advantages of parental involvement, poor relationships exist between African American parents and their child's school (Brandon, 2007). Brandon stated that poor relationships are still existent because positive relationships are not developed by parents and educators, thus creating negative attitudes among teachers and parents that often results in low parental involvement. Brandon reported, "Educators must be aware of the factors that influence parental involvement so that they can develop strategies for open communication with parents and strengthen school-family connections" (p. 116). If this trend continues, it is reasonable to conclude that no significant transformation will occur and the success of African American students will decline, resulting in increased dropout rates, teen pregnancy, and low academic achievement (Mackell, 2011). Therefore, the intention of this project study was to investigate African American parent viewpoints of limitations to parent participation. Negative outcomes that result as a lack of parental involvement support the need to investigate parental involvement in the district.

Definitions

To fully understand the research surrounding African American parental involvement, several terms were defined to help guide the study. By incorporating this specific language, I was able to better develop my project study.

Barriers to parental involvement are causes that contribute to the lack of involvement by parents (Smith-Graves, 2006).

Engagement includes parental involvement activities as defined by parents and school officials (Howard & Reynolds, 2008).

Family involvement includes “the parents or caregivers investment” in a child’s educational career (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011).

Parental involvement is how parents “engage in the learning process” (Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007).

Perceptions are attitudes that influence the level of parental involvement (Lawson, 2003).

School improvement is a systematic plan put in place to improve schools (Georgia Department of Education, n.d).

School officials are all school personnel (Howard & Reynolds, 2008).

Significance

Parental involvement at the school district under study has been limited, possibly because parents do not understand how to become involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The purpose of this study was to identify hindrances to African American parent participation in Lane School District and to make suggestions for improvement. I used interviews and a questionnaire with African American parents in the district to gather

evidence of their experiences regarding parental participation. Study data will be useful to the district under study to assist parents and school officials in promoting effective parental involvement.

The findings of this study will define areas for future research that will highlight and illustrate effective parental involvement approaches that are viewed as positive influences for African American students in this southeastern school district. Currently, research is limited in the area of African American parental involvement. After extensive searches using a variety of search engines and search terms, I found that research on parental involvement was heavily focused on other races. Using the Walden University Library's research databases, I initially selected search engines displayed under the topic of education. I also used multidisciplinary search engines Academic Search Complete/Premier and Proquest Central. The following terms were used: *parental involvement, parent participation, types of parental involvement, parental participation barriers, African American parental involvement barriers, parent perceptions, and African American parent perceptions.*

This study adds to the existing body of research because limited information identifies perceived barriers that affect parental engagement among African American parents and will provide viable solutions to improve parental involvement. Archer-Banks and Behar-Hornstein (2008) stated that while studies inform on parental involvement factors among various cultures, researchers have not thoroughly explored African American parent perceptions. The findings from this study were compiled and synthesized to determine how the results compare with previous studies' findings on barriers to African American parental involvement. The findings from this study are

useful to the local education agency because they provide an interactive tool that parents and school officials can use to influence educational outcomes for students and build relationships among school officials.

Guiding/Research Question

The literature reviewed indicated that parental involvement has influenced numerous positive results, including academic success. Developing clear guidelines and effective communication between all stakeholders improves parental involvement. This study used a sample of 20 African American parents from Lane School District to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceived barriers to parental involvement in school that African American parents identify?
2. What are recommendations to break down barriers to African American parental involvement?

Review of the Literature

In this literature review, I discuss the meaning of parent engagement, perceptions of parent engagement, significance of parent engagement, and hindrance to African American parent engagement. The review of literature begins with the theoretical framework for the current study. The professional literature clearly connects to both research questions by expanding on the topic of promoting parental involvement while teaching for academic success.

Theoretical Framework

Epstein's (2010) framework provided structure to categorize the types of ways parents participate in schools, classify the barriers under parental involvement types, and

organize suggestions for improvement based on these types. Epstein (2005) stated, “Parental involvement recognizes the shared responsibilities of educators and families for children’s learning and success in school” (p. 180). All six types of involvement are established upon trust and respect. When effective partnerships are formed, these behaviors can be activated to assist student learning. If all types of involvement are being employed in the schools and homes then it increases the chance for student success (Epstein, 2010).

While parental involvement can take on many forms, Epstein’s (2010) framework outlines six types of parental involvement,

Type 1 is parenting, which addresses establishing home environments to support students. Type 2 is communicating, which focuses on designing effective communication regarding programs and student progress. Type 3 is volunteering, which centers on recruiting and organizing parental support. Type 4 is learning at home, which provides information and ideas to families on how to aid student’s effectively. Type 5 is decision-making, which targets how to include parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders, and Type 6 is collaborating with the community, which identifies and integrates resources and service to strengthen stakeholder relationships. (p. 704)

Epstein’s involvement practices support student development, academic success, and positive working relationships amongst principals, teachers, and staff. This framework is beneficial to school officials and parents in that it supports effectual partnership efforts between parents, teachers, and students.

The parenting structure assists parents with skills to provide supportive home conditions. The communication structure establishes effective communication systems. The volunteering structure improves parent retention and offers parents assistance to support their children. The at home learning structure supports home-related and curriculum-related activities. The decision-making structure promotes decision-making amongst families and schools. The collaboration structure promotes family and community related activities (Johnson, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2011). Literature pertaining to the topic of parental involvement is broadly classified into the following categories by the researcher as (a) definitions of parent practices, (b) perceptions of parental involvement, (c) benefits of parent participation, (d) barriers to parent participation, and (e) limitations to African American parent participation.

Literature on Defining Parental Involvement

In discussions of parental involvement, controversy has swirled around how to define parental involvement. Numerous researchers have defined parental involvement in various ways; yet and still parents have different perceptions as to how they can involve themselves in the educational process. There are multiple facets of parental involvement, which include (a) school level involvement, (b) involvement through educational discussion, (c) assistance with homework, (d) time management, and (e) parent expectancies (Epstein, 1995). Overstreet et al. (2005) defined parental involvement as school involvement (school-related activities), cognitive-intellectual involvement (activities that stimulate both parents and children), and personal involvement (parents are knowledgeable of academic performance). When parents understand what parental

involvement means, effective parental involvement models can be formed to benefit the child.

Stylianides and Stylianides (2011) defined a particular type of parental involvement to examine the effect on urban children that included all subject areas. The researchers defined the specific type of parental involvement as parent-child interaction that was comprised of activities that enhanced student learning through various learning styles (Stylianides & Stylianides, 2011).

Participants in a study conducted by Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby, and Allen-Eckard (2009) defined parent participation as “Parent Teacher Association membership, coaching athletic teams, working concession and admission stands at sporting events, meeting with teachers, talking to school personnel, fundraising, and helping with different programs that are going on in the school” (p. 284). Taliaferro et al. (2009) and Epstein (1995) defined parental engagement in terms of two specific environments—school and home. Formal parent participation refers to physical presence in the schools while informal parent participation focuses on learning that takes place in the home (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Informal parental involvement includes, “help with and monitoring of homework as well as establishing rules and routines conducive to school success” (Shumow, Lyutykh, & Schmidt, 2011, p. 82). Involvement influences child and student outcomes, parents’ choice of involvement forms, and tempering and mediating variables. These levels linked parents’ decisions to participate actively in education (Shumow et al., 2011). Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) defined parental involvement as parent behaviors that reinforce academic achievement. While there are many definitions that encompass

parental involvement, it is important that all educational institutions work together to implement effective parental involvement. Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2012) reported that, “Given that teachers, administrators and parents often see ‘parent participation’ in a different light and within differing parameters, it is not uncommon to find stakeholders wondering about the reasons for the lack of parental involvement in a particular school” (p. 67). Parental involvement should be clearly defined to assist with parent participation.

Perceptions of Parental Involvement

One factor that contributes to the involvement of parents is how they perceive parental involvement. If parents do not have a clear understanding of how to become effectively involved questionable outcomes may arise. Lawson (2003) examined parent and teacher beliefs surrounding the context of parental involvement. Twelve teachers and 13 parents in an urban elementary school engaged in a 2-year ethnographic study that examined their notions of how parent participation is defined. The two parent groups identified in the study’s sample were categorized as involved and uninvolved. The parent sample included 13 African Americans (6 involved and 7 uninvolved).

Prior to the study, schools implemented teacher and family initiatives that promoted parental involvement and advanced academic achievement (Lawson, 2003). A survey that defined parental involvement in a schoolcentric way addressed parent participation in activities such as conferencing, classroom decision making, and physical parental involvement in schools through field trips and fundraising. Study results revealed low parent teacher conference attendance numbers and teachers believed that this was due to the lack of parent concern. Almost half of the teachers who participated in the study believed that parental involvement was underdeveloped and that expectations

were not made clear. Findings of the study revealed that both perceptions of parental involvement were different but contained overlapping elements. Both parents and teachers agreed that they struggled to find validity in ingrained contexts that made them feel inferior by their counterparts. Stakeholders both agreed that the need to have their voices viewed as legitimate would positively enhance the learning experience for students. Lawson (2003) stated,

If teachers and parents can truly reach a level of mutual understanding and acknowledge their different worldviews, epistemologies, and cultural frames of reference without pathology, it is believed that their common grounds and interests will become more readily apparent and if they can reach the next step, their caring and commitment to children promises better outcomes for all. (p. 128)

This understanding can potentially lead to better educational experiences for students.

Likewise, Williams and Sanchez (2012) sought to identify parent involvement and uninvolvement beliefs at an urban African American high school. Fifteen African American parents and 10 staff members participated in in-depth qualitative interviews that addressed perceptions of parental involvement. Twenty-five in-depth interviews were conducted with school personnel and parents who had had contact with each other over the previous 3 months. Semistructured interview practices developed for parents and teachers contained four sections that inquired about parental involvement beliefs, assessed home-school communication, examined home and school partnerships, and explored parents personal history. Both teachers and parents believed that there should be a shared responsibility between both parties. Findings revealed that while parental involvement models aid in understanding African American parental involvement, one

specific model does not encompass the meaning of parental involvement for all African Americans involved in this setting. Parents identified safety measures as a form of parental engagement while school stakeholders believed that school-home communication was most vital. Williams and Sanchez (2012) found five themes from the interviews regarding parental involvement connotations, including “participation at school, being there outside of school, communication, achieve and believe, and village keepers” (p. 634). The study concluded that both parents and school personnel should clearly define and design parental involvement interventions that synchronize like values and judgments.

Several studies have identified positive outcomes when associated with parental engagement. The positive outcomes of parental involvement are documented throughout history. Researchers have conducted numerous studies to support the benefits of parental involvement.

Significance of Parental Involvement

Ji and Koblinsky (2009) examined Chinese immigrant parental practices in an urban environment. Ji and Koblinsky specifically examined parental expectations for academic achievement goals, parental involvement levels, and limitations to parent engagement. While language barriers have contributed to the lack of parental involvement, parents’ perceptions of academic achievement support how students perform academically (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009).

Frank, Plunkett, and Otten (2010) examined 158 Iranian American adolescents’ notions of parent practices relative to self-sufficiency through positive regard.

Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale and the Parental Behavior Measure were used to measure

self-efficacy, parent behaviors, and students' perceptions of self. Results revealed that parent support and understanding was significantly connected to positive self-esteem.

In addition, Midraj and Midraj (2011) studied 131 English as Foreign Language (EFL) fourth-grade students and parents to understand the dynamics between parental involvement and English reading acquisition. The results showed that parent engagement was significantly associated with comprehension, reading accuracy, and English reading fluency. Dehyadegary et al. (2011) investigated 382 adolescent students in Iran to explore academic engagement, parent engagement, and scholastic achievement. Using both Paulson's Academic Involvement assessment and the Academic Engagement Scale, Dehyadegary et al. (2011) found that parent and school alliances that directly support academic engagement are meaningful. Studies conducted by Epstein and Sheldon (2002), Koonce and Harper (2005), and Jeynes (2005) also supported the notion that parental involvement positively affects student achievement. Turney and Kao (2009) believed that parental involvement "sends a message to children that education is important, provides a mean of social control, and makes parents privy to information they need to know so they are in a better position to intervene more properly" (p. 258). These advantages further support the need to examine barriers to parental involvement.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) identified parent beliefs, societal factors, and current life contexts as barriers to parental involvement. Family structure, socioeconomic status, educational aspirations, and perceptions of teacher support have also been identified as barriers to parental involvement (Hayes, 2011). Other barriers include intimidation and negative treatment by school personnel, poor understanding of the navigational system,

and inconvenient meeting times (Koonce & Harper, 2005). Additionally, pragmatic life matters such as childcare and work have also been identified as reasons for the lack of parental involvement (Taliaferro et al., 2009).

Previous research indicated that some factors that contribute to low parental involvement include socioeconomic status and lack of interest (Brandon et al., 2010). Cousins, Mickelson, Williams, and Velasco (2008) administered 150 extensive interviews with both African American and White students and their parents and educators regarding how to select high school courses. Researchers found that White parents were at a greater advantage because “they were more knowledgeable about the way the school system operated, who key gatekeepers were, and when important decisions had to be made for optimizing students’ academic trajectories” (Cousins et al., 2008, p. 32). The advantages of simply being aware of day-to-day operations in the school provide parents with the knowledge needed to help students succeed. Family structure, school expectations, and school structures also greatly influence the level of involvement by parents (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). Holcomb-McCoy (2007) reported that, “The key to increase student achievement and to ensure more equitable practices in schools is to increase parent and community involvement” (p. 66).

Other barriers to parental involvement include transportation, negative attitudes, and cultural and language barriers (Bartel, 2010; Hornby & LaFaele, 2011). Additional barriers include negative prior experiences and lack of knowledge related to parent expectations (Young, Austin, & Growe, 2013). Previous research shows that school staff typically view African American parents as less educated; because of this, parents are unwilling to support their child academically (Williams & Baber, 2007). Hayes (2011)

also identified demographic variables, teacher support, and low socioeconomic levels as obstacles to parental involvement.

Barriers to African American Parental Involvement

Research points to three overarching factors that prevent participation for African American parents. These factors include (a) social class and parent perceptions, (b) teacher and administration intimidation of parents, and (c) lack of knowledge (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Samaras & Wilson, 1999). Economic status has been consistently recognized as an adverse effect to parental involvement amongst African American parents.

Diamond and Gomez (2004) examined how social class shapes educational beliefs of African Americans. Research and theory have identified school types, parental resources, and parents' academic beliefs as challenges to parental participation (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Parents from higher socioeconomic demographic levels are more involved. Diamond and Gomez argued that these beliefs were formed based on where they are educated and the resources used to navigate these environments. Eighteen African American parents (working and middle class parents) from seven schools participated in semistructured interviews. The interviews focused on parents' positions, notions, and constructs related to schooling and interviews of the African American working class focused on parents' academic beliefs and constructs in the community. Diamond and Gomez found that schools should acknowledge that parent engagement is based on their perceptions of the schools.

Samaras and Wilson (1999) reported multiple barriers to African American parental involvement, particularly single parents with monetary, didactic, and resource

restrictions. The socioeconomic structure of a family unit affects parental involvement in low-income areas. Families may possibly need assistance with understanding how to participate in less desirable circumstances. Parents who are faced with financial barriers should still be provided with ways they can be helped. Murry, Berkel, Brody, Miller, and Chen (2009) examined African American families and concluded that there are limited jobs for African Americans, which cause them to travel greater distances to work. Several African American families were void transportation, which makes it difficult to attain income. Without jobs and difficulty gaining income, African American parents stand a greater chance of remaining in poverty. In contrast, parents of high socioeconomic status have greater contact with teachers and presence within the school (Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008).

Jeter-Twilley, Legum, and Norton (2007) examined the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and stakeholder involvement in elementary schools. Socioeconomic status was evaluated by the number of students that received free or reduced lunch (FARMS). Ten schools were considered in a large urban county. Five low socioeconomic schools and five high socioeconomic schools were investigated and parental engagement was measured by Parent Teacher Association (PTA) attendance and membership. An independent *t* test was utilized to attain a statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic status and PTA membership. The study found a statistically significant difference in PTA participation and PTA meetings at the $p < .01$ level at both schools.

Socioeconomic barriers to African American parental involvement on postsecondary levels have also been highlighted. Grodsky and Jones (2007) considered

parental education and parental economic resources as dimensions of socioeconomic status. Questionnaires administered to 9,147 participants addressed college costs and the types of institutions parents believed their child would attend. Findings showed low-SES parents lacked financial support for college funding and could not save money. When parents were informed about financial aid and scholarships, parents began to support their child academically (Grotsky & Jones, 2007).

Mendez, Carpenter, LaForett, and Cohen (2009) implemented a community-based instrument with a sample of 201 African American parents to determine what limitations inhibited parent involvement through parent workshops. Mendez et al. found that the most prevalent barriers were work schedule conflicts, followed by class inductions, childcare needs, and transit issues.

Other barriers that affect the alienation of African American parents include (a) lack of school reliance, (b) insouciance, (c) life stress, and (d) parent aspirations (Brandon, 2007; Brandon et al., 2010). Koonce and Harper (2005) cited negative treatment by school personnel as a factor that dissuades African American parents from being involved. As a result apprehension, doubt, and detachment emerge to affect school involvement.

If barriers are not identified, students have the potential to decline academically (Huang & Mason, 2009). Yan (1999) argued that this issue remains prevalent because the positive outcomes of African American involvement are not often highlighted. Yan's research demonstrated the need to focus on benefits of parental involvement of African American families.

While studies currently emphasize parental involvement amongst diverse cultures, “researchers have rarely explored the perceptions of African American parents” (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008, p. 144). Hayes (2012) wrote that while researchers have thoroughly examined the benefits associated with parental involvement, African American parental involvement is addressed at substandard levels. Rapp and Duncan (2012) reported that, “Educators’ understanding of the effects and barriers of low socioeconomic status is a vital component in improving school-parent partnerships for low-income families” (p. 3). When educators understand specific barriers low-income families encounter, they are able to take the necessary steps to reach these students effectively. If barriers are not taken into consideration, students risk a possible decline in school performance.

Parents’ attitudes, outlooks, and perceptions directly affect parental involvement. Many parents do not support parental involvement because they discredit their dexterity in the educational process. LaRocque et al. (2011) stated that African Americans “might not have been successful in schools themselves, have a lingering mistrust of the school system, and do not feel adequate to the task of supporting their children because of their low level of education” (p. 118). Some parents’ memories of school are negative and ultimately affect their child’s perceptions.

Kaya and Lundeen (2010) conducted a study that examined parental interest and attitudes in science. Parents’ low levels of interest about what students were studying in science were attributed to their own lack of knowledge about the topic and negative recollections of learning science at school (Cardoso & Solomon, 2002). In addition, parents who have negative notions regarding science abstain from homework help

(Cardoso & Solomon, 2002). Kaya and Lundeen found that many parents stated having a general disregard for science due to the complexities related to learning. When parents have positive outlooks on education, children may take on the same beliefs.

Levine and Sutherland (2013) explored how parent perception influences career development. Thirty-three African American parents participated in individual interviews that analyzed socioeconomic status, scholarly histories, educational status and beliefs, and career development roles. Results from the study suggested that negative beliefs related to education might be passed down to their children. Children should be presented with positive views of education despite parents' bad experiences. By identifying the barriers to parental involvement in Lane School District, this school system can identify solutions to remove these barriers. When these barriers are removed, the proper communication can take place with parents to ensure involvement in the academic experience.

Conclusion

Parents' beliefs, roles, and conduct greatly strengthen academic success (Chen & Gregory, 2009). Improvement in self-competence, conduct, and school participation are all positive outcomes associated with parental involvement (Green et al., 2007; Hornby & Witte, 2010). However, ineffective communication and parent preconceptions often hinder how much parents actually participate (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). In order to promote effective parent practices amongst schools, parents, and school, officials must assume roles to facilitate parental involvement and encourage community participation. It is important that African American parents actively contribute to their child's scholarly development.

Implications

Implications for the future will be based on the results of the focus group, individual interviews, and questionnaire responses. The data indicates that the methods of promoting parental involvement at the school district under study include both positive and negative perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. The findings from this study will be most beneficial by gaining a better understanding of perceived barriers to African American parental involvement. The manifestation of effectual parental involvement in Georgia public schools is imperative. Schools with strong partnerships will be equipped with the tools needed to overcome challenges to parental involvement.

Summary

Parental involvement has been limited in the target school district. Barriers to African American parental involvement that currently exist in studies were compared to barriers found in this school district in order to make suggestions for improvement. This study examined African American parent engagement in Lane School District. In order to acquire an exploratory view of parental engagement, the study focused on parents of middle and high school students.

Section 1 of this study described the significance of the problem for the school district. The literature review explained the significance of parental engagement and the complexities surrounding this issue. The section that follows outlines the methods used to carry out this qualitative study. Section 2 of this study highlights the methodologies used to explore the perceptions and experiences of African American parents regarding parental involvement. The research design, setting, participant sample, instrumentation materials, as well as data collection analysis, are discussed in Section 2.

Section 2: The Methodology

Section 1 defined the problem concerning the deficit of African American parental involvement in the school district under study. I focused on African American parents' perceptions and barriers that prevent involvement while emphasizing barriers to improve parental involvement. The research questions that guided the qualitative instrumental case study were as follows:

1. What are the perceived barriers to parental involvement in schools that African American parents identify?
2. What are recommendations from parents to break down barriers to African American parental involvement?

Data collection through interviews and an online questionnaire provided answers to the research questions. Both methods of data collection, the interviews and questionnaire, were connected to the research questions (see alignment chart in Appendix B). Using the interview questions, I collected data about how African American parents defined parental involvement, their experiences surrounding specific involvement practices, and their perceptions of the barriers to parent engagement in the schools. The questionnaire allowed parents to rate current parental involvement practices. The data provided a rich description of parental involvement in the study school district and viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

To conduct the study, I employed a qualitative instrumental case study research design for data collection and analysis. An instrumental case study allowed me to conduct

the research with limited participants and within a shorter period than other designs. Unlike an ethnography design, which involves studying an intact cultural group for a prolonged period, a case study is used to gather in-depth data from a small selection of parents (Merriam, 2009). Similarly, I did not use the grounded theory design to form an explanation or theory grounded in research after examining individuals with shared experience of barriers to African American parental involvement. The purpose of this study did not include formulating a theory related to African American parental involvement. I sought a design that would allow for the exploration of the barriers to African American parental involvement. The goal for research included an increase in parental involvement among all parents as described by Epstein's (2010) parental involvement practices. This includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2010). The outcomes of this project study may aid parents in becoming effective communicators with school officials, which may increase student achievement for students and empower parents to immerse themselves in the educational process.

Participants

This subsection highlights the local setting of the research study. It also provides a detailed explanation of the selection and justification of participants, the plan I used to access participants, and the process I used to develop a researcher-participant relationship with the parents in the target school district. The subsection concludes with a description of steps that I took to provide ethical protection for participants.

Participant Selection

I used purposeful maximal variation sampling (Creswell, 2012) to collect responses from African American parents to gain a variety of perspectives on barriers to African American parental involvement. Flyers (see Appendix C) that described the parental involvement study were posted in churches and the community recreation center to gain access to the participants. The African American parents who responded to the circulars placed in local churches and the community recreation center were invited to participate in the interviews for the study. Twenty parents were chosen as participants to generate a rich discussion. In qualitative case studies, it is advantageous to have participants who will have diverse experiences to represent the case effectively (Creswell, 2012). I was able to work with African American parents who ranged in age and whose children ranged in age (middle school and high school only) in the sample to assist in gaining as much diverse information as possible. I established a researcher-participant working relationship by making myself available to answer questions and address misconceptions regarding the study.

I gained institutional review board (IRB) approval from Walden University in December 2014 (IRB approval number 12-05-14-0157106). Following IRB approval, I contacted local churches to post participation interest flyers and attended the local recreational center to pass out flyers. I used personal communication as my first method of contact. When parents contacted me via phone showing interest, I briefly explained the study and offered an invitation to take part in an interview. The anticipated duration of the focus group was 60 minutes. The anticipated duration of each individual interview was 45 minutes.

After 33 inquiries, 20 African American parents agreed to participate in the focus group. Ten of the 20 participants were selected to participate in individual audiotaped interviews. The three most outspoken participants in the focus group were solicited for the first three individual interviews. The other seven participants in the individual interviews were selected from the initial list of volunteers who responded to the flyer and who agreed to be interviewed.

I hand delivered consent forms to each potential participant within a week of personal communication. Then, I used email to set up the focus group and individual interviews as a more conducive way of scheduling. Participants were also required to identify viable solutions to improve parental involvement using an online questionnaire on a password-protected computer at the local recreational center.

The sample of parents ranged in age and experience. Seventeen of the parents were females and three were males. Three of the participants were married and the rest were single parents. All participants were high school graduates and six had graduated from college. Four of the participants had children who attended middle schools in the district; the rest of the participants' children attended high school in the district.

Ethical Protection

The ethical protection of participants was vital during the interviews. To protect participants, I excluded characteristics that could lead to the identification of the participants, and, thus, risk confidentiality. Prior to the interviews, I asked participants to sign a consent form, which included an explanation of the study, permission to be audiotaped, and an option to retreat at any time. From the initial point of contact, I informed participants of my purpose for this study and that they could withdraw at any

time. All information pertaining to the participants remained confidential throughout the study. Participant signatures and agreements were secured and filed.

I usedonyms for the study site and parent participants to protect privacy. I randomly assigned a participant identification code that included a letter to each interview participant (i.e., participant A, participant B). Individuals who participated in both the focus group and individual interviews kept the same pseudonym. The procedures protected all participants and kept them free from physical, mental, and emotional harm throughout the study. I worked diligently to form a working relationship with participants built on compassion, gratitude, and benevolence. It was vital that the participants understood that their time and efforts were appreciated. While participants were aware that they would not be compensated for participation, each participant was sent a thank-you card to show that I appreciated their participation.

Data Collection

The data collection subsection outlines the methods used to gather data. Each method will be justified and explained. Throughout the data collection period, I audiotaped participant responses from both the focus group and individual interviews. Additionally, observations on participant understandings were recorded in a reflective journal to record study happenings in a confidential manner. Using a reflective journal during the data collection process allowed me to be a more effective and efficient researcher. Member checking was used to ensure that the participants' true thoughts were captured in the interviews.

I am an advocate for parental involvement because I realize that without it students' future success can be jeopardized. Therefore, I sought to examine some of the

problems associated with weak or nonexistent parental involvement among African American parents. All reflective field notes were recorded based on participant responses and observations. I also added my personal comments during the focus group and individual interviews. Merriam (2009) noted that when taking reflective field notes the researcher actually engages in a preliminary data analysis about what is observed and what it all means. The reflective field notes assisted me in deciphering the data without including my personal thoughts. Member checking was used to ensure that participants had the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy (Merriam, 2009). It was my hope that through my member checking methods, I was able to construct an effective project study that school officials can utilize to examine the barriers that weaken African American parent engagement.

Focus Group

The researcher-produced focus group allowed the 20 parents to express multiple perspectives on similar experiences regarding barriers to parental involvement while focusing on possible solutions to improve parental involvement. Baker and Soden (1997) used 16 focus group interviews to produce rich information about the beliefs and observations of parents in order to highlight as many different issues, opinions, and perspectives related to parental involvement. While I used similar questions, the interview responses looked significantly different due to the various types of involvement each participant experienced. I audiotaped the parent focus group and then provided parents a transcript of the interview to ensure their remarks were accurately recorded.

The focus group took place at the local recreational center. Prior to questioning, I explained that all information would remain confidential and that the participant had

permission to withdraw from the interview at any time. All participants understood the protocol. The focus group lasted approximately 60 minutes. Glesne (2000) noted that focus groups could be used as exploratory research to help determine the line of questioning you want to pursue in individual interviews. The focus group guide consisted of 11 questions geared toward understanding African American parents' views on their specific involvement in the schools (see Appendix D):

- What are your expectations from the teachers and administration in Lane School District?
- What specific parental involvement activities have you participated in at the school?
- What are some options that would motivate you to become more involved?
- What are some barriers that have prevented you from being involved?
- Does parental involvement in the African American community positively affect children's academic achievement?
- What have been your experiences when you were involved in your child's school?
- How confident are you that your involvement will have a positive impact on your child's education?
- Has the school reached out to you in an effort to involve you in your child's education?
- What skills would you bring to your child's school as a volunteer?

- How do you think Lane School District would fare if 90% of the parents were involved in some aspect of their child's life?
- How do you feel each time you enter your child's school?

The focus group questions were designed to collect insight into understanding African American parents' notions of school involvement. Study results could aid school officials in understanding limitations to active parent engagement.

Individual Interviews

Semistructured individual interviews with 10 parents provided information-rich feedback about parental involvement and barriers to parental involvement. Cardona, Jain, and Canfield-Davis (2012) used open-ended interview questions to gain a broader definition of family involvement and to understand if parent participation is restricted due to race, socioeconomic status, educational status, or language barriers. Although I used similar questions to those used by Cardona et al., my interview questions were different because only African American experiences about parental involvement were examined.

Participants determined the time and location for the interviews. Parents elected to use their homes and the local recreational center to conduct interviews. I explained that all information would remain confidential and that the participant had permission to withdraw from the interview at any time. All participants understood the protocol. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. I listed reflective field notes while the interview took place. I recorded the individual parent interviews and then provided parents a transcription of the interview to ensure their remarks were accurately recorded.

Each interviewee was identified with a participant participation code (i.e., participant A, participant B). The individual interview questions highlighted parents'

perspectives of four areas of parental involvement: (a) importance of parent participation, (b) various levels of parent participation, (c) African Americans views on limitations to parent participation, and (d) possible resolutions to improve parent participation in the district. The individual interview questions consisted of nine questions that sought to identify African American parental involvement limitations and strategies that promote parent participation (see Appendix E):

- How do you define parental involvement?
- In your opinion, what defines effective parental involvement?
- Do you feel that the school has been receptive to parental involvement?
- In what ways have your child's school been open to parental involvement?
- Do parent perceptions impact parental involvement?
- Did you have any specific perceptions to parental involvement?
- What would be a viable solution for parental involvement in Lane School District?
- How important is parental involvement in a child's life?"

Questionnaires

Twenty parents were asked to complete an online questionnaire and rate the effectiveness of parental involvement practices based on peer-reviewed literature. Questionnaires were emailed to all participants. In an effort to increase the rate of returned surveys, a second email was sent to all parents. The email thanked those parents who had completed and returned the survey, and those who had not done so were encouraged to respond. 95.0% of surveys were returned.

A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *highly effective*, *effective*, *neutral*, *ineffective*, and *highly ineffective*, was designed for this study (see Appendix F). Parents analyzed 10 practices that promote parent participation based on literature surrounding parental involvement. Participant responses were displayed on summary tables that allowed the researcher to identify the attitudes of the participants. The researcher interpreted the data from the summary tables in narrative form, and supported the findings using percentages. All data collection instruments were researcher-produced.

Systems for Recording, Tracking, and Analyzing Data

To analyze the data, I used a multistep technique to review and classify the information. I began the analysis during the interviews by making comments on the field notes, listening to the recorded interviews multiple times during the transcription process, and summarizing the interviews for individual participants' responses. Through this method, I was able to understand each participant's viewpoint related to parental involvement barriers, experiences, and perceptions. After gaining this understanding, I diligently analyzed each transcript (focus group and individual interviews) and sorted the content into categorized columns. After organizing the data, I was able to see common themes more clearly.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to perform all data collection procedures. I have worked in the district under study for the previous 10 years in a nonsupervisory position as an educator. My nonsupervisory position did not affect participants or parent participant relationships. Hatch (2002) believed that establishing relationships with parents was key to parental involvement. I have built relationships with the parents in

Lane School District in order to identify parental involvement barriers and identify practicable solutions designed to ameliorate parental involvement. I had no contact with parents who currently have children who attend the school where I am currently employed in the district. Despite being detached from many parents at the school, I did have a connection to the district as a faculty member and was a biased member. Based on interaction with officials in Lane School District there is an evident lack of parental involvement.

Data Analysis

During a qualitative study, data collection and data analysis should synchronously occur (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) stated that organizing, editing, interpreting, and presenting are essential for data analysis. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used to develop categories from information gathered.

After the focus group and the individual interviews both interviews were immediately transcribed to ensure data accuracy. Participants member checked transcript reviews and I used inductive coding to identify, classify themes, and patterns. After each transcript was coded and compared to the other transcripts, I reported the data using a qualitative narrative, which allowed the reader to understand the participant responses. The research centered on African Americans' perceptions and experiences of barriers to parental involvement, and the research questions were answered by gathering data from the interviews. The questionnaire was used as supportive evidence for possible solutions that would improve parental involvement practices. Upon conclusion of the data collection phase, I used a thematic analysis to explore the results of the study.

Accuracy and Credibility of Findings

To ensure validity, multiple strategies were used. Three ways to validate the accuracy of research findings is through triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking (transcript review). I used triangulation, transcript review, and peer debriefing to ensure that accurate information was gathered and interpreted appropriately. In the triangulation process, I compared data from multiple sources to form themes that were supported by the focus group interview, individual interviews, and questionnaire. The parent interviews were compared and contrasted with other parent interviews. Most of the data were supportive of each other; however, some parents held different perceptions of parental involvement. Transcript reviews were used to validate the findings of the interviews. All interviewees reviewed a report of their interview to check for completion and accuracy. Member checking allows participants to assess data accuracy (Creswell, 2012). In the peer debriefing validation process, a peer researcher reviews and asks questions about the study in order to offer a knowledgeable perspective on the data. The peer debriefer reviewed the study for veracity and confirmed the results as described.

I used a coding method to sort and investigate the responses from the interviews and questionnaires. Throughout the data analysis phase, I ensured that all findings were accurate and credible. I also effectively explored discrepant cases. Codes such as clear understanding of parental involvement, integration of effective school communication, ineffective school leader and teacher support, communal disintegration, and parental involvement strategies emerged during the data collection and analysis phase.

Discrepant Cases

A discrepant case consists of data that provide alternate perspectives. Discrepant cases provided vital insight on how African American parents define and promote parent engagement in the target school district. Data from discrepant cases did not fit into the categories created for coding. I noted, then explored and considered all of the discrepant cases in detail. I used triangulation to examine the cases further.

Qualitative Results

I collected data from parent interviews as well as reviews of questionnaire responses. Twenty parents were focus group participants and 10 parents participated in individual interviews. The focus group took place at the local recreational center. Individual interviews took place at the local recreational center and the most convenient location for each participant. I conducted four of the nine interviews in the participants' domains; I conducted the remaining interviews at the local recreational center. The focus group lasted an hour. The individual interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. All topic areas were addressed and the interview questions answered with considerable detail. I recorded and then later transcribed the interviews identifying each with a participant identification code to ensure confidentiality. Each participant received a typed summary of the interview. This transcript review assisted me in ensuring that the data I collected and summarized were accurate.

Research Findings

Five themes related to parental involvement issues developed from the data. Four topics correlated with Research Question 1 and one topic correlated with Research Question 2. Table 1 contains the analysis of data themes. These themes emerged from a

coding process after gathering data from the participant responses during both interviews. Additional information collected from the parental involvement questionnaire provided viable solutions to improve parental involvement.

Table 1

Research Questions and Themes

Research question	Themes
1. What are the perceived barriers to parental involvement in schools that African American parents identify?	1. Clear understanding of parental involvement practices 2. Integration of effective contact 3. School leader and teacher support 4. Communal disintegration
2. What are recommendations to break down barriers to African American parental involvement?	5. Recommendations for improved parental involvement practices.

Note. This table describes the guiding research questions and themes from the focus group interview, individual interviews, and questionnaire.

Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement

The manner in which African American parents described parental involvement was consistent. The sample of parents believed that parental involvement includes being involved in activities that aid in their child's overall growth. The majority (60%) of the parents expressed that parent engagement starts at home and goes beyond the classroom setting. Overall, the participants expected parental involvement to be a daily requirement so students can succeed inside and outside the classroom. I summarized each parent's description of parental participation and parent experiences below. Although the parents in the target district had different perceptions of specific levels of parental involvement, they all felt that it was necessary for student success. As parents, they had similar

experiences and expectations concerning parental involvement. When asked what defines effective parental involvement, participants answered:

Participant A. PA defined parental involvement specifically as staying in contact with the teachers regarding behavior and academics, setting clear expectations for the child, staying abreast of what is going on at the school via school listings and home recordings, and volunteering when necessary. PA stressed the importance of making sure all students are involved in the school in some way. PA was knowledgeable about parental involvement because she was a former educator and could specifically speak to the benefits of being involved. She understood that without all stakeholders working together effectively, students have the potential to decline both socially and emotionally. PA also realized that every child should be made to feel as if they are a part of something and parents should be there to support the students wholeheartedly.

Participant B. PB defined parental involvement as being in the child's life on a daily basis. This included making sure homework was done, communicating with the teachers, and enjoying them during the time you spend with them. PB also mentioned the importance of supporting students in extracurricular activities. From PB's perspective, allowing students to participate in sports and other organizations that encourage and support their talents will provide motivation for students to put their best foot forward academically. Although he realized the importance of parental involvement, he understood why some parents are not as involved as they should or would like to be.

Participant C. PC believed that parents are the first teachers. PC believed that children tend to mimic those who interact with them on a daily basis, and if they are seeing positive behaviors, they will mimic these same behaviors. PC stated that parenting

begins from the time a child wakes up in the morning. PC believed that parents should properly help students get in the right frame of mind to learn and to perform at their best levels. PC highlighted the importance of letting children know that their futures come first and that they cannot achieve much without education.

Participant D. According to PD, parental involvement mainly involves staying on top of your child's grades. PD believed that without the educational support, support in other activities, such as sports and clubs was not warranted. PD believed that too much emphasis is placed on sports and not academics. She acknowledged the point that while you may be talented, without education you are nothing. PD referenced a time when her daughter (who was a senior at the time) failed an exam before the senior trip. As a result, she did not let her child attend. She stated that the senior trip was not going to provide for her future and that her grades would.

Participant E. Similar to PC, PE believed that children do not understand the world and it is the parents' job to give them a foundation as to what they need in life. PE compared parental involvement to a mother teaching a baby bird how to fly. She believed that with her child, parental involvement involves giving her child a foundation as to what she needs to thrive in life. If not, she feels as if she is throwing her child to the wolves. She has instilled motivational techniques in her child by reminding her that she is the *bar* in any classroom she enters and consistently encourages her passion for reading.

Participant F. PF believed that if you are not an involved parent you are essentially leaving the world and everyone else to raise your child. PF stated that what is important to the parent becomes important to the child. PF specifically described parental

involvement as staying on top of grades, helping with homework and projects, meeting with teachers, and aiding in the planning of their futures to ensure they have options.

Data Analysis

Data analysis allowed me to break down the information gathered from the focus group, individual interviews, and questionnaires to render common themes of parental involvement barriers, experiences, and perceptions. I developed a spreadsheet and organized each participant's focus group and individual interview data into categories derived from the research questions. I created a separate chart to categorize percentages of parents' responses to parental involvement strategies. From there, I searched for common themes among all data, including the questionnaires. This method allowed me to see responses by the participant and theme. Discrepant cases involved data that did not fit into the common themes. The most common themes support the idea that parental involvement is vital in student success; however, learning how to become involved was deemed somewhat problematic.

The research questions that guided my study pertained to the barriers, perceptions, and experiences of African Americans and viable solutions to improve parental involvement. In conjunction with the research questions, I was particularly interested in knowing how African American parents specifically involve themselves in the educational process and their general perceptions of parental involvement barriers. I searched the table of collected data for common themes. I assigned each theme a color and then color-coded the data. The overall themes included a clear understanding of parental involvement, integration of effective contact, ineffective school leader and

teacher support, and communal disintegration. By applying these methods, I was able to summarize the data pertaining to the research questions from both interviews.

Findings From the Data

The research findings resulted from the data analysis phase, which allowed me to see the ways African American parents promote and define parental involvement, limitations to parental participation, and possible solutions to remediate parental involvement. With the data, I can answer the research questions and address the local problem described in Section 1. African American parent participation has been limited in the school district under study. The research findings provide information about the experiences and perceptions African American parents had with barriers to parental involvement. The findings explain how more can be implemented to encourage effective parental involvement in the district and pose possible solutions to do so. African American parents have similar feelings regarding perceptions and barriers to parental involvement.

Data Supported Themes

Interviews with parents returned a collection of data with five overarching themes pertaining to parental involvement: (a) clear understanding of parental involvement, (b) integration of effective contact, (c) school leader and teacher support, (d) communal disintegration, and (e) recommendations for improved parental involvement practices. A clear understanding of parental involvement includes practices that parents actually implement in their daily lives relating to student success. Integration of effective school contact includes rules and procedures that schools should incorporate on a consistent basis. Ineffective school leader and teacher support includes the ways school leaders are

not supportive of parental involvement. Communal disintegration includes discussion about the African American community and why parental involvement is nonexistent in some homes. A description and discussion of the themes supported by the perceptions and experiences of each participant follows. Recommendations to improve parental involvement emerged after participants rated specific parental involvement practices as defined in current literature on parental involvement.

Clear understanding of parental involvement. Parental involvement was valued as a vital component of student success, even though most parents did not understand how they could be involved in the school itself. Most parents admitted to being involved outside school but were unable to do it successfully in the school. The data revealed a common barrier to improving parental involvement—that is a clear understanding of parental involvement. The data suggested that parents are unclear on how to become involved. Many parents felt as if stakeholders in the district did not want them to be involved directly in the school:

PA: What schools have to remember is that every parent is not college educated or feels confident enough to show up at the school. I have seen first-hand where a parent who dropped out of high school continuously showed up at the school to volunteer and the only thing they had for her to do was read to students—which was not fair because she expressed on numerous occasions that she was a struggling reader. What else can they do to become involved if they can't read? Does this make them a worthless parent that should go home and never become involved? It all boils down to respect. Parents will get involved when they know

that their child is being respected and getting what they need and when they are getting respected.

PE: Volunteering at the school to me means more than coming into the school and cutting out stencil patterns in the library. It (parental involvement) means actually being involved in the learning process, in the classroom, with the students. Don't tell me I can volunteer in the classroom and then send me to the front office to work. I don't feel involved then. I don't want to be involved.

PG: I don't understand that when coming into the school I am somewhat made to feel like a criminal inside the school. Now you have to be fingerprinted, and I understand this for school safety, but to know that I essentially have to be placed on a waiting list to be notified when I can be involved in the school is very irritating. A more systematic way to get parents to be involved without all the hassle should be implemented.

PH: I can vividly remember a point and time when the district lost its accreditation due to annual yearly progress, and this being the only time where the school reached out for parents to actually be involved. They had this can the parents do for "us" attitude to keep the school in good standings. For me, I was looking at it as you want something from me but don't want to offer me the support I need to successfully support my child inside the school. To me, it almost seems as if the school only wants you involved when the school itself is not being shed in a good light. When it is time for school board elections and things of that nature (because they want you to stick a sign in your yard), they want a slew of

support but don't want to aid us in becoming more effective leaders and parents within the school.

PK: My experience as far as being directly involved in the schools is that they will let you volunteer but only in the front office stapling papers or putting packets together for students to take home. I staple papers at my current job, so if I'm taking off to volunteer to assist my child in the learning process I want to do just that.

PM: I have tried to volunteer at my child's school and have been directly told that there was nothing for me to do. When I have asked what can I specifically do in my child's classroom I was somewhat discouraged due to the fact that I would serve as a distraction. Since I came toward the end of the day, they did propose the offer for me to help volunteer at the concession stand during the school's basketball game later on that evening. While this is a way to volunteer, this was not what I had in mind. I declined because helping my child inside the classroom would have made me feel efficient as a parent. Even if it was something as simple as helping a teacher grade papers or chiming in on a class discussion. I essentially run a concession stand every day I get home and have to feed my kids. I don't want to do it at school too.

PN: So I'm asking, what can we really do as parents at the school? When we are there, there is nothing to do. When we are not there we are made to feel as if we are not doing enough. And when I feel this way, I don't want to do anything.

One parent commented on how being perceived negatively when trying to volunteer at the school deterred her from further being involved:

PC: Also I think you have to be received well. And I'm never received well.

When I go to the school, I get attitude and irritation. They look at you like, "Oh my God-why is she here again? Her child must be in trouble. That's why they are coming up here," perception. But when you think about it you do have to come up to the school when your child is in trouble, but that does not mean that I can't come up to the school about something positive related to my child as well. That's my issue.

The previous comments exemplify how parent perceptions affect parent involvement. If parents are provided with clear and useful ways to become involved, parental involvement may increase. PA described how the pressure is placed on the parents for more active parental involvement in the schools but schools will not provide adequate help to assist parents in the process. She felt that this is a deterrent for parents who are less educated or who are intimidated by the schools because of their personal experiences. PN was conflicted as she deliberated on whether or not the schools even truly wanted the parents to be involved. She mentioned that her volunteer application was rejected even though she is a former educator and holds several degrees. While she wholeheartedly wanted to promote parental involvement, she felt as if the schools wanted the complete opposite. Parents recognized the value of being an active parent in the educational process. According to the participants being involved is vital to student success.

Integration of effective contact. While parents expressed a clear concern as to what parental involvement is and how to get involved specifically in the schools, they equally expressed disappointment about the communication displayed in the district.

Support systems such as parent liaisons and the PTA have been put in place to serve as the communication bridge between the schools and parents, but according to these parents, they have been just the opposite. The parents agreed that communication has to be a two-way street but communication in the district is limited. Most of the parents expressed that they have very little to no communication with the schools about vital school information. While the district describes parental involvement as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication,” parents expressed great disdain for the current communication methods used in the district.

The PTA should serve as a supportive platform that aids in student and family success. When asked, parents stated that they would like to see more helpful information provided at the meetings. They would like to know where the district is moving academically and how their children will progress toward their futures. Four participants, who had children on the middle school level reported that communication for the most part is visible. The PTA is very helpful and included the parents in the learning process. The views from parents who had children on the high school level saw minimal to no support from the PTA. Only six actually attended PTA meetings during the 2014–2015 school year. Parents discussed their expectations of the PTA and of parent liaisons:

PA: I look for what we are moving toward education-wise. Let me know how my child can progress for her future. In elementary, PTA is great because you want to help your child, when they move to the middle school grades it’s prevalent, but by the time you get to high school you feel as if you’ve heard it all and unless my daughter is in an event, the PTA meetings all sound the same—useless information that I don’t understand. I feel like if you are a parent that stays on top of your

child's education 100% you will get what you need. I think this creates a barrier for some parents because they are not easily accessible due to transportation, work, etc. I have not yet been to a PTA meeting where there are more than 10 parents in attendance.

PM: I believe that they are not scheduled enough in advance. Every parent does not work 9-5. If we are informed about this a little bit ahead of time maybe I can schedule off. I feel as if I don't get enough information ahead of time. If you tell me about something two days beforehand I am not going to be able to make it. Most of the time I don't get any information at all.

PH: From my experience, what I don't like is how the PTA meetings are disguised. In the lower grades, you'll receive notices about the kids putting on a program where they will be singing or something like that and you'll have all of these parents show up to see their kids and someone will come to the stage and say ok, let's have a PTA meeting real quick. Immediately you can feel the energy go down or as if parents feel like they have been bamboozled. It's sad that they have to trick parents to have involvement but it does get to the point especially when you come to one event but they want to take 30 or 40 minutes of that time and discuss a PTA meeting. Even the person speaking feels the energy shift and they begin to speak low and what they are talking about becomes boring. This is how parents lose interest.

PC: What I don't understand is why do you have to be a member of the PTA to be made privy to the information provided at the meetings? If you really want parents to be involved that information should be made available to everyone.

Some of us just don't have enough time to come to the meetings. So, by excluding me you make me feel as if I don't matter. The information can't be emailed to us? Most of the time nothing is shown but PowerPoint presentations anyway. Why can't we get a hold of this information? Is this not information that you claim to want us to know?

Similar to the role of the PTA, the parent liaison helps link the communication gap between home and school. The majority of parents reported receiving little to no information from the parent liaisons. Some reported not even knowing who they were.

PA: When I could not get a hold of the school's administration, I sought out the school's parent liaison to help. After countless phone calls with no response, I decided to go up and talk with the liaison personally. When I got there (to my surprise) they were having a going away party for the current parent liaison. Had I not gone up to the school would I have even known that? Since then, I have yet to hear from the new parent liaison...if they even have one.

PH: I've spoken to my school's parent liaison only one time on the phone with the promise that she would return my call, but she has yet to do that. If the school doesn't want to talk to us when we are trying to be involved, and then the person of contact who is supposed to communicate doesn't want to be involved then what does that leave me as a parent to do? I will only call so many times and eventually say forget it if my voice is not being heard.

PC: If I were the parent liaison and I saw that participation was not where I wanted it to be, I would do something about it. Sometimes it requires more than simply sitting at a desk making phone calls. Sometimes you have to actually go

into the community and knock on doors and talk with community business owners about what we can do together to help get these parents involved. This is a part of your job. Use social media to help. Spread the word. This is what they are paying you to do.

From these accounts, it is evident that supportive parental involvement practices need improvement in order to aid parents in reaching goals for their child. Another aspect the parents discussed was the minimal communication provided to keep parents informed. Most of the parents reported receiving calling posts related to the weather but nothing else of importance.

PE: I feel that communication within the schools is almost nonexistent. The only time I can vividly remember the schools contacting me for anything is when the schools would be closed due to the weather. While I don't mind this being communicated to me, I don't need a million nagging phone calls stating that the schools would be closed when I can't even get a call stating when a parent-teacher conference is or when my child is failing. Additionally, PA highlights how simple communication within the schools is void.

PA: Even something as simple as using the parents' portal (grading platform used to communicate with teachers, check grades, send emails, etc.) is complicated. The grades are never updated and even when you do reach teachers you have to deal with their excuses as to why the grades are not updated. I should be contacted when my child is failing any class. Something as simple as the school marquee being updated can provide the parents with some kind of information to not only get them involved, but keep them involved in the learning process.

Another barrier parents identified that limited them from being involved centered on the time specific events took place. Parents below expressed their concerns:

PB: I believe that meeting times with teachers should be optional. Often times we are only given this small time slot to see the teachers, but what if your schedule doesn't align with the time given. What if you just started a new job and can't get the time off? Why aren't the teachers doing more to make sure that we set up appropriate times to see them? I have a problem with the parent teacher conferences being at six and I get off at five.

PP: For me, I don't have a car because we only have one car and the last time my child told me about parent-teacher conferences, they were only in increments of 15 minutes. What can I possibly learn about my child in 15 minutes? I'm not going to go out of my way to catch a cab or find a ride for 15 minutes.

PC: Alternative measures should be taken for parents who cannot make these times. The school board meetings should be moved to the middle of the week instead of a Monday. Perhaps a second meeting should be given on the weekends. Everything should be more centralized. Because who has time or the energy to run from one side of [town] to the other for a meeting that's going to be over by the time I arrive anyway? The schools have to respect what parents deem as effective forms of effective communication, too.

Based on the comments, it is vitally important that stakeholders are strategically planning events that parents can attend and are continuously aware of events that may prevent parents from participating due to specific times and days of the week.

School leader and teacher support. In addition to parental involvement being promoted via the PTA and parent liaisons, many of the interviewed parents pointed out that the attitudes and behaviors of both the teachers and administration were not supportive of parents as well. Parents did not speak highly of teachers and administration. These perspectives illustrated the experiences parents have directly had with teachers and administration. According to the parents, administration and teachers only support the parents and students when they need something and not the other way around.

PC: This is my child's first year in high school and for me this is a critical time. The interaction that I have had with administration thus far has not been satisfactory. If I come to talk to the principal I should not be passed around to the counselors and finally to an assistant principal because I am made to feel as if the principal does not want to be bothered. I believe that teacher morale is also affected by how the principal runs the school. If you seemingly always have an attitude and you only want to be approached by parents as a final means of communication, the parents pick up on this. If she were friendlier, the whole perception of the school would change because it starts at the head. If you act nonchalant and then are rude, then this is going to trickle down to your peers and those that work for you.

PH recounted her first indirect interaction with the principal:

I can remember coming after school hours to pick up my child. Upon my arrival, she was not outside and I was assuming because it was raining. When I entered the school, I encountered the principal almost screaming at the top of her lungs at a student for wanting to stand inside because of the rain. You may have children

who are disruptive, but you don't approach all students that way. If you come to them in this manner then there is always going to be a constant tug of war. You cannot lump them all together and assume that all students are bad. When I walked in to register my daughter I wanted to cry because I'm worried that she is going to fall through the cracks because people don't seem to care. If she is talking to this child this way and an adult is around, imagine how she speaks to them when parents are not around. She is rude and something needs to be done. From the top to the bottom, there is a problem within this school.

PA: Because of my child's educational plan, she had to transfer to three different middle schools. In the middle schools, the principals and teachers were easy to speak to and seemingly wanted to help. It has only been my child's high school experience that has been dissatisfactory thus far. It seems as if I have to bypass the powers that be to get what I need for my child. I have to go to the superintendent and board members to discuss issues I have. I literally don't speak to my child's principal because I have nothing good to say to her or about her.

PK: Because I am a teacher myself, most of the communication is done through my wife because she is able to make the meetings and things of that nature. While I've never met the principal of my son's school it seems as if there is a big communication gap between administration and parents. I personally think it is because they are taking elementary school principals and placing them in high schools or vice versa and I think that sometimes is a problem. With parents at the elementary school level, they are always there, then in middle school, it seems that the parental involvement kinda weans out. Unless it's a sporting event,

because I coach girls basketball, or something like that, the gym will be packed out but if you call a parent meeting or have times where they have to pick up report cards you find yourself sometimes looking for parents. Communication is nonexistent. If administration is empathetic, it will trickle down to the teachers.

PE supported this statement by providing her reasoning as to why sports are supported by African American parents more than academics:

I think that some believe that sports are the way out of being poor, or in the hood. They feel like I gotta support them because a scout might see them and we may get drafted. This is why African American parents are more prone to support sports. It's a way out. They don't think of something as robotics as a way out. They don't know that you can get a scholarship in robotics because some don't even know what robotics is-but they know what sports is because the media gives it to them and they know what it can give you in life.

PC talked in detail about her experiences with some of her child's teachers:

I've experienced that the teachers don't try to communicate with you, even if your child is failing. Sometimes I don't even know until I look at the parent portal that my child is failing. And because they are in high school you do try to not micro-manage them every other week, but if there is no communication even when your child is being disciplined then it's oblivious. You want your child to do better but you are not received well. And when you go to the teacher and ask what can they do, they will respond with something like, "Well, they just need to study." But that's just not all they need to do. You need to give them some steps to make sure that they understand. Academically, I can't tell her how to do her chemistry

because I am oblivious to chemistry. I can't just say well just study. I can't even help you study because I don't even know anything about what you are doing. When you're not getting what you need from the teacher it forces you to seek outside help and it just sometimes isn't worth it.

PD expressed a similar negative experience with one of her child's teachers who was failing her daughter.

Upon calling the teacher, I expressed to her that I am a very involved parent and prior to her class, my child was making good grades. Because of the teacher's bad experiences with other parents, she believed I was trying to be confrontational, which wasn't the case. I had to explain to her that I am not the other parents and that I just wanted the best for my child. All parents should be received well when trying to be involved in their child's education. Teachers should not make assumptions about students or their parents based on previous experiences. Not all of us are confrontational. Some of us just want to see our kids be great.

PH: When you have the teachers that have been bullied by parents they assume that we are just going to come up there, and especially people of our race, arguing, fussing, and cursing. And because of this, negative attitudes are formed from the beginning and the teachers distance themselves from you to avoid possible conflict. A lot of teachers are there for the teaching aspect and then with others it's like yea, you are just here for a paycheck. And you can tell. Some of them don't know how to handle their class and their teacher instruction is not where it should be.

The parents had different experiences interacting with administration and teachers. They agreed that aside from themselves, teachers were next in line to help raise the youth.

From the interviews, it was evident that the school leaders and teachers should attempt to create an encouraging environment that helps children be successful in life.

Communal disintegration. Several parents mentioned that the issue with the lack of African American parental involvement is a small part of a larger problem in the African American community. A few parents spoke to how parental involvement first begins with a mindset and if you have a generational/socioeconomic mindset then you will remain in a downward spiral. PE stated that sometimes the parents do not have a clue as to how to get involved because their parents were not involved:

The parents feel as if they turned out all right without parents being involved in the schools and don't recognize the value in doing so. They have to be concerned with getting the bills paid on time. Going to work. And most of them would risk losing their jobs by taking off of work because they have jobs and not careers.

They have to be more concerned with taking care of the home because they trust the teachers to take care of the kids at the schools. It's an economically deprived state of mind that their first thought is survival and that's keeping the bills paid, and keeping the lights on, keeping a roof over your head. It's about survival. I'm not saying that it's our fault but if you don't know and were not exposed to certain things or education then how far are you really going to get?

PB's sentiments echoed PE's thoughts on generational curses in the African American community. PB believed that dealing with parental involvement in the African American community surrounds a greater situation that has been festering for many years.

PE: This just didn't start over night. It has been gradually building over decades. We first have to deal with what went wrong and how we can correct that. There are a number of things that have happened. At one point and time, there was a certain pride. Unity has started to disappear in the community. It is no longer "us" and "we" in the African American community. It slowly became "me" and "my." Growing up, if you did something wrong, it did not have to be your mother to chastise you. Now, there are no levels of respect. Etiquette is not even taught in school. The problems are the adults and no one says "we" should set better examples for our children. We can't keep blaming the children. It starts with the parents' mindsets and the types of environment that they allow their children to grow up in. You do what your environment dictates you to do. We as parents have to look in the mirror and ask what we can do at this moment to be an example for all children and not just my own. The students are going to do what they have been exposed to. Just as their parents did. The cycle will continue to repeat itself as long as parents don't stand up and take responsibility for what they are not doing.

PA commented on how we have to sympathize first with some of the parents in the community to understand why being involved is a problem for some.

I'm fortunate enough to have a career and a family but let's face it, a lot of these parents are single parents with no help from anyone. Several of these parents are kids raising kids. If they saw no value in education then why would their child see it? If their sole concern is paying bills and staying fresh, what do you think is

going to be the most important to the child? As parents, we have to help break these generational curses that have been alive for years.

PB agreed by adding, “Somewhere we have to begin to help some of the parents shift their thinking. Poverty is a mindset, not a standard for life. If they are not exposed to greater they won’t know greater.” PJ believed that we have to make up our minds that we want change in order to create it,

When I was younger, I can remember my mom giving my siblings and me the option as to whether we wanted to go to school on certain days. I’m not going to say she didn’t care about school but it wasn’t at the top of her list of things to do. She was more concerned with us getting a job to help provide for the family. I remember her saying that you can’t eat your school books. Now that I am a parent I understand why she did what she did, but I don’t agree with it. I am teaching my children to use their brains to get ahead so they can have options and choices in life. Even at 46, I am in school about to graduate with my bachelor’s degree and I do this for my kids. I want them to see that where you are in life (financially) doesn’t determine where you are going. It all begins with a strong mindset. If I had adopted those same habits from my mom who knows where I would be.

The participants’ views on the African American parents and socioeconomic status suggested that more should be done to strengthen African American families as a whole.

Recommendations for improved parental involvement practices. A parental involvement questionnaire created by the researcher was used for parents to rate specific parental involvement practices that parents deem effective in promoting effective parental involvement. Participants were asked to use a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to rate 10

specific participation strategies (see Appendix F). The specific involvement strategies have been revealed in literature and some suggested by the parents. The following parental involvement strategies were rated:

- The teacher sends home an introductory letter and has the parent fill out a survey that allows parents to voice student concerns.
- The teacher sends home a monthly calendar that outlines all major assignments, tests, and quizzes.
- Parent appreciation night.
- Parents are provided with sample problems to aid students and parents in understanding the homework content.
- A teacher parent contract is created to ensure parental involvement.
- Information nights are held in regard to standardized assessments.
- Workshops on how to become an involved parent.
- Transportation is provided at least once a month for parents without vehicles
- Parent teacher conferences are scheduled during the morning, afternoon, and evening (in-person, Skype, phone).
- Participation bucks (school money that will allow parents to accumulate items, such as school supplies, snacks, based on the number of bucks).

The researcher generated a table to analyze the questionnaire results. In addition to compiling information for each response item, the researcher reviewed data on current strengths and weaknesses of current school efforts to promote family and community

partnerships. Ninety-five percent of the 20 participants returned the survey. Table 2 contains the results of the questionnaire.

Table 2

Parental Involvement Practice Strategy Ratings

Involvement strategy	<i>Highly effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>	<i>Highly ineffective</i>
Introductory letter	42.1	31.6	21.1	5.3	0.0
Calendar of assignments	68.4	31.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Parent appreciation night	27.8	27.8	38.9	5.6	0.0
Sample content problems	63.2	31.6	0.0	5.3	0.0
Parent contracts	22.2	44.4	16.7	11.2	5.6
Standardized testing information night	36.8	52.6	10.5	0.0	0.0
Parental involvement workshops	31.6	36.8	26.3	5.3	0.0
Transportation	47.4	36.8	5.3	10.5	0.0
Varied parent teacher conference meetings	79.0	21.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Parent participation bucks	26.3	26.3	36.8	10.5	0.0

Note. *These percentages were a result of participants rating parental involvement practices from a questionnaire entitled Parental Involvement Practice Strategies.*

Parents rated parental involvement strategies to inform school officials on how to help parents become involved and stay involved in schools. The *most highly effective* parental involvement practices included (a) varied parent teacher conference meetings, (b) calendar of assignments, and (c) sample content problems to aid parents. The *most effective* parental involvement strategies included (a) standardized testing information night, (b) parent contracts, and (c) transportation. Parents were *neutral* to (a) parent participation bucks, (b) parent appreciation night, and (c) parent involvement workshops.

The *least ineffective* parental involvement strategy was introductory letters. The results provided viable solutions to aid in improving parental involvement practices. The perceptions of African American parental involvement strategies can possibly help parents become involved and stay involved.

Evidence of Quality

Evidence to support the quality of this study is available in numerous forms. Participants received a report following the transcription of their interviews. I revised the data based on parent recommendations after they reviewed the summaries. Transcript reviews allowed me to confirm that my data correctly depicted the perceptions and experiences each participant had describing their perceptions of parental involvement.

Data findings and evidence of quality supported the themes found in this qualitative case study. A focus group interview, individual interviews, and a questionnaire were used to collect data. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed to support the effectiveness of this qualitative case study. During this time, reflective field notes were taken to ensure data quality. Data were analyzed to organize like themes. Member checking (Merriam, 2009) and thick rich descriptions (Creswell, 2009) were used to further support this study and assure accuracy and validity of the research. The data collected from these sources yielded five themes. Data were presented as narratives with examples. Parents were informed of the study, procedures, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. My nonsupervisory role did not influence my relationships or components of this study.

Outcomes

The outcomes addressed the guiding research questions and were related to barriers to African American parental involvement. During both the focus group and individual interviews, all participants recognized the value of promoting parent engagement and described possible solutions to improve parental involvement. Barriers to African American parental involvement were also revealed. The data collection exposed a lack of parental involvement in the district. Most parents wanted to become actively involved but felt that the support needed to do so was not evident.

Conclusion

African American parental involvement has been limited in the district under study. This qualitative case study was designed to gather data about African American perceptions of barriers to parental involvement. The methodology section described how I gathered data from African American parents using interviews and a questionnaire. Following the data collection phase, I analyzed findings using thematic coding. Upon completion of the study, I have a better understanding of perceived limitations to African American parental involvement. This vital information will allow me to support the promotion of parental involvement. More details about how I will create a workshop to encourage social change through parental involvement are explained in Section 3.

Section 3: The Project

I used a qualitative case study to highlight the issue of minimal parent participation in a local school district. There has been low involvement in PTA membership, little parent participation in the schools, and a lack of participation as described by school officials in the district. Participation has been low especially among African American parents. African American parent participants completed a parental involvement strategy questionnaire and were interviewed in both the focus group and individual interviews to gauge parents' perceptions of the current barriers to parental involvement, to understand how parents perceive parental involvement, and to explore ways that stakeholders can unite to improve parental involvement.

The data indicated that African American parents in the district wanted to be involved in their children's educational careers; however, parents were unsure about how to be effectively involved. The results explained why participants had negative perceptions about being involved. For instance, several parents expressed that the communication in the district was not up to par and that school communications with officials was almost nonexistent. Both the interviews and the questionnaire provided me with specific solutions to increase parental involvement; parents also expressed an interest in learning how to be involved at home and how to build valid relationships with school officials. This section includes the project goals, design justification, literature review, the proposed implementation schedule, and the project evaluation process. I also include the implications for social change.

Description and Goals

The study results showed a shared desire among African American parents for resources on how to promote parental involvement easily, in and out of the school. This desire supported the development of training materials on parent involvement in the form of a parent-friendly resource that will promote parent engagement in schools and allow parents to become actively involved. The parental involvement resource is in the form of an easily accessible interactive online communication workshop, Positive Parental Involvement, linked to an Edmodo page.

This online communication presentation is composed of two modular PowerPoint presentations, a blog post, and a topic-specific newsletter that allows parents to have access to materials that aid in student success on various levels. In addition, the parenting-to-go card serves as a printable reference card that describes technology-related resources for parents on how to become involved and that are related to the monthly themes. Parents can also pass the cards out to other parents. The parenting-to-go cards will also address the monthly topics presented on the Edmodo website by providing technological resources that relate to the topic. As a result, obstacles such as transportation and employment can no longer negatively affect parents and their access to important information regarding their children because they can access the material online.

Because not all parents have online access, parents will receive an information letter that informs them of the Edmodo page, its purpose, and resources on where to access the website (e.g., public libraries, coffee shops, schools). These online presentation workshops should be presented at the beginning of the school year so

parents are equipped with the tools needed to promote positive student outcomes. The topics of the workshops and newsletters for the first month were based on participant responses.

The project was guided by themes identified by participants during interviews and questionnaire review. For example, findings that prevented African American parents from participating in the district were ineffective communication, scheduling conflicts, and poor school official relationships. The findings influenced my decision to develop an Edmodo-based, interactive online communication presentation. Study results were shared (see Appendix A) with stakeholders in the district so that adjustments could be considered to enhance parental involvement.

Goals

The goal of this project was to use study results to increase African American parental involvement by (a) offering parent approaches that can be used at home to ensure student success and by (b) supplying parents with tools related to relationship building school with officials. Through effective communication, school officials and parents can work together to help students succeed. Continuous contact with school officials will create positive relationships and environments in schools (Hill & Craft, 2003). When productive relationships are established between school officials and parents, positive outcomes emerge. Parent and school-official relationships directly relate to the construct of parental engagement in schools.

I selected an online communication workshop to address the issue of the lack of parental involvement in the district under study. Because participants in the study identified inconvenient times and lack of transportation as barriers to parental

involvement, I wanted to design a tool that would be handy for parents at any time. An ample number of school officials are available to assist parents in effectively becoming involved in their child's education such as parent-liaison communication and PTA membership; however, the district under study has seemingly failed to implement these strategies positively in the district. Parent participants reported little to no communication with these resources. African American parents are interested in doing more to become involved, while staying abreast of current information to aid their child academically.

Data from Section 2 revealed three common themes. First, African American parents need a better understanding of how to promote parental involvement. Second, African American parents need to be communicated with about the things that are happening regarding their children. Third, African American parents need to learn effective ways to build rapport with school officials. An online parental involvement communication presentation linked through Edmodo will provide parents with vital, practical methods that are easily attainable and can be accessed on a daily basis. Because not all parents have online access, parents will receive an information letter that informs them of the Edmodo page, its purpose, and resources on where to access the website. This project was motivated by the results of the limitations that interfered with parents being involved inside the schools. Parents indicated that if they knew how to participate in the educational process that they would be more actively involved. The layout of Edmodo is visually comparable to Facebook, the social media website.

Parents will be informed on how to acquire the skills that will empower them to become active participants in their child's life and foster relationships among school officials that will encourage success in their child's educational career. It was revealed

through the data analysis that parents were not satisfied with the levels of involvement in the district and several barriers prevented their active participation. I seek to address the concerns of parents by providing an effective platform that demonstrates to parents how to communicate effectively with school officials in the district.

Rationale

I selected an online communication workshop to address the issue of the lack of parental involvement in the district under study. Because participants in the study identified inconvenient times and lack of transportation as barriers to parental involvement, I sought to construct a tool that would be handy for parents at any time. An ample number of school officials are available to assist parents in effectively becoming involved in their child's education such as parent liaison communication and PTA membership; however, the district under study has seemingly failed to implement these strategies positively in the district. Parent participants reported little to no communication with these resources. African American parents are interested in increasing parental involvement practices, while staying abreast of current information to aid their child academically. Parents will be informed on how to acquire the skills that will empower them to become active participants in their child's life and foster relationships among school officials that will encourage success in their child's educational career. I seek to address the concerns of parents by providing an effective platform that demonstrates to parents how to communicate effectively with school officials in the district.

Review of the Literature

The literature review revealed that technology, Edmodo, blogging, and newsletters were all beneficial forms of communicating with parents. This parental

involvement online workshop can potentially minimize the barriers that prevent African American parental involvement in the schools. Through interview and questionnaire analysis, parents identified what specific barriers prevented them from being involved and what types of information was needed from the schools to keep them involved. The results were analyzed and while parents have tried to become more involved, poor communication, ineffective school support, and depleted relationships have hindered parent participation. This literature review supports the development of the Parental Involvement Online Communication resource, which has the potential to aid in increasing parental involvement and relationships between parents and school officials.

There is limited direct research available on using blogs and Edmodo to promote parental involvement. This could be because Edmodo is a new educational platform that has only existed since 2012. In addition, Edmodo recently launched a parental involvement application in April 2015. Walden library scholarly databases used to seek out related topics for this literature review included ProQuest, EBSCOhost, SAGE, and ERIC. *Blogs, education blogs, parentblogs, technology, parental involvement, newsletters, PowerPoints, communication, building relationships, increase parental involvement, and Edmodo* were used as key search terms in the review of literature.

Parental Involvement through Technology

Technology has become one of the integral components in the education process over the last decade. It is used to correspond with parents and sustain the involvement of parents in their children's education (Selwyn, Banaji, Hadjithoma-Garstka, & Clark, 2011). These various types of technology can include voice-calling systems, websites, emails, and parent portals. Olmstead (2013) stated,

Voice-calling systems allow parents to keep in touch with the school by having messages sent to their preferred phone number, despite what type of phone it is. Websites, if updated regularly, allow parents access to important news and events about the school. Teacher websites provide parents with homework assignments and class news. Parent portals allow parents to access students' courses, homework assignments, grades, and attendance. The portals allow parents to directly communicate with teachers via email through a direct link if they have questions about their students' progress. (p. 30)

Currently, classroom websites serve as a primary form of technology that connects the school to the parents. This type of learning platform increases the level of communication between parents and school officials and assists in improving parental involvement overall. Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and DePedro (2011) stated that,

Using technology to enable parent involvement has the benefits of instant communication as well as reducing the time costs associated with the school calling parents or sending home newsletters. It allowed for two-way communication when parents were able to email the school, something not afforded when information is only sent from the schools to the parents. (p. 87)

Websites serve as an interactive electronic space where individuals can "raise questions, share ideas, plan activities, congregate, and learn" (Dunn, 2011, p. 22). This type of educational platform allows both parents and school officials to communicate effectively, gain resources, and collaborate when needed. Class websites generally distribute information, promote discussion, and provide resources related to course content (Dunn, 2011).

Based on the study results, African American parents desired an easily accessible parental involvement promotion resource. Schools should consider how to maximize technology to further support school and home communications to encourage positive parental involvement. Technology allows parents to easily access information at their convenience. Follansbee et al. (1996) reported that technology had the potential to diminish communication impediments regarding socioeconomic status and cultural differences. An increase in communication through technology promotes homework completion, motivation, and successful parent-teacher communication (Lewis & Lamb, 2003). Hesterman (2012) used a variety of technologies to supplement classroom instruction in order to understand how technology directly affects student learning, motivation, and parental involvement. Results revealed that technology provides a means of increasing parental involvement, enhancing student motivation and developing alternative learning methods for students (Hesterman, 2012). Olmstead (2013) collected data using surveys and focus group interviews to examine perceptions of achievement when technology was implemented as a form of direct communication. Parents welcomed the resources via technology and felt “more connected” to the learning experience. When parents are connected via technology, they promote ways to become involved and stay involved.

By incorporating technology into the project, study parents are able to view all school-related entities occurring in the district at their convenience through a host of electronic tools. According to the literature, there has been an abundance of positive attributes associated with the implementation of technology in the educational setting.

Technology has made a important impact in education and serves a communicable platform that connects parents and school officials.

Blog Effectiveness

Blogs serve as a platform that connects users worldwide. A blog is defined as “an online journal where individuals are able to post entries of commentary, events, and other materials” (Powell & McCauley, 2011). Blogging is effective because there is consistent interaction, relevant content uploaded to assist in learning, and links to a variety of resources that aid all parties in the educational process (Portier, Capitaio-Tavares, & Rambaran, 2013). Because parents tended to use the computer to participate in Internet searches and online forums, blogging was deemed an essential component of the educational process. Vanderpool’s (2008) study on technology revealed that, “Technology diminishes existing barriers to parental involvement by expanding channels of communication” (p. 100). When the channels of communication expand, there is a better chance for parents to become involved.

Blogging is also an effective means of allowing students to refine and develop their skills. It also provides a convenient way for individuals to search for information. Deng and Yeun (2011) believed that blogging is effective because it (a) encourages self-expression; (b) centers on social values; and (c) fosters interaction and collaborative learning. If blogging has positive effects on students, it can be assumed that parents will have similar experiences about communicating effectively.

I-ping, Yi-Hsuan, and Yu-chi (2013) explored the effects of blogging behaviors, which include basic journaling, advanced publishing, and interactive feedback.

Interactive feedback is the blogging behavior that the parental involvement online

communication resource will use. This specific blogging behavior will encourage active participation through message boards and discussion recommendations. By developing social relationships, parents, educators, and school officials will gain the skills to inform them properly on how to aid their child in attaining educational success. As long as the site is monitored and regularly updated, this form of virtual communication can service both parents and students (Dunn, 2011).

Edmodo

An effective social-networking tool for educators that is being implemented around the world is Edmodo. This type of teaching practice not only involves technology but also allows students to gain skills through learning and collaboration. Edmodo has 12 subject communities that allow teachers to interact with numerous teachers in shared content areas. Ozmen, Akuzum, and Baysal (2011) believed that the benefits of using social networking sites in education reveal the importance of such sites for individual and social development and aid in efficiently developing careers. Schachter (2011) assessed how various social media networking sites are being used to enhance education and connect students to a larger world. Edmodo provides a platform for ongoing class discussion, class engagement, and effortless conversation (Schachter, 2011).

Because many parents are familiar with the layout of Facebook, the transition to Edmodo may be perceived as easier to manage and navigate. In addition, Edmodo is already permissible in the district site. This site allows for new-age interaction about parent participation. While there is minimal scholarly research that discusses parental involvement through Edmodo, it is an educational tool that enhances social networking and strong educational value and purpose (Schachter, 2011). Through Edmodo, the power

of integrating technology with teaching and learning can occur among parents, educators, and school officials.

Newsletters and PowerPoint

One of the most effective ways to establish effective home-school communication is through written communication. The goal of written content is to present precise information that parents will fully understand. Newsletters have been an effective tool used to communicate with parents on all grade levels. This form of communication is beneficial because it “supports the text and provides clear, visual examples of the application of research and theory to practice” (Baker, 2014, p. 221). Baker (2014) stated that creating newsletters using the same color, quality, and paper size forms a communication set that parents can understand. Newsletters should be an essential part of every schools communication plan that offers support for parents. Topics in newsletters can range from academic achievement goals to positive parent-school partnerships. A newsletter enhances school and home relationships (Baker, 2014).

PowerPoints are defined as computer-aided presentations that are “dynamic communication tools in oral and visual senses in terms of reading and writing” (Can, Karaca, Akyel & Demirci, 2012, p.129). Selimoglu, Arsoy, and Ertan (2009) analyzed the effectiveness of PowerPoint presentations in learning, found that students who were lectured with PowerPoint presentations were more successful, and found the learning experience to be highly beneficial. There are more than 300 million users of PowerPoint worldwide and it has become the predominant technology platform in the classroom (Lowenthal, 2009). Mayer (2009) conducted a study on the effectiveness of multimedia learning and concluded that PowerPoints should support five basic principles: (a)

informative content, (b) effective signals, (c) no excessive content, (d) content approximation, and (e) visual contingency.

Both the newsletter and the PowerPoint presentation should be viewed as an opportunity to support both parent and student learning. The newsletter will “inform, announce, remind, advise, instruct, advertise, and communicate” information that will aid in an increase in parental involvement (Baker, 2014, p. 57). Can et al. (2010) studied the attitudes toward the effects of use of teaching materials and found that students believed that the use of PowerPoint “brings some kind of change, prevents teaching from being boring, and helps make a lively, colorful teaching and learning environment” (p. 341). Using both the newsletter and the PowerPoint, I intend to inform parents and school officials about ongoing parental involvement practices and issues in education.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

For this online parental involvement tool to be successful, the content must be current. I would be responsible for uploading new content related to parental involvement and themes in education on a monthly basis. Both parents and school officials are potential resources for this project. The school leaders are also promoting the use and exploration of modern technology as instructional tools. In the future, teachers and school officials can provide feedback about issues occurring in the district of which parents should be aware. When working together through effective communication, school officials will become successful at implementing strategies to promote parent and school partnerships. The instruction in Appendix A was created for illustrating the intent of the project study, but will change as the school year progresses.

Potential Barriers

A potential barrier could be parents' lack of access to technology. Many parents may not have access to the Internet, which may prevent them from finding alternate ways of accessing the online workshop. Some parents may have access to the Internet via cell phone but may have limited usage because of data plans. If parents in the district have limited technology knowledge, intimidation may discourage them from visiting the online resource. Although most parents were in favor of a resource that addresses parental involvement, some may still fail to increase involvement. However, the format of the resource, a blog, newsletter, and online presentation should benefit the parents.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The Parental Involvement Online Workshop will be an on-going, monthly project. The data from the interviews and questionnaire guided the development of the blog, newsletter, and online presentation topics for the first month. Every month a new topic will be discussed that will aid the parents in not only becoming involved, but also aid in dealing with issues in education that some students are faced with (i.e., bullying, learning disabilities). Parents will provide feedback and provide me with the data to promote parental involvement continuously. The project will become more beneficial as time goes on and resources are described and discussed on the blog, in newsletters, and online presentations. During the start of the academic year, principals will distribute a letter to parents that describes the online communication resource and its purpose. The letter will include ways the parents can access the website if they do not have internet accessibility. Parents will have access to the website following the distribution of the letter.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

I created the blog and online workshop resources without assistance from others. It is my responsibility to develop, guide, and update the content of the online workshop. A thriving resource must be managed at all times. The resource is dependent on users. Potential users will comment on blogs entries and online discussions.

Role of Potential Users

When users share their experiences, they will develop a plan for learning more about parental involvement. Feedback from potential users will help enhance the development of the workshop. Potential users will comment on blog entries and online presentation content. When users share their experiences, they will build a platform for learning more about parental involvement.

Project Evaluation

The project will be evaluated through an online link attached to the Edmodo site (see Appendix A). The evaluation contains eight questions that allows parents to express their thoughts on how to improve the online communication resource overall. The survey was designed to determine how resourceful the online workshop is and to gain immediate feedback from parents. The goal of my outcome-based evaluation is to gather parents' perceptions about barriers to involvement. The anticipated outcome is that parents will gain resources that will provide support on how to become involved. Any feedback provided will contribute to the growth and adjustment of the online resource.

Implications Including Social Change

The parental involvement online workshop has potential to influence everyone in the community. Parents, school officials, and community members will benefit from the

workshop by gaining resources on how to become involved effectively in education. The research for the current study focused on perceptions to parental involvement barriers in a local school district. Gathering additional data from parents and school officials in other districts could provide more insight into perceptions and experiences promoting parental involvement. The current study did not include students.

Parents' greatest concern was the lack of communication from school officials. Using a more effective method of communication that can be updated through technology should result in parents being more engaged in the learning process. This could strengthen partnerships in the community and take parent involvement to new levels.

This online workshop through Edmodo can be important in a larger context by determining if similar strategies can be implemented in other school districts. Through the online parental involvement resource, I plan to make parents, school officials, and community members aware of issues that plague our schools and communities. This may encourage discussion that needs to take place for students to be successful. The project study also has the potential to build effective partnerships between schools and families.

Conclusion

This project was developed because of the data collected from the parent interviews and questionnaire responses. While I plan to share this resource with all schools in the district, school officials have the choice whether or not to implement strategies from the resource. Parents can gain skills that directly pertain to parent participation. This qualitative case study should positively add to the limited research promoting African American parental involvement in the district. Throughout this project study, I have developed into a stronger scholar and practitioner. The implications for

social change of this project revolve around resolving parent issues described in their interviews. Section 4 includes my reflections and conclusions for my project study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

I decided to explore perceptions of barriers to African American parental involvement after observing a lack of participation from this specific group of parents. An online parental involvement communication workshop resource, in the form of two modular PowerPoint presentations, a blog post, parenting-to-go cards, and a topic-specific newsletter, was created to address themes found in the focus group and individual interviews. I sought to first understand why involvement pertaining to scholastic endeavors was so low in the school district and then use that information to create viable solutions to increase parental involvement in this district. The themes that emerged from the interviews were ineffective communication, scheduling conflicts, and poor relationships with school officials. The project study was developed so that parents and school officials would have easy access to parental involvement resources and ongoing information on current trends and issues in education.

In this section, I will describe the project strengths and recommendations for remediation of limitations. I will also reflect on the development and evaluation of my project as well as my growth as a scholar, professional, and project developer. Finally, I will discuss the project's impact on social change and direction for future research.

Project Strengths

The purpose of this study was to examine perceived barriers to African American parental involvement. The data revealed lack of communication as a major contributor to the problem. I have proposed an Edmodo parental involvement resource tool to strengthen the forms of communication in the educational process. Strengths of this project are in its design; using PowerPoint presentations, blogs, and newsletters, the

online tool will accommodate parents and address a variety of learning needs. The Edmodo learning platform will enable the parents to engage in new learning practices using technology. The features of online social technology have the potential to improve social interactions both inside and outside the classroom (Ractham & Chen, 2013).

School officials have a duty to ensure that parent participation strategies are used to enrich the learning experience for students. An additional strength is that this study may lead to effective parent and school partnerships. Effectual relationships serve as one of the key factors in established educational practices (Pushor, 2010; Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). Two-way, formal exchanges of communication allow school officials to become more aware of what is preventing parents from being involved and begin having conversations about how to remediate this issue. Parents and school officials will benefit by taking the initiative to improve, repair, and maintain relationships. An added strength of this online communication resource is that parents will meet as a unit. The dialogue shared will potentially help reduce patterns of potential isolation and help build trust.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

The number of participants interviewed could be a limitation. Because the number of participants was small, a limited number of responses were gained. In addition, I did not gather interview data from a diverse group of African American parents. The data would be more representative of the district population if there were more participants. Including parents from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups, and gender in the district could have increased the need for the project.

In addition, the fact that the parental involvement communication presentation is internet based means that parents must access the internet to learn more about the

parental involvement tool. I created the project as an internet-based tool so parents can access the content from various electronic devices. Even though two PowerPoint presentation workshops, a newsletter, and a blog were created as an initial online parent professional development, not all parents may have access to the internet, which could also cause limitations. To help parents without internet access at the beginning of the year, a letter will provide and explain the parental involvement online resource and lists local resources (e.g., libraries, coffee shops) that provide internet access.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

To address these limitations, additional components can be added to the project to improve the overall format. In addition to online trainings, effective communication workshops can be provided to the parents at convenient times at the schools to encourage parental involvement. However, many parents may not be willing to attend because of other engagements. A possible project supplement is a printed guide with resources for promoting parental involvement delivered to parents via mail. By doing this, parents can access a printed guide to reference without an internet accessible device. Several parents stated that they would even prefer a hard copy of information they needed in order to reference when necessary. However, parents may misplace or lose the guide. A combination of the current project, Edmodo resources, professional development, and a printed guide could reduce the limitations and provide parents and school officials with the opportunity to obtain resources for promoting parental involvement.

Another drawback is the fact that only one school district was explored. Exploring neighboring school districts with high parental involvement can potentially remediate this limitation. Surrounding districts can be explored to understand effective parental

involvement practices. Subsequently, strategies can be put in place to cultivate alliances between all stakeholders.

An alternative approach to the project would be to implement parental involvement training in the schools. Parents could participate in practicing parent strategies that best suits the need of their child. The trainings could include activities and mini-projects for the parents to complete during training. At the end of the training, parents can share their experiences with school officials and recommend alternatives to improve the live sessions.

Scholarship

As the educational world constantly evolves, scholarship is vital to grow continuously as a professional and scholar. I have gained great knowledge related to scholarship over the past 6 years as a Walden University student. While completing my project study, I gained skills to analyze articles effectively to extract information that will enhance my growth as a professional educator.

More specifically, I planned to research the perceived barriers to African American parental involvement. I found there were limited peer-reviewed research articles surrounding this specific topic. Using peer-reviewed articles ensured that the articles were of quality, accurate, and valid. While analyzing research articles, study results indicated benefits of understanding parental involvement, effective methods of parental involvement, and limitations to African American parental involvement. This in-depth analysis assisted me in understanding African American parental involvement from a number of studies. This analysis also aided me in drawing conclusions about the limited research conducted on this topic.

Project Development and Evaluation

This project study was created to advise parents, school officials, and community members on effective parental involvement practices. The development of this project was guided by the rubric and feedback from committee chair members. The semester plan also allowed me to develop my project study further by providing goals per semester related to the development of my study. I have learned that when developing a project, an extensive amount of time and detail is required to report beneficial research information. Two types of interviews and a questionnaire were developed and implemented to collect data. Data were later analyzed. Decisions about how to best promote parental involvement strategies were created and researched. Throughout this process, I learned that developing this tool involved implementing a strategy and maintaining consistency in identifying the needs of parents.

Another vital component to the development of this project was understanding the barriers to African American parental involvement. After the problem was analyzed, I had to decide how to resolve this issue to influence social change. The study findings indicated that all African American parents wanted to promote parental involvement; however, they felt limited due to the lack of communication provided by school officials. My goal was to create an accessible way for parents to strengthen parent engagement. Participants expressed displeasure about effective communication involving teachers, school leaders, and administration. After finding that communication was deemed ineffective, creating the interactive parental involvement online presentation through an Edmodo page was simple.

The parental involvement communication presentation using Edmodo provides resources for parents to understand how to become involved and stay involved in education. The parental involvement promotion evaluation form provides feedback about the usefulness of the content associated with effective parent participation. In order for the online communication resource to be successful in any school district, parental involvement resources must be continuously amended to remain current on the trends and issues that affect parental involvement and education. While an evaluation tool currently exists for the resource, the enhancement of this project will be ongoing. The lack of communication amongst parents and school officials brought me to this project. As a lead teacher, I will continuously update the project with valuable information for all stakeholders. As new trends and issues in education emerge, parents will be afforded knowledge on how to implement the best parenting strategies their children need.

Leadership and Change

While leadership and change are represented in various forms, through this process I have learned that the two are indispensable. Throughout my educational career, I have been exposed to various leaders and leadership styles. This project compelled me to examine my current leadership abilities and learn how to assume more effective leadership roles. Because of this project, I began to take on a leadership role as lead teacher in my current school of employment. I started helping colleagues and passing along the information gathered on ways to remediate African American parental involvement. Because I know the importance of parental involvement, I am passionate about promoting parental involvement among all parents and helping other educators do the same. As a leader, I met with the English department and we created a parental

involvement strategy board to attack the issue of parental involvement for the upcoming school year. I also implemented Skype parent-teacher conferences as a way to reach the parents. As a leader, I have learned the importance of effective communication, team building, and vision and goal setting. The effective leader must demonstrate commitment to all stakeholders in the process. Teamwork does make the dream work. The instructors at Walden University provided me with the necessary skills to delve extensively into education through discussion questions and other frameworks. This information allowed me to dig deeper into issues that ultimately affect education.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Becoming a scholar was one of the most challenging tasks I have had to encounter in my life thus far. While I understood there would be challenges associated with achieving something as prestigious as my doctoral degree, I did not anticipate the hardships I faced during this process. I learned how to effectively analyze articles and develop connections between diverse works and various educational practices. After evaluating various research articles, I was able to discover profound insight through scholarly reflection.

As a scholar, I now recognize the importance of content credibility and trustworthiness. It is important to examine the credibility of the analysis process, including the planning, design, and reporting of results. Being a scholar means that you have analyze all components of the process with a keen eye. An extensive amount of time is also needed to synthesize findings. Another important attribute of being a scholar that I learned was how personal opinions and biases should be eliminated in order to assess research and data findings properly.

One of my biggest struggles as a scholar was balancing my project study with my life. Organization and goal setting are components of being a scholar. It was important that I consistently set goals along the way to enhance my productivity as a scholar and practitioner. One of my consistent goals was to make sure that I was able to provide sound research for future researchers.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner, I was able to have parent participants complete a questionnaire and participate in two interviews. Through the analysis of the data I collected, I created a parental involvement presentation linked through Edmodo to address the problem in the project study. My overall goal was to improve parent engagement amongst all parents in the district under study.

As a practitioner, I was able to engage in collective inquiry with African American parents to improve parental involvement. In addition, I also shared the knowledge gained with school officials and parents in the district to promote parental involvement. I am able to promote social change in the district through the process of sharing knowledge and implementing effective parent participation practices. My goal as a practitioner was to educate parents on how to become more involved. When positive relationships are established, the outcomes for children can be great.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

I established the role of project developer when I agreed to obtain a doctoral degree in teacher leadership. I examined an issue in education, collected and analyzed data on this issue, and created a project study based on this issue. I also was responsible for writing a scholarly paper that explained the entire process.

Choosing a project was not an easy task. After identifying the problem in the district under research, it was vital to collect data that would aid me in further understanding the current problem. As part of the development, I administered a questionnaire and conducted a focus group and individual interviews to understand the lack of parental involvement better. After data were analyzed, barriers that affected parental involvement were identified. Peer-reviewed research articles and other resources were reviewed. I was able to formulate a deeper understanding of my topic by using the resources available.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

The project's potential impact on social change was to identify perceived barriers to African American parental involvement and provide viable solutions to remedy this issue. I designed the parent involvement online presentation through Edmodo to help parents understand the process and the many components of parental involvement. This project has the potential to influence social change on numerous levels. First, this project has the potential to help parents understand parental involvement from a variety of perspectives. Second, this project has the potential to encourage school leaders and instructional leaders to promote parental involvement through effective communication. Third, this project has the potential to enhance parental involvement across the district where it is lacking in various schools. Most importantly, when parents implement involvement effectively, students will potentially succeed on optimal levels. I intend to advance the parent involvement online presentation in order to influence social change in the comprehensive educational setting.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

This project study is vital because it serves as the beginning of a parent engagement network that could aid parents in implementing effective parental practices. In addition, the relationships between parents and school officials will be strengthened if both parties are provided with the necessary tools to progress. Furthermore, this work is important because of the potential outcomes for students. A large amount of literature has identified increased academic success, improved behavior, and increased self-esteem as just a few of the benefits associated with effective parenting practices. This project has helped me learn how to address effectively the needs of parents who want to become actively involved.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Research on promoting effective parental involvement can greatly benefit parents and school officials in the educational process. The research for the present study focused on promoting and improving parental involvement in one school district. Gathering data from parents in other schools, districts, and states could provide more extensive information on the barriers to parental involvement. The most vital indication of the study is the significance of supplying supplementary instruction on themes recommended through the Edmodo online presentation. If schools in the district would model the project study, the ways parents are involved may increase. Overall, study results could encourage future research on districts with like characteristics that have successfully employed parental involvement strategies. Future research may include how this tool may increase the involvement of parents and its effect on student achievement.

Conclusion

This qualitative project study explored perceptions of perceived barriers to African American parental involvement, discovered what barriers prevented parents from being involved, and examined ways to best aid parents with parenting practices. It is vital that the concerns of parents are addressed in order to remediate the issue of parental involvement. This will open up the lines of communication for strong relationships and student success. This project was developed because of the data collected from parent interviews and questionnaire reviews on parental involvement. Although the project was created as result of the data collected from the district under study and I plan to share it with schools within the district, school officials have the choice whether or not to access and implement ideas from the resource. Regardless if the project is used by school officials, the project will serve as a resource for any parent who wants to be involved but does not know how to be. This qualitative case study should add to the current limited research on African American parental involvement. Throughout this project study, I have developed into a stronger scholar, leader, and practitioner. This experience has provided me with the skills to affect social change positively by helping parents strengthen home and school alliances.

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Appendix A: The Project

The screenshot displays the Edmodo Parental Involve interface. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://www.edmodo.com/home#/group/index?id=13623493>. The page title is "Parental Involve".

The main content area is titled "Parental Involvement Academy" with the group code "LOCKED" and the name "Ms. Foley - All". Below the title, there are tabs for "Posts", "Folders", and "Members 1", along with a "Group Settings" link.

The "Small Groups" section is visible, listing four categories: "BLOG POSTS", "NEWSLETTERS", "ONLINE COMMUNICATION POWERPOINTS", and "PARENTING-TO-GO CARDS". Each category has a "more" dropdown menu. A "New Small Group" button is located in the top right corner of this section.

The left sidebar contains a "Small Groups" menu with a plus icon, and a "Manage" button at the bottom. The right sidebar features a calendar icon showing "30" and a magnifying glass icon.

UNDERSTANDING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Avis Foley



In this online workshop, we will answer the following questions:



- What is parental involvement?
- What is the school district's policy on parental involvement?
- What are the common barriers to parental involvement?
- What are the different types of parental involvement?
- What are viable solutions to help increase parental involvement?

Parental involvement is...



...the participation of parents in **regular, two-way, and meaningful communication** involving student academic learning and other school activities.

The involvement includes

- 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.

(Clayton County Public Schools, 2015)

What is parental involvement?

Parental involvement is described as the participation of parents in meaningful communication between home and school that ensures parents are given the tools needed to help their children learn at home and become more actively involved in the learning process by volunteering in classroom activities, attending school events, and communicating with their child's teacher.



(Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014)



Barriers to parental involvement

- Numerous barriers to involvement exist for both schools and families.
- Some barriers are created by limited resources.
- Others originate from the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of families and school staff.

(Epstein, 2010)

When parental involvement is effectively implemented, the following may occur:



STUDENTS	PARENTS	SCHOOL OFFICIALS
Higher academic achievement	A deeper understanding of educational programs and how schools operate	Higher student achievement
Better attendance	Increased confidence in their ability to help their children learn at home	Increased student attendance
Higher grades and test scores and enrollment in higher-level programs	Increased support for their children	A network of supportive parents and communities

Types of parental involvement

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at home
- Decision making
- Collaborating with the community



(Epstein, 2010)

How can parents and schools help families establish home environments to support children?

- Workshops, videotapes, and phone messages on parenting
- Effective home conditions
- Parent education and training
- Family support programs
- Transitional home visits



(Epstein, 2010)

Effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication includes the following:

- Conferences
- Language translators
- Current student work review
- Report card conferences
- Updates via notices, memos, phone calls, and newsletters
- Information on school policies, programs, and reforms



(Epstein, 2010)

Appropriate communication methods



One-way communication	Two-way communication
Letters/newsletters	Telephone calls
Report cards	Home visits
Communication books	Parent-teacher conferences
Radio announcements	Open houses
School website	School based community activities

Parent volunteering— organizing parent help and support



- School and classroom volunteer programs
- Parent rooms or family centers
- Annual postcard survey to identify volunteer components of volunteers
- Class parent and telephone trees to deliver information
- Parent patrols concerning operations of school programs

(Epstein, 2010)

Learning at home

- Homework skills help for both parents and students
- Activity calendars
- Family subject activities
- Summer learning packets
- Family goal setting



(Epstein, 2010)

Including parents in school decisions



- Active parent organization membership
- Parent advocacy groups
- District-level councils and committees
- School/local elections
- Parent/family representative links

(Epstein, 2010)

Collaborating with community resources

- Strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning
- Summer programs for students
- Service integration through partnerships
- Community service
- Alumni participation with students



(Epstein, 2010)

Strategies to increase parent involvement

- Generate regular communication amongst all stakeholders
- Promote parenting skills
- Encourage active parental involvement
- Welcome parents
- Create positive, ongoing communication between parents and schools
- Institute classroom volunteer programs
- Conduct parent workshops

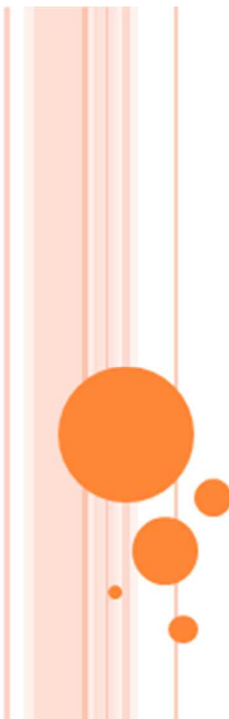


(Epstein, 2010)

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**BUILDING EFFECTIVE
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND
ADMINISTRATION**
Avis Foley

THE POWER OF BUILDING TRUST

“Trust between parents and educational professionals is necessary for effective partnerships stipulated by legal mandates; it appears to have a positive effect on student outcomes, and it is the students themselves who are the true beneficiaries of trusting relationships between parents and education professionals”

(Sheldon, Angell, Stoner, & Roseland, 2010)



5 FACETS OF TRUST

BENEVOLENCE	Having confidence that another party has your best interests at heart and will protect your interests is a key ingredient of trust.
RELIABILITY	Reliability refers to the extent to which you can depend upon another party to come through for you, to act consistently, and to follow through.
COMPETENCE	Competence has to do with belief in another party's ability to perform the tasks required by his or her position.
HONESTY	A person's integrity, character, and authenticity are all dimensions of trust.
OPENNESS	Judgments about openness have to do with how freely another party shares information with others. (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000)

OBSTACLES TO BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS

- Being time poor or stressed when attempting to communicate.
- Lack of confidence in one's skills as a parent or a teacher.
- Lack of experience in teacher/parent communication.
- Previous negative experiences when communicating or interacting.
- Preconceived ideas about the parent/teacher/school.
- Not recognizing the benefits of developing a positive working relationship.

(Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012)

BENEFITS OF PARENT-TEACHER AND PARENT-ADMINISTRATION RELATIONSHIPS (OLSON & FULLER, 2008)

Benefits for Children	Benefits for Parents	Benefits for Educators and Administration
<p>Children generally achieve better grades, test scores, and attendance</p> <p>Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school</p>	<p>Parents' perceptions of the school are improved and there are stronger ties and commitment to the school</p> <p>Parents are more confident in their parenting and decision-making skills</p>	<p>Consistent parent involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents, teachers, and administrators</p> <p>Teachers and principals acquire a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time</p>
<p>Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level</p>	<p>Parents increase their interaction with children and are more sensitive to their children's emotional, social, and intellectual needs</p>	<p>When schools have a high percentage of involved parents in and out of schools, teachers and principals are more likely to experience higher morale</p>

DISTINCT ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

“Distinct role relationships characterize the social exchanges of schooling: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents, and all groups with the school principal. Each party in a relationship maintains an understanding of his or her role’s obligations and holds some expectations about the obligations of the other parties. For a school community to work well, it must achieve agreement in each role relationship in terms of the understandings held about these personal obligations and expectations of others”.

(Byrk & Schneider, 2003, p. 41)

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO INSPIRE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Principals	Teachers	Parents
Are parents involved in authentic, engaging ways or are they receiving mixed messages about the pathways of their involvement?	What could I do to let parents know that their help and input are valued, and benefit their children?	How can I find out more about how to support my children's learning development at home?
Have parents been receiving information about the positive things and extra efforts that teachers/staff have been doing to support students and schools?	Have I taken the necessary steps to establish and develop an effective relationship with the parents?	Do I share my concerns with the teacher and principal? How could I do this better?
Has the school demonstrated a welcoming approach and honored the roles and expertise of parents in their children's lives and in the community?	What steps can I take to help parents support their children's learning and development?	How can I be more involved in decisions that affect my child?

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO INSPIRE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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Have parents been receiving information about the positive things and extra efforts that teachers/staff have been doing to support students and schools?	Have I taken the necessary steps to establish and develop an effective relationship with the parents?	Do I share my concerns with the teacher and principal? How could I do this better?
Has the school demonstrated a welcoming approach and honored the roles and expertise of parents in their children's lives and in the community?	What steps can I take to help parents support their children's learning and development?	How can I be more involved in decisions that affect my child?

ROLE OF PRINCIPAL

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students.
- Creating a climate to hospitable to education.
- Cultivating leadership in others.
- Managing people, data, and processes.
- Improving school leadership.

(Wanat, 2012)

ROLE OF TEACHER

- Working with parents, community members, and school officials to set clear and obtainable standards for students.
- Participating in the decision making that helps to deal with problems that affect our students' learning.
- Providing a dependable and consistent influence on young people as they make choices about further education, work, and life

(Wanat, 2012)

ROLE OF PARENT

- Providing an optimal environment.
- Teaching and educating your child.
- Providing guidance, direction, assistance, and help.
- Supporting and motivating your child.

(Wanat, 2012)



ROLE OF PARENT

- Providing an optimal environment.
- Teaching and educating your child.
- Providing guidance, direction, assistance, and help.
- Supporting and motivating your child.

(Wanat, 2012)



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BUILDING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND ADMINISTRATION

Let's face it, when it comes to building parent relationships with educators and school officials the lines of communication can get lost sometimes and relationships either go awry or remain underdeveloped. This ultimately affects how students function in their educational settings.

In order to eliminate this problem, it is important to establish various levels of trust so all stakeholders can work together to benefit the child. Parents, teachers, and school officials all have a role to fulfill in making sure their children's learning experience is not only positive, but also rewarding. Establishing specific levels of trust will aid in better understanding the student's strengths and weaknesses and in establishing partnerships that will serve students in the end.

It is not a secret that some parents have reservations about establishing these relationships due to their prior experiences, but what they have to understand is that relationships are not built over night and there is set protocol that needs to be understood before results emerge.

So how is this done? Follow the steps listed below to learn how to communicate effectively with stakeholders in the educational process.

- Effectively communicate to the best of your ability
- Make yourself known
- Listen as well as inform
- Remain organized
- Keep a positive mindset
- Familiarize yourself with the school
- Be clear on all policies
- Volunteer
- Keep students first

While it will take time, this goal is achievable. In the end, your child will appreciate this. Follow these specific steps to become involved, build trust, and stay involved. What will you do to make sure you are involved?

Parental Involvement Newsletter

Parental Involvement Academy

Newsletter Date
Volume 1, Issue 1



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WELCOME TO THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACADEMY!

Parental involvement in a student's life can have lifelong effects. When students have parents who are actively involved, benefits such as higher grades, improved behavior, and more confidence are reaped. Relationships between parents and school officials are vital components in the educational process. Effective communication with parents and school officials can significantly improve the school climate, educational experience, and follow the students throughout their lives.

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide effective information regarding various aspects of parental involvement. This bulletin is a great way to develop a strong relationship with parents.

Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. Because of this, all stakeholders must continue to develop and expand their skills in order to maximize effective communication.

Dear Parents

Welcome to the district's first parental involvement bulletin!

As you know, different communication approaches can strengthen or weaken parent teacher relationships. This newsletter was created to provide you with tips on how to become involved in your child's education and stay involved.

Your involvement is vital to the development of the school as a learning community.

We want you to know that YOU ARE APPRECIATED!!

This bulletin was created to provide the information needed to help your child succeed on ALL levels in their academic careers.

Using Epstein's framework for parental involvement, this bulletin was created to provide you with several different ways to become involved in your child's education.

Below are ways to effectively involve yourself in your child's education!!

Future Bulletins

- ◆ Technology
- ◆ Bullying
- ◆ College Help



Teamwork makes the dream work!

"Parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way communication."

Parenting

Parenting involves helping families establish home environments to support children.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE???

Workshops, videotapes, and phone messages on parenting
Effective home conditions

Parent education and training
Family support programs
Transitional home visits

Communicating

Effective communication involves establishing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE???

Conferences
Language translators

Current student work review
Report card conferences

Updates via notices, memos, phone calls, and newsletters

Information on school policies, programs, and reforms

Volunteering

Volunteering consists of organizing effective parent help and support

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE???

School and classroom volunteer programs
Parent rooms or family centers

Annual postcard survey to identify volunteer characteristics

Class parent and telephone trees to deliver information

Parent patrols concerning operations of school programs

Learning at Home

Learning at home provides ways that parents can aid with homework and curriculum activities, decisions, and planning.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE??

Homework skills help (parents & students)
Activity Calendars

Family subject activities

Summer learning packets

Family participation goal setting

Decision-Making

Decision making involves including parents in helping make school decisions that affect education.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE??

- Active parent organization memberships
- Parent advocacy groups
- District-level councils and committees
- School/local elections
- Parent/family representative links



*Working toward
Academic Success
through Parental
Involvement*

Collaborating with the Community

In order for true involvement to take place, it has to take place not only in the school, but in the community as well.

HOW CAN THIS BE DONE??

- Resources to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning
- Summer programs for students
- Service integration through partnerships
- Community service
- Alumni participation with students

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BENEFITS

Did you know that the following results from active parental involvement?

- Higher academic achievement
- Better attendance
- Increased confidence
- Improved behavior
- Reduced absenteeism



Parenting-To-Go Cards

Parental Involvement Pledge

I _____ pledge
to _____,
_____, and _____ to
remain active in my child's education. I will do my best
to fulfill these duties by maintaining constant
communication with my child's teachers and school
officials. I will take responsibility for my child and
their learning experience.

Name _____

Parental Involvement Apps

- Remind: Safe Classroom Communication
- Ringya
- SchoolCircle
- ClassDojo
- Edmodo
- Schoology
- Shoparoo
- Team Snap

Did YOU KNOW?

Students with involved parents tend to have
higher grades, better social skills, and are more
likely to graduate and further their education

Children are more likely to be socially competent
and have better communication skills when they
have parents who are sensitive to their needs and
emotions

Children who have parental support are likely to
have better health as adults

Parental Involvement Websites

- www.ncpie.org
- www.nea.org
- www.edutopia.org
- www.pta.org
- www.projectappleseed.com
- www.educationworld.com
- www.csos.jhu.edu

Online Parental Involvement Strategies

1. Do you currently implement effective parental involvement strategies? Yes, I implement effective parental involvement strategies. Yes, I promote parental involvement in the home. Yes, I utilize parental involvement. No, I do not currently implement parental involvement strategies.**2. How often do you visit Edmodo to find out what's going on in your child's classroom?** Every day Multiple Times a Week Several Times a Month About One Time a Month Less Than One Time a Month**3. What are you looking for in an online resource to assist with parental involvement?**

4. What do you like about the Parental Involvement Academy blog?

5. How would you like to see the Parental Involvement Academy blog improve?

6. What do you like about the Parenting-to-Go cards?

7. What do you like about the Parental Involvement Academy blog?

8. How did you first hear about the Parental Involvement Academy online resource?

Appendix B: Alignment Chart for Research Questions and Data Collection

Guiding research questions	Focus group questions	Interview questions
<p>1. According to parents, what are the perceived barriers to their involvement in the schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some options that would motivate you to become more involved? • What have been your experiences when you were involved in your child's school? • Does parental involvement in the African American community positively impact children's academic achievement? • How confident are you that your involvement will have a positive impact on your child's education? • How do you think the Lane School District would fare if 90% of the parents were involved in some aspect of their child's life? • How do you feel each time you enter your child's school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you define parental involvement? • In your opinion, what defines effective parental involvement? • Do you feel that the school has been receptive to parental involvement? • In what ways have your child's school been open to parental involvement? • Do parent perceptions impact parental involvement? • Did you have any specific perceptions about parental involvement? • How important is parental involvement in a child's life?
<p>2. According to parents, what are recommendations to break down barriers to parental involvement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your expectations from the teachers and administration in Lane School District? • What specific parental involvement activities have you participated in? • What are some options that would motivate you to become more involved? • Has the school reached out to you in an effort to involve you in your child's education? • What skills would you bring to your child's school as a volunteer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think keeps parents from being involved in the schools? • What would be a viable solution for parental involvement in Lane School District?

Appendix C: Participation Flyer

Barriers to African American Parental Involvement Study
RESEARCH STUDY
Walden University

Be part of an important educational research study!

- Are you an African American parent of a child in Lane School District?
- Would you like to provide your thoughts about the lack of parental involvement in Lane School District schools?

If you answered YES to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an educational research study!

The purpose of this study is to identify perceived barriers to African American parental involvement in the Lane School District and to provide possible suggestions for improvement. Volunteers will participate in a focus group, individual interviews, and a parental involvement strategy questionnaire. Participants will not receive an incentive payment.

Adults (18-50 years of age) are eligible to participate. This study is being conducted at Central Building, 1234 Main St., Any City, USA.

To learn more about this research please call Avis Foley at (111) 222-3333 for more information.

Appendix D: Parental Involvement Focus Group Questions

Number of Participants _____
Date: _____

Researcher: _____
Site: _____

Key Questions

1. What are your expectations from the teachers and administration in Lane School District?
2. What specific parental involvement activities have you participated in?
3. What are some options that would motivate you to become more involved?
4. What are some barriers that have prevented you from being involved?
5. Does parental involvement in the African American community positively impact children's academic achievement?
6. What have been your experiences when you were involved in your child's school?
7. How confident are you that your involvement will have a positive impact on your child's education?
8. Has the school reached out to you in an effort to involve you in your child's education?
9. What skills would you bring to your child's school as a volunteer?
10. How do you think the Lane School District would fare if 90% of the parents were involved in some aspect of their child's life?
11. How do you feel each time you enter your child's school?

Closing Question

12. Am I representing your thoughts accurately?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix E: Parental Involvement Individual Interview Questions

Number of Participants _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Site: _____

1. How do you define parental involvement?
2. In your opinion, what defines effective parental involvement?
3. Do you feel that the school has been receptive to parental involvement?
4. In what ways have your child's school been open to parental involvement?
5. Do parent perceptions impact parental involvement?
6. Did you have any specific perceptions to parental involvement?
7. What do you think keeps parents from being involved in the schools?
8. What would be a viable solution for parental involvement in Lane School District?
9. How important is parental involvement in a child's life?

Closing Question

10. Am I representing your thoughts accurately?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix F: Online Parental Involvement Strategy Questionnaire

The following are descriptions of parental involvement practices. Please rate your perception of the effectiveness of each strategy using the following scale.

	1 highly effective	2 effective	3 neutral	4 ineffective	5 highly ineffective
1. The teacher sends an introductory letter and has the parent fill out a survey that allows parents to voice student concerns	1	2	3	4	5
2. The teacher sends home a monthly calendar that outlines all major assignments, tests, & quizzes	1	2	3	4	5
3. Parents are provided with sample problems to aid students and parents in understanding the homework content	1	2	3	4	5
4. A teacher-parent contract is created to ensure parental involvement in some form	1	2	3	4	5
5. Information nights are held in regard to standardized assessments for all parents	1	2	3	4	5
6. Workshops on how to become an involved parent	1	2	3	4	5
7. Transportation provided at least once a month to school for parents without vehicles	1	2	3	4	5
8. Parent teacher conferences scheduled during the morning, afternoon, and evening (in person, Skype, phone).	1	2	3	4	5
9. Parent-participation bucks (school money that will allow parents to accumulate items based on the number of bucks)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Parent Appreciation Night	1	2	3	4	5

What are some additional suggestions or recommendations you have to improve parental involvement?
