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Increasing Family Engagement in an Elementary School

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Catherine Roy

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Abstract

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by

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MS, University of New Haven, 2003

BS, University of Connecticut, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Many students who receive Response to Intervention (RTI) Tier II support at an elementary school on the east coast of the United States seldom reach grade level expectations based on end of year assessments. Parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction often do not take advantage of the opportunities for involvement at the elementary school. The purpose of this qualitative research was to investigate the perceptions of 34 parents who receive RTI Tier II instructional services about what inspires them to become involved in their child's education at home and at school. This study investigated the opportunities for involvement, recommendations for enhancing opportunities, and how existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of families. This study was guided by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent involvement, which states that parent involvement influences student outcomes. Epstein's framework defines 6 types of parent involvement and Vygotsky's theory states that learning is a social activity. A case study approach identified 4 themes: (a) parents preferred to communicate electronically; (b) parents were interested in getting expert advice on specific topics; (c) parents were able to identify problems with the current parent involvement opportunities and provide suggestions on how to make them better; (d) parents perceived community to be made up of the school, the parents, and the town. A policy recommendation was created based on the findings for the school to better assist parents in engaging with their child's learning. The policy includes home visits, weekly progress updates, parent training programs, electronic communication, and a public library-school partnership. This project study promotes positive social change by increasing family engagement at the school ultimately improving academic achievement.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, Robert N. Roy, Jr., who has never let me give up on my doctorate. He has taught me that with planning, hard work, and a specific goal in mind, I can achieve anything. Without his support and own way of encouraging me I would have never completed this long journey. I also dedicate this work to my two sons, Landon Thomas Roy and Liam Jefferson Roy. They have been patient and understanding when mommy had to work on her paper. They both were my quiet study buddies when they came with me to the library. I hope that seeing my hard work and dedication to further my learning will inspire them to do the same.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning or behavior needs. Teaching begins with Tier I instruction, which is the general core education lesson that all students receive from their teacher. All students are screened and at-risk children are monitored regularly to ensure progress is being made. At an elementary school with about 400 students on the east coast of the United States, all students are screened early in the school year during fall assessments. If any students are not making adequate progress, they begin to receive Tier II instruction. Intervention lessons are added and frequent progress monitoring is conducted. If the student fails to make progress with Tier II instruction, Tier III one on one, or small group, instruction is added to the Tier II instruction. If the student still does not make adequate progress, after Tier II and Tier III intervention, the student is screened for special education services (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011; "What is RTI?," n.d.). There is a problem at this elementary school: many students who receive RTI Tier II support never reach their grade level's expectations based upon end of year assessments according to the school's literacy coach (Personal communication, April 4, 2016).

Research has been conducted that indicates that there are important benefits to students whose parents are engaged with their child's school. For instance, studies have shown that students learn more when their parents are involved with their education, and that students whose parents are involved with their school often have higher achievement in school (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Family

involvement is important to students' literacy and math skill development and, with proper direction, parents can become more involved with their child's education (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, Lloyd, & Leung, 2013). Research conducted by Van Voorhis et al. (2013) shows that increased parental involvement can have a positive impact on children's education. Similarly, if parents of students who receive Tier II RTI intervention became more involved with their child's school, then the students might achieve more academic success. The research above shows that when parents are involved with their child's education, the student reaps great benefits.

The Local Problem

An elementary school on the east coast of the United States has a population of about 400 students and, according to the school's literacy coach, many students who receive RTI Tier II support never reach their grade level's expectations based upon end of year assessments (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). According to school data, approximately 5% of students are Asian, 24% are African American, 1% is native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1% is American Indian or Alaskan native, and the remaining 69% are Caucasian. Approximately 30% of the school population is Hispanic. Approximately 42% of students receive free lunch, and about 6% qualify to buy lunch at reduced prices. In addition to the problem of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction not reaching their grade level's expectations, many parents, including parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction, often do not take advantage of the opportunities for family involvement at the elementary school.

Some of the family engagement opportunities at the elementary school include: open house, family math night, social thinking night, lunch bunches, ice cream social, PTA meetings, parent teacher conferences, grade level family fun nights, parent volunteer opportunities in the classroom, playgroups and ESL classes. Many of the events that are designed to teach parents about topics such as the social thinking curriculum and how to help students at home with math homework based on the common core curriculum are poorly attended; only about 30 families—or less than 7%—of parents attend events such as these (Personal communication, April 20, 2015). The school's math coach reported that in February of 2016, only 14 families (12 families from grade kindergarten to second grade, and two families from grades three to five) out of all the families of the 400 students at the school attended a school wide family math night (Personal communication, March 6, 2016). Of the families who attended the math night, none were parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction (Personal communication, April 1, 2016). Another after school workshop was held by the school social worker on the social thinking curriculum. The majority of the attendees at this social thinking event were parents of kindergarten and first grade students. None of the attendees were parents of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). In addition, the school principal reported that in the past 11 years, the majority (close to 100%) of parents who do not attend report card conferences are parents of students receiving Tier II intervention services (Personal communication, May 11, 2016). The principal also reported that family involvement around learning is definitely lacking with students who receive tiered intervention. For example, in grades 3-5, the preponderance

of parents who do not sign the daily home-school communication planner, which includes homework assignments and messages about school learning, are parents of students whose children are receiving tiered intervention services. This is also indicative of families whose students complete summer reading logs and other independent reading logs to document the school wide independent reading homework. The majority of parents who sign these completed logs are parents of students whose children are at or above grade level in reading (Personal communication, May 14, 2016).

The above data show that there is a large population of families, specifically families whose children receive RTI Tier II instruction, who could take greater advantage of the family involvement opportunities offered by the school. These family involvement opportunities teach parents learning activities for home which, when implemented, increase parent engagement with their child's learning (Christianakis, 2011; Van Voorhis et al., 2013). There are many barriers that can prevent parents from being involved with their child's school and learning such as individual parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors, societal factors, school climate, and language (Epstein, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

At the elementary school, a majority of the 50 students identified as needing Tier II instruction are members of families who are not involved with the school (Personal communication, May 4, 2015). Every school year, over 100 letters are sent to the families of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction notifying them of the RTI process

and who to contact with any questions. Since the inception of tiered instruction in 2009, only one parent has called the reading coach inquiring after more information on how to help their child with their learning at home (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). In addition, parents of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention do not attend family math nights at school or workshops on the social thinking curriculum (Personal communication, April 1, 2016; Personal communication, April 4, 2016). The reading coach at the school reported that many of these students never reach their grade level's expectations, despite the extra support and instruction they receive (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). The school has made attempts to reach out to families and there are many opportunities at the school for family engagement, yet parents of children who receive RTI Tier II intervention seldom respond to the attempts and opportunities.

There may be a problem with the quality and suitability of parent involvement opportunities at the elementary school. The director of the family resource center at the school reported that the current model for the family resource center is a model that has been in place at another elementary school in the district for more than 18 years (Personal communication, August 7, 2015). Knowledge about what motivates parents to become involved with their child's education is a national concern; locally, knowledge about what motivates parents to become involved with their child's education is critical to the success of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention (Bartel, 2010; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Van Voorhis, et al., 2013; Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011; Young, Austin & Growe, 2013). Based on the personal communication the school principal and

the school literacy coach, the problem with the performance of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention is that some students never reach their grade level's expectations despite the extra intensive instruction. Some of these students have families who are not involved with their education.

The purpose of this study was to investigate what parent involvement opportunities are most useful to parents of students who receive RTI Tier II support. My research identified what is most useful, and now the school can plan effective programs to help support these parents, ultimately increasing student success.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Lack of family engagement is not an isolated problem at only this east coast elementary school. School districts across the country struggle to get parents involved with their children's school (Christianakis, 2011; Epstein, 2010; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin & De Pedro, 2011). For example, a school in Missouri struggled with attendance and created a program to award students with good attendance (Epstein, 2010). In Pasco, Washington, schools hold essay contests on how to involve more fathers and father figures at school (Epstein, 2010). Likewise, charter schools across the United States interview parents on what skills each parent has that would be beneficial to the school and what their plan is on how to be involved with the school (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin & De Pedro, 2011). In addition, Christianakis (2011) conducted a study at an inner city school in California and found creative ways for parents to collaborate with teachers as well as alleviate tensions between teachers and parents in hopes that family engagement would increase. Teachers used parents as translators, one-on-one tutors, and for helping

with in-class projects or centers (Christianakis, 2011). Across the nation, schools are working to identify strategies that help welcome families into their children's school and improve their involvement in their children's education, both at home and at school. The problem affects all children, not just those receiving RTI Tier II instruction; however, I chose to focus only on students receiving RTI Tier II because these students have the most academic needs.

The purpose of this research was to investigate what inspires parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional services to become involved with their child's education at home and at school, to determine their perceptions of the opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and recommendations they can offer for enhancing these opportunities, and to discover to what extent the existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of these families

Definition of Terms

Barriers: For the purpose of this study, barrier was defined as any limitation that prevents a parent from fulfilling a request from a teacher or school to aid their child with their academic efforts (Brain & Reid, 2003).

Family/Parent involvement: For the purpose of this study, family or parent involvement was defined as the partnership between school and family. Both the school and family share the responsibility for the children's shared educational goals (Epstein, 1992).

Response to Intervention (RTI): Response to intervention "is a systematic, and data-based method of identifying, defining, and resolving students' academic and/or behavior difficulties" (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011, p. 3; "What is RTI?" n.d.).

Tier I: The level of the RTI model where core instruction is taught and regular screening is administered to all students. Students who only receive Tier I level of instruction make up approximately 80% of the student population (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011; "What is RTI?" n.d.).

Tier II: The level of the RTI model where strategic small group instruction occurs with regular progress monitoring. Tier II targets approximately 15% of the student population at a school (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011; "What is RTI?" n.d.).

Tier III: The level of the RTI model where intensive instruction and assessment occurs. Approximately 5% of a student population will receive Tier III instruction (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011; "What is RTI?" n.d.).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research was to investigate what inspires parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional services to become involved with their child's education at home and at school, to determine their perceptions of the opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and recommendations they can offer for enhancing these opportunities, and to discover to what extent the existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of these families. The results of this study identified some changes that need to be made to the current parent involvement program for students that receive RTI Tier II services. Using the information from this study, the school can make

the changes to existing opportunities, add new opportunities to increase family engagement, with the intent of increasing the performance of the struggling students receiving RTI Tier II services. The implementation of these opportunities might improve family involvement at the elementary school thus improving student performance.

Research Questions

The following questions were used guide the study:

1. What inspires families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school?

2. What are the families' of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations can they offer for enhancing these opportunities?

3. To what extent do the existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of the families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention at the school?

The research results that guide the project study will help the elementary school develop more appropriate family involvement opportunities for parents whose students receive RTI Tier II intervention services so the parents can become more involved with their child's education, ultimately helping the child to have greater success in school. Past research has been conducted on the importance of parent involvement, the types of parent involvement, barriers to parent involvement and family engagement, and ways to increase parent involvement. This research focused on various subgroups such as Hispanics, African Americans, or special education students; however, there is limited research on the perceptions or needs of families whose children receive RTI Tier II

instruction, specifically at the east coast elementary school being studied (Abel, 2012; Auerbach, 2011; Hayes, 2012; Kim & Vail, 2011; Kugler, 2011; McNair, 2013; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Walker, et al., 2011).

There is a need for increased family engagement, improved family engagement opportunities at the elementary school, and for students who qualify for RTI Tier II instruction to meet grade level expectations. Research has shown that there are many benefits to students whose parents are engaged with their child's school and education (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Rapp & Duncan, 2012; Van Voorhis et al., 2013). The results of a qualitative case study that investigates the above research questions may help to address this problem of poor parent involvement among parents of children who receive RTI Tier II instruction.

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 2005) theoretical model of the parent involvement process. This theory addresses why parents become involved in their child's education, types of parent involvement, and how parent involvement influences student outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) discussed parent motivation for involvement and how parent involvement behaviors support student learning; their research also placed importance on student focus on their own learning. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) made recommendations to school counselors, principals, teachers, and community stakeholders

on how to increase a school's capacity for engaging families. Their framework supported this case study.

Further research conducted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) described seven factors, grouped into three areas, found to have an effect on parent involvement in their child's education. The seven factors were: (a) parental role construction for involvement, (b) parental efficacy for helping the student succeed, (c) general invitations from the school/program, (d) specific invitations from the teacher, (e) specific invitations from the student, (f) parental knowledge and skills, (g) parental time and energy, and (h) family culture are part of the first level of parent involvement. The model further described the remaining four levels of the parental involvement process (Appendix B).

Epstein et al. (2002) identified six types of parent involvement that were used to investigate parent's perceptions of their involvement with their children's education. These were:

1. Type 1 – Parenting: The basic obligation of the family such as establishing positive home conditions to encourage school success.

2. Type 2 – Communication: The communication between home and school that facilitates the flow of information about school curriculum and the child's progress.

3. Type 3 – Volunteering: The recruitment of parents to act as volunteers in order to help and support school initiatives and functions.

4. Type 4 – Learning at home: Parental involvement at home, such as helping children with homework and other learning activities based on the information schools provide.

5. Type 5 – Decision making: Active parental involvement in school decisions and serving as an advocate to lobby for school improvements.

6. Type 6 – Collaborating with the community: The identifications and dissemination of a network of available resources and services in the community in order to assist parents and schools in their efforts to better their children's education. (pp. 8-9)

I used Epstein's research to categorize the aspects in which parents and schools contribute to the school-family partnership. I focused on improving the aspects at the school that were most lacking.

Review of the Broader Problem

I will review the literature in four subsections: (a) the importance of parent involvement, (b) the types of parent involvement, (c) the barriers to parent involvement, and (d) recommendations to improve parent involvement. I collected and synthesized the literature in order to understand the importance of parent involvement, to identify that there is a problem getting parents involved at school, the types of parent involvement, the role of teachers and administrators in parent involvement, what keeps parents from getting involved, and ideas on how to improve family involvement. Online peer reviewed journal references were collected using the Walden University Library, ERIC, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete and SAGE Premier. The

keywords used for searching the literature were parent involvement, family involvement, schools and parent involvement, and teachers and family involvement.

The Importance of Parent Involvement

For decades, researchers have concluded that parent involvement provides numerous benefits to children's success in school (Epstien, 2001). For instance, parent involvement has a positive effect on children's literacy and math skills (Hindman &Morrison, 2011; Van Voorhis, et al., 2013). Also, students with involved families are more likely to attend regularly, earn high grades, exhibit appropriate behavior, stay in school, and graduate to enter higher education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In addition, parent involvement benefits children as it supports the development of their cognitive and motivational resources (Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Parents from diverse backgrounds that are uncomfortable getting involved with their child's school can be coached on how to become more involved and, as a result, their children do better in school (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Van Voorhis, et al., 2013).

Although many positive benefits result from parent involvement, schools struggle to effectively engage parents in recurring, successful involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Deslandes & Rivard, 2013; LaRocque, et al., 2011; Stevens & Patel, 2015; VanVoorhis et al., 2013). In some cases, it is difficult to encourage parents to attend school events. For instance, in a pilot program of workshops aimed to teach parents about new school assessments, Deslandes and Rivard (2013) found that parents rated the workshops very high; however, there was a very low level of attendance to the

workshops. If few parents come to the very effective workshops, few parents learn about the new assessments, and few children reap the benefits of their parents being involved.

For a number of reasons, teachers also have difficultly engaging parents. First, some teachers struggle with how to involve parents effectively if they have had little training on how to do so (LaRocque, et al., 2011). Second, some teachers try different types of strategies to get parents involved, but if the strategies fail, the teachers become frustrated and deem the parents as uninvolved, rather than trying a different approach (Bower & Griffin, 2011). VanVoorhis et al. (2013) noted that more research needs to be done to specifically identify effective parent involvement practices for all students and families, as well as specific subgroups of students and families, and at different student grade levels. There is a need for research to find successful, new, non-traditional ways to get parents involved with their children's education (VanVoorhis et al., 2013).

Types of Parent Involvement

Arguably, the first opportunity for a parent's involvement with their child's learning is simply teaching their child to speak. Even in the womb, parents talk to their unborn child, and when the child is born, parents and family members talk to the baby. With no formal instruction in a school environment, a child learns language from their parents. Anderson (1985) stated, in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*:

> A parent is a child's first guide through a vast and unfamiliar world. A parent is a child's first mentor on what words mean and how to mean things with words. A parent is a child's first tutor in unraveling the fascinating puzzle of the written

language. A parent is a child's one enduring source of faith that somehow, sooner or later, he or she will become a good reader (p. 27).

Learning begins at home, with parent involvement, but parent involved learning should not stop when the child starts school. There are many ways to define parent involvement. There are also many ways to categorize parent involvement. This section discussed the different types of parent involvement as defined by various researchers. Parents, and grandparents (Barnett, Scaramella, Neppl, Ontia, & Conger, 2010) should and can be involved in their child's education in a variety of ways.

Van Voorhis et al. (2013) found that research on parent involvement can be classified into four categories: (a) learning activities at home, (b) family involvement at school, (c) school outreach to engage families, and (d) supportive parenting activities. These four categories outline the next section of the literature review to discuss the ways in which a parent can be involved with their child's education.

Learning activities at home.

Learning activities at home are those activities that parents use to teach their child outside of school. Examples of this could be parents teaching their child to read, to improve their math skills, or to teach/expose their child to any subject. In addition, parents can supplement and support what their child is learning in school by reading and writing with their child, helping with homework, and even supporting the school's disciplinary systems (Christianakis, 2011; Hoglund, Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2015; McNeal, 2014). The learning activities do not have to take place at the child's home and may occur at libraries, museums, or family resource centers (VanVoorhis et al., 2013).

There are endless opportunities for parents to support their child's learning outside of school.

There are specific reading and literacy activities and resources that parents can practice at home. Dialogic reading is one form of interactive shared reading a parent can implement at home. In this approach to reading, the child retells a story and the parent listens. The parent then guides the retell by repeating, rephrasing, and asking questions about the story (McBride-Chang, 2014). There are also parenting curricula for parents who need help being involved with their child's learning, such as Play and Learn Strategies (PALS), which teach parents effective shared book reading (Landry et al., 2012). Research highlights that parent-child conversations at home, dialogic reading strategies, and shared reading activities have a positive impact on children's literacy success (VanVoorhis et al., 2013). With these activities and resources in mind, one only needs to be able to converse with their child to successfully be engaged with at home literacy learning.

Studies showed the same positive results with math skills when parents practice math-learning activities at home (VanVoorhis et al., 2013). Parents, even those with low income, were willing and able to support math development at home with activities like counting, exploring shapes, solving math problems, connecting math with real life, and estimating numbers and sizes (Noble et al., 2012). Noble et al. (2012) noted that activities such as these are free and can easily be incorporated into daily activities thus parents can integrate "at home" math learning almost anywhere.

Family involvement at school.

Family involvement at school includes interactions that families have on school grounds, such as parent-teacher conferences, attendance at a school open house, or volunteering and participating in the classroom (VanVoorhis et al., 2013). When parents volunteer in the classroom they might work with small groups of students, read a book aloud to the class, or perform clerical-type work (Christianakis, 2011). Unlike the aforementioned learning activities at home that can be performed almost anywhere and at any time, family involvement at school is not so easy. Involvement that takes place at school takes more parent organization and effort and often happens less frequently than learning activities at home (Sad & Gurbuzturk, 2013). Not only does family involvement at school take more parent effort, it also takes more effort on the part of the school and teachers. A study by Rodriquez, Blatz, and Elbaum (2014) found that schools that actively sought out parents' input and asked for help in the school had high levels of parent involvement. They also reported that teachers had to be very clear in their communication to parents about how to best help in school because more parent involvement does not always equal better parent involvement (Rodriquez, et al., 2014). Family involvement at school takes more effort from all parties involved and also more time, however it is an important component to parental involvement that should not be overlooked.

Studies have indicated that family involvement at school has a positive impact on student achievement. For example, family involvement in kindergarten is positively related to kindergarten students' reading achievement and language skills (Galindo &

Sheldon, 2012; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox & Bradley, 2003). Also, Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss (2006) found that if family involvement at school increases as the child moves up through the grades, then higher levels of literacy are achieved. In addition, and relevant to this case study, Tang, Dearing and Weiss (2012) reported that increased family involvement over time related positively to student's literacy skills in third grade, especially for struggling readers. Parental involvement at school has also been found to benefit math performance for students from economically disadvantaged schools (Greenman, Bodovski, & Reed, 2011). With the results of these studies in mind, schools should make it a priority to reach out and communicate to parents that they are welcome and invited to be involved with their child's education at school.

    School outreach to engage families.

    School outreach to engage families was the third component to parent involvement. School outreach "refers to the strategies and practices that schools and teachers use to engage families and make them feel welcome" (VanVoorhis, 2013, p. 31). Examples of this included: (a) home visits, (b) phone calls to set up meetings, (c) letters to parents and/or children before the school year begins, (d) open houses, (e) conversations with a child's parent, (f) facilitating contacts between and among parents of children in the class, (g) workshops for parents, (h) parent teacher conferences, (i) interactive homework or learning activities, and (j) family nights after school (Early, Pianta, Taylor, & Cox, 2001; Van Voorhis, 2013). Various studies indicated a positive association between school outreach to engage families and student academic success. Teacher communication with and invitations for parents to be involved with their child's

education at school and at home were positively associated with overall student achievement (Jeynes, 2012). Van Voorhis (2011) studied the effects of implementing a program called "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Math Homework" and found that TIPS students had higher standardized math scores than the students who did not use TIPS. When educators made an effort to talk with parents about ways to become an active partner in their child's education, more parents responded and contributed to their child's success (VanVoorhis, 2013; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Pagan & Senechal, 2014). The results of the above studies provided evidence for schools to repeatedly reach out to families and provided them with opportunities and resources to become engaged with their child's learning.

Hindman and Morrison (2011) found out that when schools reached out to families about children's reading readiness and skills, more families were involved at home and when schools invited families to specific activities, more families became involved at school. Kikas, Tulviste, and Peets (2014) found that teachers needed to make a concerted effort to talk to both mothers and fathers and especially to less educated parents to make connections with the families and learn about their values and at home practices. Not only did teachers have to make these connections, principals needed to also reach out to families. Principals needed to create a parent friendly school environment and provide opportunities for parents to communicate their ideas and perceptions about the school (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). The aforementioned studies supported the idea that parent involvement is not a one-way street, few parents will be involved at the school if they are not invited, or do not feel welcome.

Supportive parenting activities.

Van Voorhis et al (2013) identified the final category as supportive parenting activities. This included parents setting rules, exhibiting caring behaviors, having positive conversations with their children about school, and creating a good home environment (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Van Voorhis, et al., 2013). Many of these parenting activities were subtle, such as having high expectations of the child, having open communication between the parent and child, and using a healthy parenting style based on love, support, a beneficial amount of discipline and structure (Jeynes, 2011; Puccioni, 2015). Studies that measured supportive parenting activities reported positive results in students' achievement and social-emotional skills, and showed that students with quality parenting are more likely to graduate from high school (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Sheridan, Knoche, Kuypzyk, Pope Edwards, & Marvin, 2011; VanVoorhis, et al., 2013). Parents' beliefs and attitudes about school and education affected how parents influence their children's attitudes, work, and progress in school (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; McNeal, 2104;). Supportive parenting activities were hard to evaluate, as they were hard to see on the surface. Teachers needed to build a strong relationship with students' families so these parenting activities can be realized.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

Despite the research that confirms the myriad of benefits that result from parent involvement, parents still faced barriers that prevent them from being involved with their child's school. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) adapted Eptein's (2001) framework of three

overlapping spheres of influence, family, school, and community, to categorize barriers to parental involvement into four types: individual parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors. This section will discuss six categories of barriers that both parents and teachers faced when trying to increase parent involvement.

Individual parent and family factors.

Individual parent and family factors consist of parents' beliefs about parent involvement, perceptions of invitations for parental involvement, and current life contexts (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, Puccioni, 2015). The way parents view their role in their child's education is important to understand. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found that if parents believe that their only role was to bring their child to school, they were not willing to be involved in school or home based parental involvement. Parents must also believe that they had the ability to help their children succeed at school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013; Stevens & Patel, 2015). The way a parent viewed his or her child's intelligence in terms of a fixed or growth mindset also determined whether a parent became involved in their child's education. A parent who thought his or her child's intelligence was fixed and predetermined was less likely to be involved than the parent who believed that achievement could be improved with effort and determination (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents may even be reluctant to be involved with their child's education because of their own negative school experiences (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Parents may not have been successful in school themselves, or they may have a preconceived mistrust of the school system (LaRocque et al., 2011;

Stevens & Patel, 2015). Parent perception of their class, especially parents in the working class, can also create barriers between parent involvements with the school (Wanat, 2012). In a study conducted by Stacer and Perrucci (2013) the strongest effect on parent involvement were parent perceptions, whether real or imagined, of the opportunities for parent involvement available to them. The above-mentioned studies support the idea that parents believed the story they tell themselves about their child's learning. As Henry Ford famously said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right" (Henry Ford quote, n.d.)

Another type of individual or family factor that could be a barrier to parent involvement was a family's life context. Single parents, young parents, parents of large families, parents out of work and struggling with poverty, families where both parents work, parents working multiple shifts or jobs, and parents with poor mental or physical health can all have difficulties with both home or school based parent involvement (Calzada et al., 2015; Hoglund et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & DePedro, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2013). School schedules can create a work-family conflict for parents when school hours are less than a parent's workday, or if holiday vacations or days off due to inclement weather don't coincide (Ryan, et al., 2013). Life context barriers like lack of transportation to parent-teacher meetings or lack of childcare can also impair parent involvement (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Because there are so many different factors that can prohibit parents from becoming involved, the school must establish a trusting rapport with the families and offer solutions to overcome their personal barriers (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; VanVoorhis et al., 2013).

Child factors.

Child factors that proved to be a barrier to parental involvement are age, learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents, and behavior problems (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). A child's age may be a barrier to parental involvement because as a child gets older, parental involvement decreases (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Hornby and Lafaele also reported that another barrier to parental involvement could occur if there is a disagreement between school and parent about a student's learning difficulty or disability (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In addition, if a parent sees his or her child as gifted and the school does not share the same opinion, this may also cause conflict and reduce a parent's involvement as they lose faith in the school system (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Patel & Stevens, 2010). Finally, a child's behavior can be a barrier to parental involvement. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found that, usually, as negative behavior increases, the less involved the parents are with the school (Hornby & Lafale, 2011). These studies showed that there are many diverse reasons why parents may not be involved with the school and their child's learning.

Parent teacher factors.

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), barriers that were associated with parent teacher factors have to do with goals and agendas, and attitudes. Similar to the disagreements between home and school in the previous section, disagreement with school and home regarding goals and agendas can be a barrier to parent involvement. These different goals and understanding of parental involvement can lead to "frustration as each party seeks to maximize its own agenda, independent of, and often in opposition

to that of the others" (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 45). For example, a school district's goal for parental involvement may be to use it as a method to address cultural disadvantage or inequality; a teacher's focus for parent involvement might be helping with homework, providing a quality home environment, and attending school events; a parent's goal for parental involvement might be to improve their child's performance in school, and to learn more about school life (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Tadesse, 2014).

Teacher and parent attitudes can also create barriers to parental involvement when their assumptions about each other do not align (Hoglund et al., 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lindberg, 2014; Mautone, Marcelle, Tresco, & Power, 2015; Tadesse, 2014). According to Hornby and Lafaele, teachers may assume parents don't care about their child's education and parents may assume the teacher is only seeking a superficial relationship, this mistrust builds and barriers to parental involvement increase. Parent's perceptions of invitations to be involved with their child's school can determine whether the parent will participate or not. If parents perceived parental involvement is not a value of the teacher or school, then they were likely to not be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). With this information in mind, it was apparent that without clear, open and honest communication, parents and teachers created their own negative perception of each other. Perhaps Mark Twain explained it best: "It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so" (Mark Twain quote, n.d.).

Teacher preparation can also be a barrier to parent involvement (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Lindberg, 2014). Teachers engaged in little outreach with families that resulted in

a meaningful, personal connection (Kugler, 2011). Teachers had little training in strategies for working with parents in a meaningful positive way and often had skills only in managing difficult parents (LaRocque et al., 2011). Often, teacher communication was one way and communication only occured when it is required (Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2012). Some teachers did not want to have parents come in to the classroom to help because they feared that "helicopter parents" would do more harm to the student than good (Lindberg, 2014; Wanat, 2012). Parents reported that they would help their children more if the teacher guided them on how to help at home (VanVoorhis, 2011). These studies indicated that without proper training, teachers did not know how to guide and communicate with parents in a way that was conducive to parental involvement.

School climate.

A positive school climate allows families to develop relationships with other families, teachers, and school staff. An unwelcome school climate can create a barrier for parents (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Chang, Choi, & Kim, 2015; Williams & Sanchez, 2013;). Promoting parent involvement within a school can be difficult especially with diverse family cultures (LaRocque et al., 2011). Parents who did not feel welcome in the school had a low rate of parent involvement. Class and school size could also be a barrier to parent involvement. Larger schools were perceived to be less safe and communicated less respect when compared to small schools (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013). Goldkind and Farmer (2013) found that this less safe, less respectful school climate smothered communication levels and involvement opportunities as perceived by parents. Rodriguez & Elbaum (2014) found that a low student-teacher ratio was the strongest predictor of

positively perceived family engagement efforts by parents. Teachers spread themselves too thin when there were large class sizes. Vera et al. (2013) found that when parents had positive perceptions of school climate they were more likely to communicate with their child about the importance of school, utilized community resources that supported education, and communicated with their child's teacher. Parent perceptions of school climate were also found to predict parental role beliefs about their involvement in their child's education (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). These studies all showed that school climate could have either a positive or negative impact on parent involvement.

Language.

Families whose second language is English could feel uncomfortable when trying to communicate with the school (Chang, Choi, & Kim, 2015). Schools could provide opportunities such as readers clubs, English classes, bilingual newsletters, parenting classes offered in Spanish, and parents groups where parents who speak the same language can meet and support one another (Miano, 2011; Poza, Brooks, & Valdes, 2014; Tadesse, 2014). St. Clair, Jackson, and Zweiback's (2012) study offered ESL families, whose children were in kindergarten, sessions on how to engage their children in academic activities linked to their child's curriculum. At the end of first grade, students whose families participated in the sessions scored significantly higher on language measures when compared to students whose families did not attend the sessions. The same children were tested again in fifth and sixth grade and the students whose families attended the parent education sessions scored significantly higher once again.

Language barriers could hinder parental involvement in other ways the most common way of families whose second language is English. Parents could be intimidated by the educational jargon that teachers use especially if the student has a disability (LaRocque et al., 2011). For instance, if teachers use educational jargon in a parent meeting, the parent might focus too much on understanding what the teacher is talking about rather than on the most important thing: helping the child succeed. With this in mind, it is important for school staff to explain the acronyms, programs and other vocabulary with parents to make sure everyone is on the same page and there is no confusion.

Societal factors.

Societal factors were the last category of barriers. According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011) societal factors included changing family structures because of parents working more hours and traveling for their occupations, increased divorces that result in more single parent families and more families where both parents work full time. All of these factors could result in less time for parents to be involved. These factors have become increasingly common. One third of all United States children have a parent who does not live with them (Stewart, 2010). Stewart (2010) examined nonresident mothers' and fathers' involvement with their children and found that nonresident parent involvement is low and the resident parent has many responsibilities to take care of alone. Single mother households are subject to economic disadvantage that affects the ability to buy books, clothes and extracurricular activities. A working, single mom will not have as much time to devote to her children as a household with two parents (Waldfogel, Craigie,

& Brooks-Gunn, 2010; Williams & Sanchez, 2013). Waldfogel et al. (2010) also reported that children who live with single or cohabiting parents were disadvantaged in terms of their educational outcomes when compared to students who grow up in married couple households. These studies indicated that teachers need to establish connections with families like those mentioned above so that the teacher and school can offer support in areas of need.

Recommendations to Increase Parent Involvement

Researchers like Walker et al. (2010), Lemmer (2011), and McNair (2013) have conducted studies to find creative, effective ways to increase parent involvement. Their research suggests that it is the job of school counselors, administrators, and teachers to help get families involved with their child's school and learning. In this final section of the literature review, I discuss the many ways the school community can extend itself to include all families.

One of the first steps schools can take in promoting parent involvement is to identify teacher (mis)perceptions of why parents aren't involved. Once the issues or misperceptions are identified, school counselors or principals can develop training programs on overcoming these perceived barriers (Lemmer, 2011; Lindberg, 2014; Mautone et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2010). Professional development should be focused on shifting practices from being child centered to being family centered, teaching teachers effective strategies for communication and engagement with parents from diverse backgrounds (Calzada, 2015; Jor'dan, Wolf, & Douglass, 2012). Training programs can be face-to-face professional development, or even a pre-recorded video of a

training program (Kim & Vail, 2011). Teachers need to better understand the lives that their parents live and how to help parents improve their efforts for their child's education. Children whose teachers reach out to parents are greatly benefited (Bartel, 2010).

Next, parent's (mis)perceptions need to be overcome. If parents perceive that their participation is valued and welcome, parents are more likely to be involved (Hafisi & Papa, 2012; Jor'dan et al., 2012; LaRocque, et al., 2011; Walker, et al., 2011). Teacher attitudes and actions have much influence on whether parents have positive or negative perceptions of the school being interested in parent involvement (LaRocque, et al., 2011; Tirrell-Corbin & Cooper, 2014). The aforementioned studies indicated that once teachers know what the parents are thinking, they will be better equipped to foster parent involvement.

A clear definition of parental involvement roles for both parents and school personnel must be created with the help of all stakeholders and then publicized (Ludicke & Kortman, 2012; Tirrell-Corbin & Cooper, 2014; Young, Austin, & Growe, 2013; Walker et al., 2010). It is helpful for parents if expectations are clearly described (LaRoque, et al., 2011). Parent-training workshops can be held to teach parents how to give quality assistance with their child's homework (Castillo & Camelo Gamez, 2013; Cunha et al., 2015). Training for parents on how to talk to their children about school and learning can also help to build family engagement (California Department of Education, 2011; Hayes, 2012). Thus, parents did not innately know how to become involved, but with appropriate training, guidance and opportunities they can be successful in becoming involved with the school.

Schools can organize various programs that support and model parent involvement. McNair (2013) invited African American students and their families to a series of workshops centered on African American children's literature. These workshops were well received and resulted in an increase in the time families read together (McNair, 2013). Kids FAST (Families and Schools Together) was an eight-week program designed for parents and their elementary school age children that included activities ranging from music lessons, games, dinners on and off site, and fun family activities. If a family attended all eight sessions, they were enrolled in a parent led follow-up program where families met on a monthly basis for two years or more (Crozier, Rokutani, Russet, Godwin, & Banks, 2010). Pagan and Senechal (2014) found that parents who were trained as reading partners who encouraged, modeled, and coached their child during an eight week summer reading improved their children's reading comprehension, fluency, and receptive vocabulary. Programs such as these empowered parents to strengthen their families, become leaders in the community and school, and built support networks in the community (Crozier et al., 2010; McNair, 2013; Pagan & Senechal, 2014).

Hiring school personnel and/or recruiting parent liaisons that reflected the student population can break down cultural barriers. (Tadesse, 2014; Walker et al., 2010; Wiseman, 2010). Families from different cultures had aspirations for their children and provided learning opportunities for their children at home, but faced barriers when trying to convey this to their child's teacher (Gregg et al., 2012). Translators could be used to break language barriers; transportation and babysitting services could be offered to

address physical barriers (LaRoque, et al., 2011). If programs for various cultures are being developed, it is very important to obtain families' input during the planning stages. This would attract more families to the program (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). If a school welcomed families from all cultures and makes an effort to learn about and embrace all differences, the culturally diverse student would be more successful (Wegmann & Bowen, 2010). Cheatham and Santos (2011) found that different cultures have different characteristics on their perception of time orientation (ranging from strict or loose) and communication (ranging from direct to indirect). If the teacher and parent have different perceptions of these characteristics, the interaction would be impacted. These studies further supported strong communication between family and school so there are no misunderstandings.

Homework could also be used as a vehicle for parent involvement. Tadesse (2014) reported that African refugee parents perceived homework to be a way of cultivating a good relationship with their child's teacher. The first homework assignment of the year could be an assignment for the parents. Their assignment would be to write a letter describing their child and to tell their hopes and dreams for their child (Gregg et al., 2012; Kugler, 2010; Walker et al., 2010). Conversely, students could write letters home once a week to tell about what they learned, about their behavior and special events going on a school (Newman & Bizzarri, 2011). These studies indicated that the more members (teachers, students and parents) involved in communication, the better parent involvement.

There were various means of communication that can help to increase parent involvement. Teachers need to frequently promote effective two-way communication with families and there are many ways to do this (California Department of Education, 2011; Hayes, 2012; Williams & Sanchez, 2013). Email is one method of communication that improved students' academic progress (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013). Text messaging via cell phones was another way for teachers to communicate with parents. Text messaging was time saving, as parent contact increased while time spent making contact decreased (Pakter & Chen, 2013). Phone calls home was a common method of communication, but seldom used in a positive way. Teachers should call home to express kind words about good things the student has done (Sawyer, 2014). Multiple invitations to an event from the school, teacher, and student helped parents to be involved in an event as the multiple invitations helped the parents perception of being genuinely wanted to participate (Auerbach, 2011; Walker, et al., 2011). DVD newsletters could also be a powerful communication tool (Sanchez, Walsh, & Rose, 2011). While there were many modes of communication, it was important for teachers not to rely on just one, but a combination of methods with each family and select methods based on what works best with each family's needs (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013; Pakter & Chen, 2013; Sawyer, 2014).

Implications

Although there has been much research conducted on the topic of parent involvement and family engagement on various subgroups such as Hispanics, African Americans, or special education students, there was limited research to be found on the

perceptions or needs of families whose children receive RTI Tier II instruction, specifically at the site of the study. Although there were Hispanic and African American students who receive RTI Tier II instruction, there were also non-Hispanic, Caucasian, and Asian students who also received RTI Tier II instruction. The implications for this study could be far reaching at the local level, as there were nine elementary schools in the district including the school being studied. The information gathered during this study will help me recommend a series of parent programs or resources at the family resource center that is part of each elementary school in the district. The intention of these projects would be to help increase parent involvement with the ultimate goal of increasing the performance of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention.

Summary

Section 1 described evidence that parents whose students receive RTI Tier II intervention are not taking advantage of the family involvement opportunities at the elementary school, indicating that there may be a problem with the quality and suitability of these opportunities. Using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parent Involvement and Epstein's six types of parent involvement as a framework, I investigated what motivated parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional services to become involved, determined their perceptions of the effectiveness of the existing opportunities for involvement at the school, and sought to understand the types of opportunities that motivated parents to influence their children's education. Section 2 details the research design and data collection methods for this project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research was threefold. First, to investigate what inspires families of students who received RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school. Second, to determine the families perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations the parents could offer for enhancing these opportunities. Finally, I sought to understand to what extent the existing opportunities for family involvement met the needs of the families at the school.

Yin (2008) stated that case studies allow researchers "to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" and focus on an in-depth exploration of a case (p. 4). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010, p. 15) indicated "Case studies typically focus on small groups or individuals within a group and document that group's or individual's experience in a specific setting." The goal of case studies is to gather information through multiple sources and perspectives (Lodico et al., 2010). Case study research is best used when the researcher has no control over behavioral events, and when the focus of the research was a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

This was a qualitative case study. The case was the group of parents at the elementary school whose children receive RTI Tier II instruction. A purposeful sample of participants was selected from the population of the school. The families were invited to participate if their child received Tier II intervention services during the 2015-2016 school year. There were 50 (12%) students in grades one through five who received RTI

Tier II instruction. There were 18 students in first grade, 14 students in second grade, two students in third grade, seven students in fourth grade, and nine students in fifth grade who received these services. No kindergarten students were identified for RTI Tier II instruction, as all kindergarten students this particular year were very close to grade level expectations and did not qualify for RTI Tier II support.

Of the 50 students, 12 were my former students; therefore, the parents of those students were not asked to participate in order to eliminate any possibility of researcher bias. Of the 38 students, two pairs were siblings. Therefore a population of 36 families was eligible to participate. The students were ethnically diverse and included Asian, Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian students as well as students who qualified for free lunch, reduced lunch, and students who paid for the school lunch. Five of the students were English language learners (ELLs) and received ELL support. The study documented the group's experience with the family involvement opportunities offered at the elementary school. I obtained data from parents regarding their perceptions of the family involvement opportunities at the school through interviews, observations during family involvement opportunities at the school, and questionnaires. The results of this study identified changes that needed to be made to current parent involvement programs for students that receive RTI Tier II services. The results also identified the needs of parents that the school failed to meet.

I used qualitative research as an inductive strategy to answer the research questions. I communicated directly with the participants through questionnaires and interviews and indirectly through observations, and then, guided by Yin (2008), wrote a

rich, descriptive narrative that identified the themes or patterns that were evident from the data collection.

Case study research was the best fit for this study because it explores the perceptions of a particular group based on their own perceptions of the phenomena of parent involvement. Other qualitative approaches that I considered using were ethnographic study, grounded theory, and phenomenology.

Ethnographic study was not appropriate as it gathers information from multiple perspectives and seeks to understand how the group's actions are influenced by society (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). The goal of grounded theory research is to develop a theory about a particular context with hopes to generalize the theory to other contexts, which was not the intent of this study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Phenomenological studies aimed to describe a phenomenon as accurately as possible from the perspective of the people involved (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). The purpose of this study was not to describe a phenomenon, but to investigate what motivated parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional services to become involved, in order to determine their perceptions of the effectiveness of the existing opportunities for involvement at the elementary school, and to understand the types of opportunities that motivated parents to influence their children's education. I discussed the various qualitative studies, in the next section I will discuss quantitative methods.

There are many quantitative research approaches, such as descriptive survey research, experimental research, causal-comparative research, and correlational research, which have merit for deductive research, but were not a good fit for this study.

Descriptive survey research surveys a sample of the population in question and

conclusions are made based on the responses of the participants (Lodico, Spaulding, &

Voegtle, 2010). Experimental research tests a hypothesis on a random sample of a

population (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Participants in the sample are

randomly assigned to two groups; the treatment group receives the independent variable,

whereas the control group does not. The dependent variable is measured to determine if

the treatment had a significant effect. Causal-comparative research seeks to explain the

differences between groups based on their experiences (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle,

2010). Like experimental research, there is an independent and dependent variable, but

the independent variable has already occurred. This variable is usually an event that

would be unethical to manipulate. For example, it would be unethical to expose a family

to homelessness to conduct a study investigating the effects of homelessness on a

student's performance in school. Correlational research seeks to find a relationship, or

correlation, between two or more variables (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). A

correlational study could be conducted to seek the relationship between parental

involvement and student success in Tier II intervention programs, and could be used in a

future research study.

Participants

The research for this study was conducted at an elementary school located on the

east coast of the United States with a population of 430 students, ranging from

kindergarten through fifth grade. A purposeful sample of participants was selected from

the population of the school. I anticipated a low response rate of less than ten returned

questionnaires. Since there is no formula for sample size for qualitative case studies, there was no minimum or maximum number of surveys that need to be completed. The more surveys that are completed, the greater the confidence in the findings, the fewer completed surveys, the less confidence in the study's findings (Yin, 2011).

I gained access to the participants by sending a letter to inform them about and invite them to participate in the research. The letters were sent home to 14 of the parents via the students' take home folders during summer school. For families whose students were not enrolled in summer school, the letter was sent to their home address via the U.S. Postal Service. The research was conducted at the elementary school where I teach, so I had personal access to the classrooms of the students and therefore could send a letter home with the students to take home to their family. None of the participants had a student in my current or past classes, so there was no conflict of interest.

Since there is no formula to determine the appropriate sample size for qualitative case studies, there was no minimum or maximum number of surveys that need to be completed. With a population of 36, to have a 95% confidence level with a three percent margin of error, 35 surveys would have had to be returned completed. I expected the response rate to be low as parents who are not typically involved with the school would not likely respond to a questionnaire. The more surveys that were completed, the greater the confidence in the findings, the fewer completed surveys, the less confidence in the study's findings (Yin, 2011). I reviewed all returned surveys, even if some questions were incomplete. Only completed questions were reviewed and any questions that were not answered were omitted from review for that questionnaire.

Interviews were completed and recorded in the air-conditioned office conference room and science classroom at the elementary school. Each interview was private, with the participant, the participant's children playing and coloring off to the side, and myself. At the beginning of each interview, informed consent forms were reviewed and the participants were advised that they could end the interview at any time. The participants' names were not used or published in the research. Participants were also informed that all data collected would be maintained in a secure file cabinet for 5 years.

Data Collection

The data collection began after district approval (Appendix F) and IRB approval (07-14-16-0293947) were obtained from Walden University in July, 2016. A questionnaire, interview, and field notes constituted the data sources for this study.

Questionnaire

The first step in the data collection was to investigate the perceptions of parents whose students who receive Tier II support about the current parent involvement opportunities at the elementary school and their needs. Each potential participant was invited to participate with a letter sent home via the student's take home folder if they were enrolled in summer school, otherwise the letter was mailed via U.S. Postal Service to the home address. In the letter, each participant was notified that he or she would receive a consent form and questionnaire in the mail within the next week. A few days later, the consent form and questionnaire was mailed to participant's homes. They were asked to read the consent form and complete the questionnaire. The return of the completed survey served as implicit consent. The participants were not obligated to

participate in the survey based on my affiliation with the school: the consent form stated, "You might already know the researcher as a first grade teacher at -----, but this study is separate from that role." At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their name and phone number if they were willing to participate in an interview. If the participant did not want to take part in an interview, they did not have to disclose their name. There were parents who spoke English as a second language (ESL) in the population but, after consulting with the ESL teacher at the school, it was determined that a translated questionnaire would not be necessary as all communication from school to home was in English (Personal communication, June 8, 2016).

I used the questionnaire (Appendix C) to gain general insight from the participants about six topics related to parent involvement: communication, student learning, volunteering, parenting, school decision making and advocacy, and collaborating with the community. The questionnaires were mailed directly to the homes of the 36 families previously described. Mailings included the consent form, questionnaire, and self-addressed stamped envelope for ease of return. One mailing was returned as undeliverable with no forwarding address. This particular family was homeless at the end of the school year. This was recorded as a field note noting that homelessness may be another barrier to parent involvement for this population. I received five completed questionnaires over the next two weeks, representing a return rate of 14%. This low response rate was expected and was also noted as a field note stating that perhaps open-ended surveys sent via the U.S. Postal Service was not the best format for communication.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their name and phone number if they were willing to be interviewed. Of the five surveys returned, two parents indicated that they would participate in an interview, a 40% response rate. Both parents were contacted and dates and times for interviews at the elementary school were scheduled.

Interviews

Each interview was recorded using the Dragon Recorder App on my iPhone. The written transcripts were transferred to my personal computer via email. All data were saved on my personal computer and backed up in my Dropbox account (a password protected online backup service), as well as printed out in hard copy. Each transcript was offered to the person interviewed for a member check to review for accuracy and corrections. Any emerging understandings were recorded and saved in a Word document on my personal computer and backed up as described above.

Both interviews were held at the elementary school. Considerations were given to both parents who asked to bring their children to the interview, and the children were provided toys and coloring materials. The children did not interrupt the interview. One parent brought only one of her four children, and the other parent brought both of her two children. Both parents' need for bringing their children was recorded as a field note stating that allowing children to come to the interview was necessary for the parents' involvement. One parent had been affiliated with the school for more than 3 years and the other for 3 years or less. Between the two parents, three of the five grade levels were represented (first grade, second grade, and third grade). Both parents' children who

received RTI Tier II instruction were boys. One parent was a member of the PTA, and the other was not.

I conducted both interviews on August 19, 2016. One interview took place in the office conference room and the other interview took place in the science classroom as the office conference room was being used and the science room was the only other room that was air-conditioned. One interview lasted about 30 minutes and the other lasted for about an hour. Five open ended questions pertaining to the participant's role as a parent in his or her child's education were created to elicit parents' perceptions of the current parent involvement opportunities at the elementary school. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission for accuracy and notes were taken to record the main points. Upon completion of the interview, the recording application transcribed the interview and the transcription was immediately emailed to the researcher. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix D.

Observations

Direct observations of parent involvement during family involvement opportunities at the school enhanced and supported data collected during parent interviews. I observed the events with the intent of seeking additional information about the three research questions. At parent involvement opportunities that included parents and children, I listened to the dialogue between all parents and children, and determined a level of engagement by watching to see if parents were using the opportunity to engage with their child. I observed parent interest in the topic by reading the parents facial expressions. I took notes using the observation protocol found in Appendix E. Direct

observations are sources of evidence that can be formal or casual, covers information in the real time, and covers the context of the event (Yin, 2008).

I observed a number of parent involvement opportunities that ranged from classroom open house visits, to kindergarten visitation, and school information sessions. All involvement opportunities took place at the elementary school. I conducted the observations with the intent of observing and taking notes on naturally occurring interactions and conversations. No names were recorded. At the end of each observation, I only asked how many families whose child received RTI Tier II instruction were in attendance. This was done to ensure the privacy of all those in attendance.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from the questionnaires, interviews and observations using a typological approach. "Typologies are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives and initial data processing happens within those typological grouping" (Hatch, 2002, p.152). Of the five methods Hatch (2002) reviewed, the typological approach was the only one that allows the researcher to identify themes after information is gathered. I was interested in understanding the types of opportunities that motivated parents to influence their children's education so the school could provide meaningful ways to build school and family partnerships therefore increasing the success of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention services. When the questionnaires, interviews and observations were complete, I analyzed the data using the following steps as outlined by Hatch (2002, p. 153):

1. I identified the typologies to be analyzed.

2. I read the data, marking entries related to my typologies.

3. I read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet.

4. I looked for patterns, relationships, and themes within typologies.

5. I read data, coded entries according to patterns identified, and kept a record of what entries went with elements of my patterns.

6. I decided if the patterns were supported by the data, and searched the data for non-examples of patterns.

7. I looked for relationships among the patterns identified.

8. I wrote patterns as one-sentence generalizations.

9. I selected data excerpts that supported my generalizations.

I used Creswell's (2012) coding process to generate categories or themes for analysis. The analysis looked for patterns, relationships, and themes of programs and strategies that can be implemented to improve parent involvement at the elementary school. I assigned code words or phrases that described different emerging topics through open coding. Next, using axial coding, I identified relationships and/or connections among the open codes. Possible topics for this study were perspectives held by participants, activities, strategies or relationships and social structures (Creswell, 2012).

To assure the quality of the procedures and best possible accuracy and credibility of the findings, I used methodological triangulation. The three sources of information and data were open-ended questionnaires, interviews and observations. The first source

was the open-ended questionnaire that was administered to parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional services. To eliminate researcher bias, the parents were not parents of students that were a current or past student of mine. The second source was the interviews with two parents to investigate their perceptions of the effectiveness of the current opportunities for involvement at the elementary school. The final source was the direct observations of parent involvement during family involvement opportunities at the school to enhance and support data collected during parent interviews. At parent involvement opportunities that included parents and children, I listened to the dialogue between parent and child, and determined a level of engagement by watching to see if parents were using the opportunity to engage with their child. I could observe parent interest in the topic by reading the parents' facial expressions. I could see looks of frustration, confusion, boredom or excitement and interest. Direct observations are sources of evidence that can be formal or casual, covers information in the real time, and covers the context of the event (Yin, 2008).

The group of parents that were purposefully selected for the research is the case; therefore there was no instance of a discrepant case. Member checks were used to ensure accuracy, credibility and validity of all data collected. My integrity ensures truth in reporting.

Outcomes

Introduction

The results and conclusion sections will focus on the outcomes of the study as they relate to the local problem and the three research questions. The results from the

questionnaire, interviews, and observations will be reviewed and analyzed. The identification of the four patterns that emerged from the analysis of the data will be discussed individually, highlighted by specific excerpts from the data that provide insight to the perspectives of the parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction. The relationship of these patterns to the research questions will be investigated and the limitations of the research will be considered.

In the literature review, I discussed the types of family involvement: learning activities at home, family involvement at school, school outreach to engage families and supportive parenting activities (Van Voorhis et al., 2013). I also discussed the barriers to parent involvement: individual parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors, societal factors (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), school climate (Bracke & Corts, 2012), and language (St. Clair et al., 2012). The data analysis from the questionnaire, interviews, and observations supported the literature review.

Four patterns emerged from the data, which answered the three research questions. The four patterns were communication, parenting, current parent involvement event problems and solutions, and community.

Research Question One

Several questions on current parent involvement opportunities were asked on the questionnaire to help answer the first research question: What inspires families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school?

Parents were able to identify problems with the current parent involvement opportunities and provide suggestions on how to make them better. The first problem, identified in the questionnaire, with most events that are just for parents, like PTA meetings, is that childcare is not consistently provided. The need for childcare was further demonstrated in both interviews when each participant brought at least one child along for the interview.

The scheduled time for parent involvement opportunities was also a perceived problem among the parents involved in the study. The parents suggested that activities would be best held after three o'clock, but not during "dinnertime." None of the parents identified what time "dinnertime" was in their household. The frequency of events was also a problem. One parent said that there were too many events to attend, but felt if they do not go to all events, they are a bad parent.

During one interview, a parent brought up Field Day at the elementary school, where parents are invited to watch students participate in eight events such as Zumba, tug of war, and relay races. With regard to Field Day the parent stated, "Why are we [parents] really there? I wave hi, but how are we [parents] really supporting them [children]?" Her statement inferred that attending Field Day was not a meaningful parent involvement event to her.

During another interview, parent-teacher conferences were discussed. One parent expressed the desire for longer conferences. Currently parent teacher conferences are held twice per school year and are 20 minutes each. The parent said about the 20-minute

conferences, "I want to know everything, but I feel pressured because other parents are waiting behind me and I don't want go into their time slot."

The final parent involvement opportunity that a parent identified as needing improvement was lunch bunches. During an interview, the parent explained in great detail how she intended for the lunch bunch to be a fun opportunity to eat lunch with her son, but that the actual lunch bunch went much differently. The 20-minute lunch bunch consisted of the facilitator reading a story. Then the children were to respond to the story both in writing and by drawing a picture. The child was so busy trying to complete the assignment that he wasn't eating. The parent said in frustration, "I was yelling at [child's name] to finish his lunch!" She felt that her child needed a break. She suggested that lunch bunches be more of a social event, rather than another time to work. She felt strongly that lunch is a break from classroom work for the students and shouldn't be filled with more writing and things the child already struggles with. She did mention that while she was waiting for her son to come down for lunch she was able to chat with another parent she hadn't met before and that they found that they were both from Texas. She thought that a social focus for lunch bunches would be more valuable and would build community amongst parents. This parent identified another problem with lunch bunches: there was no reminder about the event. She said she missed most of them and would have appreciated an email reminder about the lunch a few days before.

Parents are inspired to be involved with their child's learning when the involvement is meaningful and convenient to the family. Parents perceive that the quality of the event is more meaningful than the quantity of family involvement opportunities.

Providing childcare during these events as well as scheduling events before or after

dinnertime makes it easier for families to attend.

Importance of supporting parents with student learning with parent involvement

activities is supported in many theoretical frameworks. Learning at home is the fourth

type of parent involvement as defined by Epstein et al. (2002). Learning at home

includes helping children with homework and other learning activities based on the

information schools provide (Epstein et al., 2002). Student learning at home is found in

the third level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parent involvement

(Appendix B). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler acknowledge the parent mechanism of

involvement, including encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction, as an

important part of parental involvement and student learning (2005).

Research Question Two

Interview questions about parent perceptions of opportunities for involvement as

well as several questions on communication were asked on the questionnaire to help

answer the second research question: What are families' (of students who receive Tier II

intervention) perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school?

Parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional support prefer to

communicate electronically. All five families who returned the survey indicated that

email is the best way to communicate with families on general information such as daily

student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings and non-academic

information. Another resource mentioned by three of the families was an app called

Remind, which can also be used via the Internet at www.remind.com. It is a free text

messaging and email service for convenient and private school communication. Some teachers in every grade level at the elementary school in the study use it to communicate to parents by sending short messages and pictures about what was done in class that day to help foster communication between parent and child by asking questions about the topic of the message. In addition, one parent suggested text messaging be the way to communicate this general information.

Not only did the families prefer email for general information, all five families chose email as the way the school should communicate with families on more important topics such as school reforms, assessment tools, discipline procedures, and school goals. One family even suggested that these important topics should be communicated via Facebook.

There were other modes of communication provided by the parents such as talking face to face with the teacher after school, notes home, phone calls for urgent business, newsletters, and notices home. The most popular form of communication by far were those forms that are electronic. One parent stated, "I prefer either email or the remind app on my cell phone. Letters sent home have a habit of getting lost."

Using electronic communication is a way that teachers can ensure that parents are getting their messages. Even in the remind app, there is a way to see not only if the message has been delivered successfully, but also if the parent has viewed the message.

Importance of communication is supported in many theoretical frameworks. Communication is the second type of parent involvement as defined by Epstein et al. (2002). Communication between home and school facilitates the flow of information

about school curriculum and the child's progress (Epstein et al., 2002). School communication is found in both level one and level two of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent involvement (2005) (Appendix B). Finally, Vygotsky's (1962) idea of the more knowledgeable other, has much to do with communication from the school. The school must communicate to the parent on what the child needs to learn. Only then can the parent be the more knowledgeable other and help the child in what he or she is struggling with.

Several questions on current parent involvement opportunities were asked on the questionnaire to further help answer the second research question: What are the families' (of students who receive Tier II intervention) perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations can they offer for enhancing these opportunities?

Community was defined by parents in three ways: school, parents, and town. Questionnaires, interviews and observations all overwhelmingly identified that parents perceive the school as very inviting, welcoming, and friendly. During all observations at the school, parents and teachers smiled at each other, and used happy tones when speaking with each other. Parents did not have looks of nervousness or trepidation on their faces, they looked at ease and comfortable in the school.

Questionnaires, interviews and observations all overwhelmingly identified that parents perceive other parents as being "cliquey." In response to the questionnaire prompt, "Describe how you find the atmosphere of the school towards parents and family members" one parent wrote, "Very friendly and inviting from teachers. Parents have a

lot of cliques." One parent suggested "having a contact list of all students/parent contact info in the class has been extremely helpful. It fosters a sense of community and allows for parents to contact each other regarding play dates or birthday parties." Although this is not a common practice amongst all classrooms in the school, perhaps it should be to help with the perceived cliques among parents.

One interview shed some light on the broader definition of community. The parent talked about the apparent lack of communication between the public school system and the public library. She said that she knows her son's reading and asks the librarian to help find level L or M books. She stated the librarian, "has no idea" what she's talking about. The public school system uses the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system, but the librarians in the children's department have not been trained in this leveling system.

Importance of community is supported in many theoretical frameworks. Community is the sixth type of parent involvement as defined by Epstein et al. (2002). Community is the network of available resources and services in the community that assist parents and schools in their efforts to better their child's education (Epstein et al., 2002). Vygotsky's (1962) idea of the more knowledgeable other can be used for parents and children in the context of community. Not only can children learn from the people in the community, but parents can too. The school can help build relationships with parents and more knowledgeable other as well as with children and more knowledgeable others.

Families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention perceive that the current family engagement opportunities should be advertised electronically. These engagement opportunities don't have to be an event to attend, the opportunity could simply be an "ask

me" question. For example the teacher sends a message electronically that says, "Ask me about the new reading strategy I learned today!" with a picture of the anchor chart used in class that day. A message like this communicates curriculum as well as promoting family engagement through parent – child communication. The parents also think that family engagement opportunities should build community between all parents as well as between the school, parents and library.

Research Question Three

Several questions on parenting were asked on the questionnaire to help answer the third research question: To what extent do the existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of the families (of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention) at the school?

Parents are interested in getting expert advice on specific topics. Both the questionnaire and interview results demonstrated that parents need help with very specific things such as time management, balancing schedules for a family of six, sibling fighting, how to get a child to try new foods, how to discipline a child with ADHD, and how to increase interest in school.

The parents were also specific on the resources they thought might help with the above issues. One parent had an issue with "balancing time between two children's' activities, work, household and finding time to contribute to the school PTA activities." The parent said that they are not able to attend PTA meetings because of the time they are held and that childcare should be provided. This parent wrote in her questionnaire, "If

PTA meetings were earlier, not right at dinnertime, it would make it much easier for me to attend. If there was some kind of childcare provided at PTA meetings."

The method in which parent support was most preferred varied by family. Some parents mentioned workshops, and even private sessions in regards to their issues, but another family was against extra events. In her interview she seemed to be frustrated and guilty about the number of school events she felt she needed to attend. She said that once all of the activities like dance and sports begin the school events are "honestly, annoying." She said, "I have my schedule and its [the engagement opportunity] like one more thing; and if I'm a good parent I will show up. It gets stressful." She preferred emails and written information on the parenting issues she has.

The families who responded to the questionnaires and who were interviewed also identified student-learning issues that they needed help with. Parents identified that they have trouble getting their child motivated to read on their own, to do homework, getting their child to understand that there is more than one way to tackle a math problem, and that parents have trouble helping their child do their homework (especially math) because math is taught at school differently than the parent was taught. During an interview one parent said that she would do anything to make sure her son succeeds in reading, but that its hard to practice at home when it doesn't seem fun for him. She wants to practice, but she does not want the experience to be painful. She was very frustrated that she has not been able to help her child read, she stated, "I have my masters degree … but I can't figure out how to help my child read!" Another parent that was interviewed also expressed frustration with helping her child learn at home. Her child has ADHD and

sometimes, when they are doing homework together, she feels like he does not

understand what he is doing. She wonders, is her son just not understanding the skill, or

is he not understanding because he was not able to attend to the lesson in school?

Parents suggested things the school could do to support them with student

learning. The parents suggested that the school could provide updates on specific

activities that could be done at home. The parents also said they would appreciate more

frequent updates and feedback regarding their child's learning. One parent who struggles

with helping their child with homework declined support from the school stating, "It

seems this is something we need to figure out at home, as each individual family's needs

are unique and different."

Importance of parenting is supported in many theoretical frameworks. Parenting

is the first type of parent involvement as defined by Epstein et al. (2002). Parenting

includes establishing positive home conditions to encourage school success (Epstein et

al., 2002). Parenting is a large part of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of

parent involvement (Appendix B). Parental role construction, parental efficacy, and

parent's values and goals are all part of the first two levels of their model (2005).

Finally, Vygotsky's (1962) idea of learning as a social activity has much to do with

parenting. Parents are a child's first teacher (Anderson, 1985). Parents and children can

work together as a learning team through social interaction.

The existing opportunities for parent involvement do not meet the needs of the

families at the school. Parents identified many unfulfilled needs that the school could

provide help with. Parents also identified multiple methods to deliver information on the topics they perceive would help them with their child's learning at school and at home.

Limitations

When conducting research, it is critical for the researcher to reflect upon the limitations of the work. One limitation of this study was the limited number of respondents to the survey, which in turn created a limited number of interview participants. Perhaps an online survey, or multiple methods of surveying, would have reached the population more effectively.

A second limitation of the research is that parents who did not respond to the survey may be less likely to participate in family engagement opportunities. Further examination should be conducted on how to reach the population of parents who choose not to have frequent contact with the school.

Conclusion

The results of this research indicates that parents of children who receive RTI Tier II intervention services have needs that are not currently being met by the school. Using data from this research, a program for increasing parental involvement among parents of children who receive RTI Tier II intervention has been created. This program utilizes the research from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parent Involvement (2005), the six types of parent involvement as defined by Epstein et al. (2002) and Vygotsky's (1962) concept of learning as a social practice. The first step of the project is to define parent involvement and communicate this to all parents of students at the elementary school. The second step consists of five components that focus on only parents of

students who receive RTI Tier II instruction: home visits, weekly updates on child progress, parent training workshops, daily messages via Remind.com, and the creation of a public library-elementary school partnership. It is anticipated that implementing the components of this program will increase the engagement of parents whose students receive RTI Tier II intervention and thus improve student achievement.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Using the data collected and analyzed, I began to shift my focus to designing a project that would help increase the involvement of parents whose children receive RTI Tier II intervention. Section 3 describes the project proposal, project goals, the rationale, literature review, implementation proposal, project evaluation plan, and the implications locally and beyond.

Description and Goals

Based on the results from the study and the information included in the following literature review, I chose a policy recommendation as the project for the school. The project was designed to increase involvement among those parents whose students receive RTI Tier II instruction by identifying their specific needs and tailoring communication, workshops, and other parent involvement opportunities to meet those specific needs. It is my hope that student achievement will increase if the school and community work closely to meet the needs of parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction and help create a partnership with other parents, the school, and community.

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support. I will do this by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication. The intention is that by implementing this project, the students will meet grade level expectations as determined

by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support.

The parent involvement program will begin by defining the term "parent involvement." During this first phase, I will work with the school principal and the director of family and community engagement at the Board of Education to create a clear definition of parent involvement. Currently there is no district wide definition. This definition will be shared with all parents at the elementary school. The definition will include clarification that parent involvement focuses on parents working with their children to support the learning of the school's curriculum. The goal of parent involvement in education is to increase student achievement, and therefore increasing student achievement is the goal of this project. Once a definition has been clarified, activities can be developed to engage the parents in such a way that aligns with the definition. For example, organizing a bake sale to raise money for a school playground will involve parents, but is unlikely to increase student achievement.

The next focus will be to meet the needs of parents whose children receive RTI Tier II intervention. The parent involvement program will meet the greatest needs as defined by the research, incorporating the themes of communication, parenting, current parent involvement opportunities: problems and solutions, and community. There are five parts to the second phase of the program: home visits, weekly updates on child progress, parent training workshops, daily messages via Remind.com, and a public library-school partnership. Home visits will be conducted first; the remaining four components will be implemented simultaneously.

The first component of the parent involvement program is home visits. I, another staff member (perhaps the family resource center coordinator or the student's teacher), and a translator, if needed, would make arrangements for a home visit. This visit would include discussion on the definition of parent involvement, reviewing what their child struggles with most at school, determining the best method for communication, and asking about the parents' needs. These needs could be in regard to student learning, parenting, and communication with the school. Other needs might be identified as out of the realm of the school, but they might be issues with which the school could help, including finding the right resources for the family in regard to substance abuse or unemployment. I will also provide the parent with a simple activity that he or she could work on with his or her child to help support the work that is being implemented in the classroom. The information gathered from the home visits will guide the next components of the program.

The limited response to the research questionnaire guided this component, as all families have different needs and only a small population responded to the survey. The data from five of 34 surveys should not be generalized to the entire population of families whose children receive Tier II instruction. In addition, home visits are an opportunity for school staff and parents to create a trusting, caring relationship.

The next component will be based upon the results that indicated parents of students who receive RTI Tier II support would like regular updates on their child's progress. The program will include weekly updates to parents regarding their child's progress in the subject in which they receive Tier II support. The teacher will provide

weekly progress updates to both the parent and me via email. These weekly reports will help inform parents as to their child's progress or lack thereof. The teacher will indicate if there is a new activity the parent should engage in with the child.

The third component of the program will be small group parent training programs related to the greatest parent needs based on the information collected from the home visits. Based upon data from the questionnaires and interviews, parent training workshops topics might include how to help their child at home with reading, how to help their child at home with math, and how to help their child who has ADHD at home. These parent training programs would be grade level specific and could even be one on one coaching sessions held at the convenience of the parents.

Electronic communication will be the fourth component of the program. Messages specific to each parent would be sent via email, text message, or remind.com, based on parent preference as indicated during the home visit. In the event that a family has no Internet access, these messages will be communicated via a note sent home with the child. Messages would be sent out three times a week. The first message each week would describe an activity parents could do with their child. The second message would be a message of encouragement. The third message would be an "ask me" question—a question the parent could ask the child to help start an engaging conversation about a specific thing that was taught at school. The messages would be sent out to specific groups of parents based on student grade level and subject the student is receiving RTI Tier II support in. For instance one message would be sent to parents of first grade students that receive RTI Tier II support in math, another message would be tailored to

parents of fourth graders who receive Tier II support in reading. This component was added for the parents who indicated in the questionnaires and during interviews that they do not have the time to go to more events, that they prefer electronic communication, and that they would like activities to work on with their children at home.

The final component would be communication with the local public library and could be implemented at any time. There would be a short training session for the staff and volunteers in the children's department on the Fountas and Pinnell book leveling system. The training would also include the introduction of the book wizard found on scholastic.com. The book wizard is online and is also an app that can be downloaded from both iTunes for Apple devices and GooglePlay for Android devices. Book wizard allows the user to type in the title of a book and the book wizard tells the user what Fountas and Pinnell level the book is. It is a quick way for librarians and parents to find a just right book for their child. The book wizard could also be shared in one of the weekly messages to parents.

Conclusion

Increasing parent involvement among parents whose children receive RTI Tier II support is a critical aspect of meeting the primary goal of improved student achievement. The parent involvement program provides new and different opportunities to facilitate that involvement. Careful consideration was made in the design of the program to ensure that each component was spread across the roles of different staff members of the school so that no one teacher or staff member would be overwhelmed with extra tasks or duties. This program helps teachers and staff take small steps toward the ultimate goal of

improving the performance of students who receive RTI Tier II support, hopefully so much so that they will meet end of year expectations based on end of year assessments and be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support.

Rationale

I determined the project structure based on the results of the study, in particular from the four major themes expressed by parents in the questionnaire and during the parent interviews:

1. Parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional support prefer to communicate electronically.

2. Parents are interested in getting expert advice on specific topics.

3. Parents were able to identify problems with the current parent involvement opportunities and provide suggestions on how to make them better.

4. Parents perceive community to be made up of the school, the parents at the school, and the town.

Supported with the data from the study and the information included in the following literature review, I chose the project genre to be a policy recommendation for the school.

I designed the project to increase involvement among those parents whose students receive RTI Tier II instruction by identifying their specific needs and tailoring communication, workshops, and other parent involvement opportunities to meet their specific needs. It is my hope that student achievement will increase if the school and community work closely to meet the needs of parents of students who receive RTI Tier II

instruction and help create a partnership with other parents, the school, and the community.

<div align="center">**Review of the Literature**</div>

Introduction

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support. I will do this by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication. The intention is that by implementing this project, the students will meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support. Through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, parents identified program topics, preferred methods of communication, and perceptions of the community, as well as events held at the school. I analyzed the results and developed a project plan. The literature review supported the components of the project and the ability of those components to help with parent engagement and ultimately increase student achievement.

Educational databases used to search for related topics for this literature review included ERIC, EBSCOhost, Education Research Complete, and SAGE. Parent/family involvement/engagement, home visits, parent training, electronic communication and teacher parent communication were used as key search terms in the search for the literature. The five components of the project were used as the topics of the literature review.

Home Visits

The data that I collected through the questionnaires, interviews, and observations were extremely informative; however, the number of responses to the questionnaire was few, only 14%, and the interviews even fewer, only 5% of the population. I could not generalize the responses of five across the population of 36 families who have students who receive RTI Tier II instruction. Therefore, the first component of the policy recommendation is to conduct a home visit with each family.

Home visits are an effective way of establishing a positive home-school relationship. Home visits provide meaningful opportunities to for parents and teachers to build a positive, trusting partnership in dealing with a child's learning needs (Okeke, 2014, Whyte & Karabon, 2016). They provide an opportunity for teachers to both gather and share information (Whyte & Karabon, 2016). Home visits impart valuable insights on a child's home life, demeanors, and interests (Bradley & Schalk, 2013). A home visit gives the teacher an opportunity to coach the parent on different ways to help the child learn at home. An example of this is how to stop and check for understanding while a parent reads aloud to their child (Branson, 2015).

Although some families may refuse a home visit (Bradley & Schalk, 2013), parents who live in urban areas prefer home visits to group sessions, and are more likely to participate (Finigan-Carr, Copeland-Linder, Haynie & Cheng, 2014). Home visitation eliminates the barriers of transportation and childcare since the family does not need to go anywhere and it is beneficial to have the child present (Finigan-Carr et al., 2014).

A teacher at the elementary school where the study was conducted gave some valuable insight on home visits. She had been teaching kindergarten for 31 years and of those 31 years, home visits were required for 5 or 6 years. During the first few weeks of school, only kindergarten had shortened school days, allowing time for the kindergarten teachers to do home visits in the afternoon. The home visit program was done away with because the district found it too costly to provide early busses home for only the kindergarten students.

The teacher spoke very highly of her experience with home visits, stating, "I feel that I got to know the whole child through those visits. We met parents, extended family, pets, and really saw how they lived. I was able to support their needs and understood the kids so much better. I also formed relationships with parents that I never would have connected with if it wasn't for us sitting down informally in their home talking about their child" (Personal communication, September 2, 2016).

Parent Training Workshops

Parent training workshops are the second component of the program. Once information on needs is gathered from families during the home visits, differentiated programs can be scheduled to help support families with the needs they identified.

Parent training is one method of helping parents with their specific parenting needs. Anthony, Williams, Zhang, and Landry (2104) found that parent training in shared reading practices were instrumental for children to benefit from curriculum programs designed to enrich the home literacy environment. Anthony et al. (2014) further discovered that parent training in shared reading was the most beneficial for

children who lagged furthest behind. Two examples of how parent training could be set up are "parents-class" where parents are asked to position themselves as students, and "parents-guide" where parents work with their child as a teacher guides them (Rasyad, 2015). Saunders et al. (2012) found that parent training in a lecture format followed by hands on training is slightly more effective than parent training that is only lecture based. Parent training has benefited single parents who struggle with effective child management skills, promoting positive parent-child interactions, and implementing mindfulness in parenting (Briggs et al., 2013; Coatsworth et al., 2014; Rait, 2012).

Weekly Updates

Weekly updates on student progress are the next component of the project. Parents indicated in the questionnaire that they would appreciate more frequent communication regarding their child's progress in the subject they are receiving RTI Tier II support in. Although the parents did not define how frequent was frequent enough, Kraft and Rogers (2013) found that weekly parent contact regarding what the child needs to improve on had a positive benefit on the child's success in school. In addition, Newman and Bizarri (2012) found that when the child wrote to the parent regarding their weekly progress, the communication was even more effective and well received by parents. Most teachers do not communicate with individual families weekly, however Thompson and Mazer (2012) found in their study that teachers do communicate weekly with between two to five parents, which is about the number of students teachers have that receive RTI Tier II support at the elementary school.

Electronic Communication

Communicating with parents via email, text messaging, or remind.com (which sends messages to parents via their preferred method of communication) is the fourth component of the project. There has been many studies conducted that have had positive results for electronic communication. Email was found to be an effective way for teachers to proactively communicate to parents about their child (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013; Olmstead, 2013). Parents perceive email to provide the timeliest feedback from a teacher, and that email can actually defuse confrontation when communicating about difficult topics (Thompson, Mazer, & Grady, 2015). Hurwitz et al. (2015) found that parents who received text messages containing activities to do with their child and parent encouragement messages were engaged in more learning activities than parents who did not receive the messages. In addition, they found that the text messages were most successful with fathers and parents of boys (Hurwitz et al., 2015). Text messaging is enjoyed and a highly valued channel for delivering parenting information (Hurwitz et al., 2015; Peck, Stanton, & Reynolds, 2014; Stockwell et al., 2012). Text messaging is unique because the message can be saved for future use and are useful with populations with low literacy levels because there is a limited character count so the sender is forced to use short, uncomplicated words (Ho, Hung, & Chen, 2012; Stockwell et al., 2012). In addition, text messages are perceived to be useful and easy to use (Ho, Hung, & Chen, 2012).

Community Building

The final component of the project is to build community, specifically between parents and other parents, and the town library, school and parents. There is an old saying that says it takes a village to raise a child. The "village" used to be a very small, tight knit community and most all communication was face to face. The idea of the modern day village could now be extended to almost anywhere with the use of technology (Louque & Latunde, 2014). Family members who are in different countries can still communicate face to face through FaceTime or Skype. People "meet" others with similar interests or problems through message boards. People can learn about anything by typing a question into a search engine. The village has become infinitely larger.

Schools need to build partnerships with community organizations (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The community organizations can help to present workshops and parenting classes on the issues and needs parents identify during home visits (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). Community organizations like area colleges can help students visualize their goals by inviting elementary school children to visit the campus, or setting aside an hour of a college career fair just for elementary school students to participate (King, 2012).

The data collected in the interviews revealed that the public school and the public library are in need of some common language on book levels. The public school levels books using Fountas and Pinnell's leveling system, but when a parent goes to the library with their child and asks the librarian for "level M" books, the librarian doesn't know

what this means. For students who receive RTI Tier II support, it is important for them to practice reading books that are at their "just right" level. The parent interviewed was frustrated that there was no cohesion between the school and library.

Project Description

The first step in the implementation plan is to work with the principal of the elementary school and the district's Director of Family and Community Engagement to define a concise, easy to understand definition of family engagement. Family engagement is the term used at this school district rather than family involvement. Once the definition has been agreed upon, it can be shared with all teachers, parents and throughout the community via the district's Twitter and Facebook pages, and through email blasts from the superintendent. The definition could also be posted throughout the school, in classroom and the office and be included in paper communication such as monthly newsletters.

Once the definition has been shared, the second, and largest, phase of the program will begin. There are five parts to the second phase of the program: home visits, weekly updates on child progress, parent training workshops, triweekly electronic messages, and a public library-school partnership. Home visits will be conducted first; the remaining four parts can be implemented simultaneously.

First, home visits will be scheduled and conducted with all families whose students who receive RTI Tier II support. The intent of the home visit is to both gather information and share information. Information will be gathered about the families' greatest needs in parenting, student learning and any other issues they feel the school

could help with. Information on the best way to contact a parent will also be gathered.

The information that will be shared will be the definition of family engagement, an

update on how their child is doing in RTI Tier II support, the goal the student is working

toward, and also a grade level appropriate activity will be shared with the family to work

on with their child at home.

Armed with the information gathered during the home visits on family needs, the

next component is to work with the family resource center at the school to plan and

implement programs, workshops, or coaching sessions on the families' identified needs.

The third component is to make sure that the parent receives weekly updates on their

child's progress in RTI Tier II support. This will include updates on adjusting goals if

needed.

The fourth component is to plan and send three text or email messages per week

to the families. The first message would include a grade level appropriate activity to do

with the child, the second would be a message of encouragement, and the third would be

an "ask me" question to help families engage in conversation about school with their

child. The final component, but not necessarily the last completed component, would be

to train the public librarians in the children's department on the Fountas and Pinnell book

leveling system.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The elementary school has many valuable resources such as staff members who

are willing to go the extra mile for the success of their students. The principal is open to

new ideas that support student achievement. The school is fortunate that there is a

Family Resource Center at the school and the director has effective relationships already established with some of the families whose children receive RTI Tier II support. The Director of Family Resource Center will be an invaluable resource when it comes to scheduling home visits as well as planning the workshops based on family needs. The math coach, literacy coach, reading consultant, and school librarian at the school are also valuable resources. They will all be able to help plan the activities that will be shared at the home visit as well as the activities that will be shared in the weekly electronic messages. The English as a second language (ESL) teacher has established rapport with all families of students who receive ESL services and will be helpful if a translator is needed for home visits or translation of messages. Since training the public librarians will be benefiting all 15 schools in the district, the Director of Family and Community Engagement will be asked to help with training the public librarians on the Fountas and Pinnell book leveling system.

The district has services and assets. However, the services they provide are "Tier I" services for all families in the district, and not focused on those families whose students receive Tier II support. Much like the students receiver RTI Tier II support with their learning, there are some families that need and deserve "Tier II" support with family engagement. If the components of this project focus some the school district's resources on those families who need extra help, then families may become more engaged, and in turn their children will have greater success in school.

Potential Barriers

The major barrier of the project is the potential refusal of parents to commit to a home visit. In the event this happens with some families, a "Tier III" approach would have to be used. Perhaps a phone call interview to gather information could be used instead, or the meeting place could be at the public library or school, instead of the home. If there are multiple families that refuse a home visit, the family resource center could host a dinner at the school to entice those families to come in as a group. It is important that information is gathered from all of the families whose children receive RTI Tier II intervention so that the remaining components of the project best suit all of the families needs.

Another barrier of the project could be funding. The district's Office of Family and Community Engagement, as well as the school and family resource center have budgets for family engagement, but there is a possibility that those monies are already designated for other things. There is a foundation in the community whose mission is to promote and enhance public education in the community by providing financial support for educational projects, enrichment programs and other initiatives. A grant from this organization could help with getting extra funding if needed.

Timetable

The ideal timetable would be to write and share the definition of family engagement by July 2017. Ideally, home visits would be conducted in August 2017 so that the students and families have goals in place for the beginning of the school year and the workshops and other events could begin to be planned and scheduled throughout the

school year, from September 2017 to June 2018. Likewise, the weekly student progress updates and electronic messages three times a week could start from the beginning of the school year in September. Although this timetable would be ideal, the project could start at any time.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role in this project is to help guide all of the resources the school already has in place to better serve the families of our most struggling students. I anticipate I will help in the creation of the definition of family engagement that will be shared with families. I also believe I will be a part of the home visits to collect information on family needs. I will be in close contact with the principal, family resource center coordinator, and director of family and community engagement to share the information gathered from the home visits and help plan the workshops that will be held in response to the family needs. I will remind teachers and/or tutors to send weekly progress updates to the families of the students who receive RTI Tier II support. I also will help to facilitate the weekly electronic messages, perhaps via a private RTI Tier II remind.com account. As I described in the Potential Resources and Existing Supports section, the district has so much to offer through existing human capital and departments. I believe an important component of my role will be to guide the efforts of the existing departments so that they may better serve the families of children who receiver RTI Tier II support.

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Project Evaluation Plan

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This project will be evaluated by assessing progress of the students who receive RTI Tier II support over the 2017-2018 school year. Every eight weeks, the data from

the weekly progress updates will be reviewed by the teacher, researcher and any other

staff members involved with administering RTI Tier II support, for example tutors,

reading coaches or reading specialists. If student progress is being made, current goals

will be adjusted or new goals will be made. If no progress is being made, the teacher and

researcher will see if attendance or RTI Tier II fidelity might be a factor. The student's

parents will also be contacted to see if practice at home has been regular and to see if the

school can offer any additional support. Again, goals may have to be adjusted or

changed. The teacher and I will also use performance on grade level assessments as a

supplement to the weekly data. I will pay special attention to see if students are

dismissed from RTI Tier II support because the student has passed their grade level

assessments. At the end of the school year the researcher will review the progress of all

students who receive RTI Tier II support and record how many students "graduated"

from Tier II. This data will be compared to the number of students who "graduated" last

year. If there are a greater percentage of graduates as a result of increased family

engagement through the project, the project will have been a success. If not, further

research will be required.

Project Implications

The policy recommendation offers substantive opportunities for social change

including increased parent involvement, building partnerships, and greater student

achievement. Consideration will now be given to the importance of social change and

how it may affect the local community as well as far reaching communities.

Local Community

The families at the elementary school where the study was conducted will be the first to benefit. These families will have all the supports and information they need to know where their children are currently in school, where their children need to be in school, and how the team of family, teacher and community are going to work together to help their children reach their goals.

If this project results in increased family engagement and subsequent increased student achievement in the students who receive RTI Tier II support meeting and/or exceeding their grade level expectations based on grade level assessments, then the project can be expanded to the other 14 schools in the district so that other families whose students receive RTI Tier II support can also be better engaged with the school and their students learning.

Far-Reaching

The impact beyond the local level could be that other school districts that have trouble engaging with the families of struggling students could also imitate the project that was created specifically for this elementary school. This project is transferable because the information gathered during the home visits will identify the specific needs of that school's population. Then the workshops and activities could be tailored to the specific needs of the parents. What amazing social change would result: families, teachers and community helping each other by providing exactly what families need!

Conclusion

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and

community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized

workshops and regular, meaningful communication so that the students will meet grade

level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be

dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support. In this section I described the rationale,

provided support for all components of the project with current literature, described the

project, the project evaluation, and project implications. The following section provides

reflection on the process of researching and designing this project study. The strengths,

limitations, importance of the work, and directions for future research will also be

discussed.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and community. This will be accomplished by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication. It is intended that increased family engagement will help students meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately result in their being dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support. Designing this project study has enriched my knowledge and understanding of family engagement and has helped me to realize the transformation that can take place when a trusting relationship is established with a family. I have a responsibility to analyze the strengths and limitations of the project, and also to reflect on alternative approaches and the importance of the work. Implications, applications, and directions for future research concerning family engagement will also be discussed in this section.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This project has numerous strengths. The first strength is that the project is based on the data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The information gathered supports Vygotsky's (1962) theory that learning is a social activity. Students learn from their parents, teachers, and peers and this project supports that. Not only do students learn from others, parents do as well and this project further supports

that idea. This study found that each family has unique needs. One strength of this project is that it will meet the needs of the families by creating relationships between children and adults. Each person will teach and learn from each other.

A second strength of this study is that it uses the rich human and social capital that is already in place in the school district. The school district has so many talented people working in departments whose mission is to educate all children to be lifelong learners. This project focuses the work of these people and departments so that they may better serve the families of students who receive RTI Tier II support.

Another strength of the project is its ability to be evaluated at any time during the project. Since weekly student progress updates are part of the project, it will be easy to see student growth or lack thereof. Thus, almost immediate feedback will be delivered to me, so that I can determine if the project is successful.

The final strength of this study is that it has the ability to be far reaching. The process of the project allows for adaptability for any population because one of the first steps of the project is to ask the parents what they need. The information gathered from home visits will guide the project in the exact direction it needs to take for any population.

Limitations

There was a limitation of this project. There was a very low response rate for the questionnaire, and therefore there were a limited number of interviews. Although this was a limitation in the research, it actually helped guide the project. Because paper questionnaires mailed to the home of the participants were not well responded to, this

guided me to add the home visit component to the project. Although my research did not reach the full population, the project will.

Scholarship

To have profound knowledge of a subject involves studying the works of other scholars. I spent many hours on the Walden University Library databases, searching for and reading peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Thanks to the many scholars whose research I have read and reflected on, my own scholarly research has been created and now other scholars can use what I have learned and written about to create their own scholarly research. This project is not the work of just myself, it is another culmination of research by others put together in a new way. I anticipate that the work of all scholars, including myself, will be used again and again in the same way, so that other learned or erudite persons can have profound knowledge of a particular subject.

Project Development

Developing this project was a multi-step process. First, a problem was defined and supported through data at the local level. Next, I completed research in relation to the problem. After hours of finding, reading, and reflecting upon peer-reviewed, scholarly articles, a research study was proposed, approved, and conducted. Finally, armed with copious amounts of data, I was able to thoughtfully create a project that may solve the local problem of low family engagement among parents whose children receive RTI Tier II support.

All of the components of the project were thoroughly researched and supported by other scholars' findings. The resulting project will increase the achievement of students

who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication so that the students will meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support.

Leadership and Change

My entire doctoral journey has taught me many things about leadership. Leadership is hard work, and it makes you question yourself and your goals many times along the way. Leaders sometimes need support from other leaders to help with the endurance one needs to take on such a large goal. Improving family engagement and helping to increase academic achievement for the students who receive RTI Tier II support in my school has been the greatest undertaking I have ever taken on toward making social change. It has helped to make me a leader. I am so grateful and proud that I will soon be able to present my study and my project to my school and school district so that I may help those students and their families who need the most help by creating meaningful, trusting relationships.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As I created this project, I had a profound realization: If students struggle and do not meet grade level expectations, they receive RTI Tier II support daily to help them succeed. But when parents struggle and do not meet the expectations of the school, like attending conferences, or expecting them to help their child to read when they are not fluent readers themselves, they have no support.

Teachers know that one way of teaching will not meet the needs of all learners. Differentiated instruction and additional learning support are used to reach all students. The school and school district programs are all Tier I; there is no differentiated instruction or additional support for parents. This project is the Tier II support that parents of children who receive RTI Tier II support need to be successful. This project is important because in order for parents to be engaged with their child's learning, they may need support and a voice to tell the school what they need help with. This project will give those parents a voice so they can get the extra help they need.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project addressed the need for families of students who receive RTI Tier II support to become more engaged with their child's learning so that their child will achieve academic success. The most important implication of the work is identifying the topics or issues that the families need the most help with. Once the school knows what the parents want, it will be easy to create, schedule, and deliver those things the families need help with. If the people in the various school departments follow the guidelines of the project and focus their efforts on what families need from the school system, they may see an increase in the way parents engage with their children at home, therefore increasing their child's academic achievement.

Further research could be conducted on other populations at the school. This project's research component could be differentiated for any population, simply by changing the population. For example, instead of doing home visits for families of students who receive RTI Tier II support, home visits could be done with African

American families, Hispanic families, families whose students receive ESL services, or special education. It would be very interesting to see the similarities or differences in needs from each population.

Conclusion

This case study explored what inspired families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school, the families' perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations they offered for enhancing these opportunities, and to what extent the existing opportunities for family involvement met the needs of the families at the school. Section 4 included my reflections on this project study. This process has had profound impact on me as a teacher, a project developer and a learner. I have become an expert on family engagement and I am confident that I will be able to implement my project study successfully. I look forward to the relationships I will make with both the families at the school and with colleagues that share my passion for creating meaningful, trusting relationships with parents to help them help their child to achieve academic success.

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Appendix A: The Project

Introduction

Much research has been conducted to indicate that there are important benefits to students whose parents are engaged with their child's school. For instance, studies have shown that students learn more when their parents are involved with their education, and that students whose parents are involved with their school often have higher achievement in school (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Family involvement is important to students' literacy and math skill development and, with proper direction, parents can become more involved with their child's education (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, Lloyd, & Leung, 2013). Research conducted by Van Voorhis et al. (2013) shows that increased parental involvement can have a positive impact on children's education. Similarly, if parents of students who receive Tier II RTI intervention became more involved with their child's school, then the students might achieve more academic success. The research above shows that when parents are involved with their child's education, the student reaps great benefits.

There is an elementary school on the east coast of the United States that has a population of about 400 students. About 5% of students are Asian, 24% are African American, 1% is native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1% is American Indian or Alaskan native, and the remaining 69% are Caucasian. About 30% of the school population is Hispanic. About 42% of students receive free lunch, and about 6% qualify to buy lunch at reduced prices. There is a problem at this elementary school: many students, who receive Response to Intervention (RTI) Tier II support, never reach their

grade level's expectations based upon end of year assessments according to the school's literacy coach (Personal communication, May 4, 2015). In addition, many parents, including parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction, often do not take advantage of the opportunities for family involvement at the elementary school. Some of the family engagement opportunities at the elementary school include: open house, family math night, social thinking night, lunch bunches, ice cream social, PTA meetings, parent teacher conferences, grade level family fun nights, parent volunteer opportunities in the classroom, playgroups and ESL classes. Many events designed to teach parents about topics such as the social thinking curriculum and how to help students at home with math homework based on the common core curriculum are poorly attended; only about 30 families, or less than 7% of parents attend events such as these (Personal communication, April 20, 2015). The school's math coach reported that in February of 2016, only 14 families (12 families from grade kindergarten to second grade, and two families from grades three to five) attended a school wide family math night (Personal communication, March 6, 2016). Of the families who attended the math night, none were parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instruction (Personal communication, April 1, 2016). The school social worker held an after school workshop on the social thinking curriculum and the majority of the attendees were parents of kindergarten and first grade students. None of the attendees were parents of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention (Personal communication, April 4, 2016). In addition, the school principal reports that in the past 11 years, the majority (and close to 100%) of parents who do not attend report card conferences are parents of students receiving intervention services

(Personal communication, May 11, 2016). The principal also reports that family involvement around learning is definitely lacking with students who receive tiered intervention. For example, in grades 3-5, the preponderance of parents who do not sign the daily home-school communication planner, which includes homework assignments and messages about school learning, are parents of students whose children are receiving tiered intervention services. This is also indicative of families whose students complete summer reading logs and other independent reading logs to document the school wide independent reading homework. The majority of parents who sign these completed logs are parents of students whose children are at or above grade level in reading (Personal communication, May 14, 2016).

The above data shows that there is a large population of families, specifically families whose children receive RTI Tier II instruction, who could take more advantage of the family involvement opportunities offered by the school. These family involvement opportunities teach parents learning activities for home which, when implemented, increase parent engagement with their child's learning (Christianakis, 2011; Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

There are many barriers that can prevent parents from being involved with their child's school and learning (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This research study aimed to find out the answers to the following research questions:

1. What inspires families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school?

2. What are the families' (of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention) perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations can they offer for enhancing these opportunities?

3. To what extent do the existing opportunities for family involvement meet the needs of the families (of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention) at the school?

Questionnaires were sent out to the 34 families at the elementary school whose children receive RTI Tier II support. Of those 34 questionnaires, five were completed and returned. Of the five questionnaires, two of the respondents agreed to be interviewed. In addition, I observed a number of parent involvement opportunities to support the data collected from the questionnaires and interview. The next section provides a summary and analysis of the findings.

Summary and Analysis of Findings

The four patterns that emerged from the data were communication, parenting, current parent involvement event problems and solutions, and community. Communication will be discussed first.

Communication

Parents of students who receive RTI Tier II instructional support prefer to communicate electronically. All five families who returned the survey indicated that email is the best way to communicate with families on general information such as daily student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings and non-academic information. Another resource mentioned by three of the families was an app called remind, which can also be used via the internet at www.remind.com. It is a free text

messaging and email service for easier school communication. Some teachers at the school use it to communicate to parents by sending short messages and pictures about what was done in class that day to help foster communication between parent and child by asking questions about the topic of the message. In addition, one parent suggested text messaging be the way to communicate this general information.

Not only did the families prefer email for general information, all five families chose email as the way the school should communicate with families on more important topics such as school reforms, assessment tools, discipline procedures, and school goals. One family even suggested that these important topics should be communicated via Facebook.

There were other modes of communication provided by the parents such as talking face to face with the teacher after school, notes home, phone calls for urgent business, newsletters, and notices home. The most popular form of communication by far were those forms that are electronic. One parent stated, "I prefer either email or the remind app on my cell phone. Letters sent home have a habit of getting lost."

Using electronic communication is a way that teachers can ensure that parents are getting their messages. Even in the remind app, there is a way to see not only if the message has been delivered successfully, but also if the parent has viewed the message.

Parenting

Parents are interested in getting expert advice on specific topics. Both the questionnaire and interview results demonstrated that parents need help with very specific things such as time management, balancing schedules for a family of six, sibling

fighting, how to get a child to try new foods, how to discipline a child with ADHD, and how to increase interest in school.

The parents were also specific on the resources they thought might help with the above issues. One parent had a issue with "balancing time between two children's activities, work, household and finding time to contribute to the school PTA activities." The parent said that they are not able to attend PTA meetings because of the time they are held and that childcare should be provided. This parent wrote in her questionnaire, "If PTA meetings were earlier, not right a dinnertime, it would make it much easier for me to attend. If there was some kind of childcare provided at PTA meetings."

The method in which parent support was most preferred varied by family. Some parents mentioned workshops, and even private sessions in regards to their issues, but another family was against extra events. In here interview she seemed to be frustrated and guilty about the number of school events she felt she needed to attend. She said that once all of the activities like dance and sports begin the school events are "honestly, annoying." She said, "I have my schedule and its [the engagement opportunity] like one more thing; and if I'm a good parent I will show up. It gets stressful." She preferred emails and written information on the parenting issues she has.

The families who responded to the questionnaires and who were interviewed also identified student-learning issues that they needed help with. Parents identified that they have trouble getting their child motivated to read on their own, to do homework, getting their child to understand that there is more than one way to tackle a math problem, and that parents have trouble helping their child do their homework (especially math) because

math is taught at school differently than the parent was taught. During an interview one parent said that she would do anything to make sure her son succeeds in reading, but that it is hard to practice at home when it doesn't seem fun for him. She wants to practice, but she does not want the experience to be painful. She was very frustrated that she has not been able to help her child read, she stated, "I have my masters degree … but I can't figure out how to help my child read!" Another parent that was interviewed also expressed frustration with helping her child learn at home. Her child has ADHD and sometimes, when they are doing homework together, she feels like he does not understand what he is doing. She wonders, is her son just not understanding the skill, or is he not understanding because he was not able to attend to the lesson in school?

Parents suggested things the school could do to support them with student learning. The parents suggested that the school could provide updates on specific activities that could be done at home. The parents also said they would appreciate more frequent updates and feedback regarding their child's learning. One parent who struggles with helping their child with homework declined support from the school stating, "It seems this is something we need to figure out at home, as each individual family's needs are unique and different."

Current Parent Involvement Opportunities: Problems and Solutions

Parents were able to identify problems with the current parent involvement opportunities and provide suggestions on how to make them better. The first problem, identified in the questionnaire, with most events that are just for parents, like PTA meetings, is that childcare is not consistently provided. The need for childcare was

further demonstrated in both interviews when each participant brought as least one child along for the interview.

The scheduled time for parent involvement opportunities was also a perceived problem among the parents involved in the study. The parents suggested that activities would be best held after three o'clock, but not during "dinnertime." None of the parents identified what time "dinnertime" was in their household. The frequency of events was also a problem. One parent said that there were too many events to attend, but feel if they do not go to all events, they are a bad parent.

During one interview, a parent brought up Field Day at the elementary school, where parents are invited to watch students participate in eight events such as Zumba, tug of war, and relay races. The parent said about Field Day, "Why are we [parents] really there? I wave hi, but how are we [parents] really supporting them [children]?" Coming to Field Day was not a meaningful parent involvement event to her.

During another interview, parent-teacher conferences were discussed. The parent wished that conferences were longer. Currently parent teacher conferences are held twice per school year and are 20 minutes each. The parent said about the 20-minute conferences, "I want to know everything, but I feel pressured because other parents are waiting behind me and I don't want go into their time slot."

The final parent involvement opportunity that a parent identified as needing improvement was lunch bunches. During an interview, the parent explained in great detail how she intended for the lunch bunch to be a fun opportunity to eat lunch with her son, but that the actual lunch bunch went much differently. The 20-minute lunch bunch

consisted of the facilitator reading a story. Then the children were to respond to the story both in writing and by drawing a picture. The child was so busy trying to complete the assignment that he wasn't eating. The parent said in frustration, "I was yelling at [child's name] to finish his lunch!" She felt that her child needed a break. She suggested that lunch bunches be more of a social event, rather than another time to work. She felt strongly that lunch is a break from classroom work for the students and shouldn't be filled with more writing and things the child already struggles with. She did mention that while she was waiting for her son to come down for lunch she was able to chat with another parent she hadn't met before and that they found that they were both from Texas. She thought that a social focus for lunch bunches would be more valuable and would build community amongst parents. This parent identified another problem with lunch bunches: there was no reminder about the event. She said she missed most of them and would have appreciated an email reminder about the lunch a few days before.

Community

The final theme that emerged from the data was community. Parents defined community in three ways: school, parents, and town. Questionnaires, interviews and observations all overwhelmingly identified that parents perceive the school as very inviting, welcoming, and friendly. During all observations at the school, parents and teachers smiled at each other, and used happy tones when speaking with each other. Parents did not have looks of nervousness or trepidation on their faces, they looked at ease and comfortable in the school.

Questionnaires, interviews and observations all overwhelmingly identified that parents perceive other parents as being "cliquey." In response to the questionnaire prompt, "Describe how you find the atmosphere of the school towards parents and family members" one parent wrote, "Very friendly and inviting from teachers. Parents have a lot of cliques." One parent suggested "having a contact list of all students/parent contact info in the class has been extremely helpful. It fosters a sense of community and allows for parents to contact each other regarding play dates or birthday parties." Although this is not a common practice amongst all classrooms in the school, perhaps it should be to help with the perceived cliques among parents.

One interview shed some light on the broader definition of community. She talked about the apparent lack of communication between the public school system and the public library. She said that she knows what level her son reads at and asks the librarian to help find level L or M books and the librarian, "has no idea" what she's talking about. The public school system uses the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. The public library should know this system to ensure they can help the town's children read books that are at their "just right level."

Major Evidence from Literature and Research

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication so that the students will meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be

dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support. Through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, parents identified program topics, preferred methods of communication, and perceptions of the community as well as events held at the school. These results were analyzed and a project plan was developed. The literature review that follows supports the components of the project and the ability of those components to help with parent engagement and ultimately increased student achievement. The five components of the project will be used as the topics of the literature review.

Home Visits

The data that was collected through the questionnaires, interviews and observations were extremely informative; however number of responses to the questionnaire was few and the interviews even fewer. The researcher did not feel comfortable generalizing the opinions of five across the population of 34 families who have students to receive RTI Tier II instruction. Therefore the first component of the policy recommendation is to conduct a home visit with each family.

Home visits are an effective way of establishing a positive home-school relationship. Home visits provide meaningful opportunities to for parents and teachers to build a positive, trusting partnership in dealing with the child's learning needs (Okeke, 2014, Whyte & Karabon, 2016). They provide an opportunity for teachers to both gather and share information (Whyte & Karabon, 2016). Home visits impart valuable insights on a child's home life, demeanors, and interests (Bradley & Schalk, 2013). A home visit gives the teacher an opportunity to coach the parent on different ways to help the child learn at home, for example how to stop and check for understanding while a parent reads

aloud to their child (Branson, 2015). Although some families may refuse a home visit (Bradley & Schalk, 2013), parents who live in urban areas prefer home visits to group sessions, and are more likely to participate (Finigan-Carr, Copeland-Linder, Haynie & Cheng, 2014). Home visitation eliminates the barriers of transportation and childcare since the family does not need to go anywhere and it is beneficial to have the child present (Finigan-Carr et al., 2014). A teacher at the elementary school where the study was conducted gave some valuable insight on home visits. She has been teaching kindergarten for 31 years and of those 31 years, home visits were required for five or six years. During the first few weeks of school, only kindergarten had shortened school days, allowing time for the kindergarten teachers to do home visits in the afternoon. The home visit program was done away with because the district found it too costly to provide early busses home for just kindergarten students. She spoke very highly of her experience with home visits stating, "I feel that I got to know the whole child through those visits. We met parents, extended family, pets, and really saw how they lived. I was able to support their needs and understood the kids so much better. I also formed relationships with parents that I never would have connected with if it wasn't for us sitting down informally in their home talking about their child" (Personal communication, September 2, 2016).

Parent Training Workshops

Parent training workshops are the second component of the program. Once information on needs is gathered from families during the home visits, differentiated programs can be scheduled to help support families with their identified needs.

Parent training is one method of helping parents with their specific parenting needs. Anthony, Williams, Zhang, and Landry (2014) found that parent training in shared reading practices were instrumental for children to benefit from curriculum programs designed to enrich the home literacy environment. Anthony et al. (2014) further discovered that parent training in shared reading was the most beneficial for children who lagged furthest behind. Two examples of how parent training could be set up are "parents-class" where parents are asked to position themselves as students, and "parents-guide" where parents work with their child as a teacher guides them (Rasyad, 2015). Saunders et al. (2012) found that parent training in a lecture format followed by hands on training is slightly more effective than parent training that is only lecture based. Parent training has benefited single parents who struggle with effective child management skills, promoting positive parent-child interactions, and implementing mindfulness in parenting (Briggs et al., 2013; Coatsworth et al., 2014; Rait, 2012).

Weekly Updates

Weekly updates on student progress are the next component of the project. Parents indicated in the questionnaire that they would appreciate more frequent communication regarding their child's progress in the subject they are receiving RTI Tier II support in. Although the parents did not define how frequent was frequent enough, Kraft and Rogers (2013) found that weekly parent contact regarding what the child needs to improve on had a positive benefit on the child's success in school. In addition, Newman and Bizarri (2012) found that when the child wrote to the parent regarding their weekly progress, the communication was even more effective and well received by

parents. Most teachers do not communicate with individual families weekly, however Thompson and Mazer (2012) found in their study that teachers do communicate weekly with between two to five parents, which is about the number of students teachers have that receive RTI Tier II support at the elementary school.

Electronic Communication

Communicating with parents via email, text messaging, or remind.com (which sends messages to parents via their preferred method of communication) is the fourth component of the project. There has been many studies conducted that have had positive results for electronic communication. Email was found to be an effective way for teachers to proactively communicate to parents about their child (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013; Olmstead, 2013). Parents perceive email to provide the timeliest feedback from a teacher, and that email can actually defuse confrontation when communicating about difficult topics (Thompson, Mazer, & Grady, 2015). Hurwitz et al. (2015) found that parents who received text messages containing activities to do with their child and parent encouragement messages were engaged in more learning activities than parents who did not receive the messages. In addition, they found that the text messages were most successful with fathers and parents of boys (Hurwitz et al., 2015). Text messaging is enjoyed and a highly valued channel for delivering parenting information (Hurwitz et al., 2015; Peck, Stanton, & Reynolds, 2014; Stockwell et al., 2012). Text messaging is unique because the message can be saved for future use and are useful with populations with low literacy levels because there is a limited character count so the sender is forced to use short, uncomplicated words (Ho, Hung, & Chen, 2012;

Stockwell et al., 2012). In addition, text messages are perceived to be useful and easy to use (Ho, Hung, & Chen, 2012).

Community Building

The final component of the project is to build community, specifically between parents and other parents, and the town library, school and parents. There is an old saying that says it takes a village to raise a child. The "village" used to be a very small, tight knit community and most all communication was face to face. The idea of the modern day village could now be extended to almost anywhere with the use of technology (Louque & Latunde, 2014). Family members who are in different countries can still communicate face to face through FaceTime or Skype. People "meet" others with similar interests or problems through message boards. People can learn about anything by typing a question into a search engine. The village has become infinitely larger.

Schools need to build partnerships with community organizations (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The community organizations can help to present workshops and parenting classes on the issues and needs parents identify during home visits (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). Community organizations like area colleges can help students visualize their goals by inviting elementary school children to visit the campus, or setting aside an hour of a college career fair just for elementary school students to participate (King, 2012).

The data collected in the interviews revealed that the public school and the public library are in need of some common language on book levels. The public school levels

books using Fountas and Pinnell's leveling system, but when a parent goes to the library with their child and asks the librarian for "level M" books, the librarian doesn't know what this means. For students who receive RTI Tier II support, it is important for them to practice reading books that are at their "just right" level. The parent interviewed was frustrated that there was no cohesion between the school and library.

Outline of Project

The goal of this project is to increase the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication so that the students will meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support.

Phase One

Researcher, school principal and director of family and community engagement meet to write a clear, concise definition of family engagement that will be adopted across the entire district. Once the definition has been agreed upon, it can be shared with all teachers, parents and throughout the community via the district's Twitter and Facebook pages, and through email blasts from the superintendent. The definition could also be posted throughout the school, in classroom and the office and be included in paper communication such as monthly newsletters.

Phase Two

Phase two is made up of five components, some of which can happen simultaneously.

Component 1: Home Visits

Home visits will be scheduled and conducted with all families whose students who receive RTI Tier II support. Prior to the home visit, the staff conducting the visit will gather data from the child's teacher and/or tutor on the progress being made during RTI Tier II support. The team will decide on an appropriate goal to be discussed during the home visit. With guidance from the teacher and/or tutor and with help from the math and/or reading coaches, an activity or game that support the child's learning goal will be designed and made so that it can be shared with the family during the home visit.

The intent of the home visit is to both gather information and share information. Information will be gathered about the families' greatest needs in parenting, student learning and any other issues they feel the school could help with. The interview protocol from the research will be used to guide the interview (Appendix D). Information on the best way to contact a parent will also be gathered.

The information that will be shared will be the definition of family engagement, an update on how their child is doing in RTI Tier II support, the goal the student is working toward, and also the grade level appropriate activity mentioned earlier will be shared with the family to work on with their child at home.

Component 2: Program Planning

Armed with the information gathered during the home visits on family needs, the next component is to work with the family resource center at the school to plan and

implement programs, workshops, or coaching sessions on the families' identified needs.

Communication about the programs will be communicated in many ways: emails, student

invitations, phone calls from teachers or other staff members so that the parents perceive

that their attendance is welcomed and wanted.

Component 3: Weekly Student Progress Updates

The third component is to make sure that the parent receives weekly updates on

their child's progress in RTI Tier II support. This will include updates on adjusting goals

if needed. This component can and should begin immediately after the home visit is

completed. Updates will be delivered by phone, text message, or email depending on

how the parent would prefer to be contacted.

Component 4: Electronic Messages Three Times Per Week

The fourth component is to plan and send three text or email messages (depending

on the families' preference) per week to the families. The first message each week would

include instructions on how to do a grade level appropriate activity with their child, the

second would be a message of encouragement, and the third would be an "ask me"

question to help families engage in conversation about school with their child. This

component will also begin immediately after the home visit is completed.

Component 5: Public Library Cohesion

The final component, which can be completed at any time, is to train the public

librarians in the children's department on the Fountas and Pinnell book leveling system.

The Scholastic Book Wizard app should also be shared with the librarians. This app

allows users to type in a book title and usually the app can find the book and determine the level.
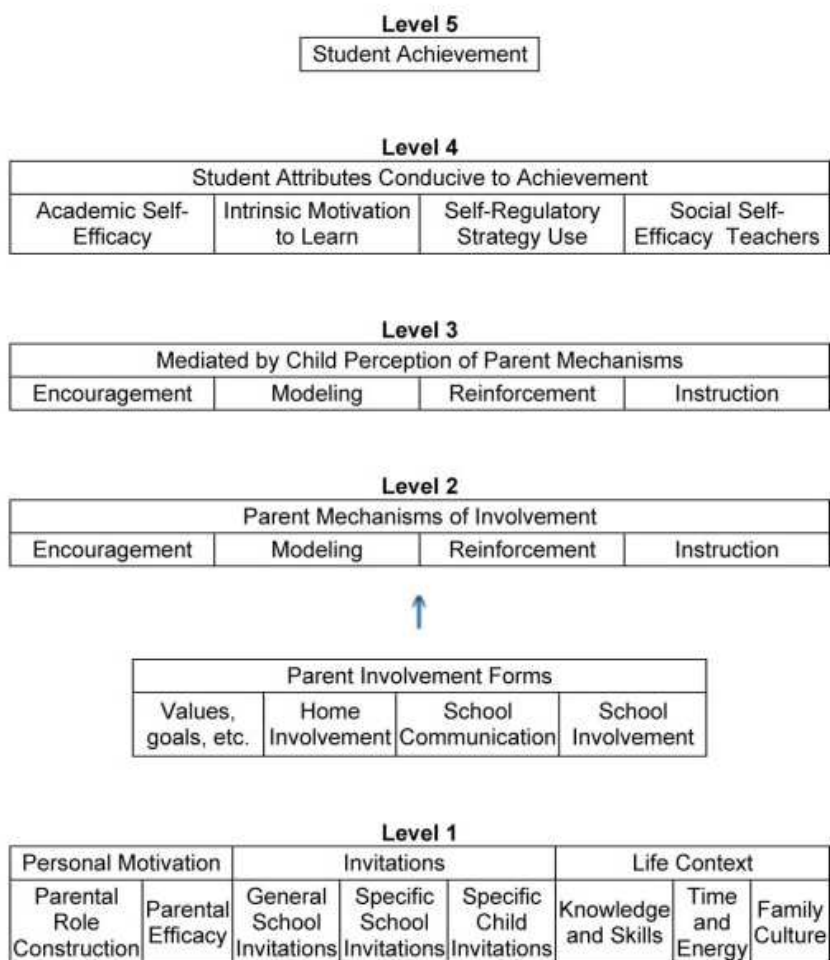
Project Evaluation Plan

This project will be evaluated by assessing progress of the students who receive RTI Tier II support over time. Every eight weeks, the data from the weekly progress updates will be reviewed by the teacher, researcher and any other staff members involved with administering RTI Tier II support, for example tutors, reading coaches or reading specialists. If student progress is being made, current goals will be adjusted or new goals will be made. If no progress is being made, the teacher and researcher will see if attendance or RTI Tier II fidelity might be a factor. The student's parents will also be contacted to see if practice at home has been regular and to see if the school can offer any additional support. Again, goals may have to be adjusted or changed. The researcher and teacher will also use performance on grade level assessments as a supplement to the weekly data. Special attention will be paid to see if students are dismissed from RTI Tier II support because the student has passed their grade level assessments. At the end of the school year the researcher will review the progress of all students who receive RTI Tier II support and record how many students "graduated" from Tier II. This data will be compared to the number of students who "graduated" last year. If there are a greater percentage of graduates as a result of increased family engagement through the project, the project will have been a success. If not, further research will be required.

Conclusion

This case study explored what inspired families of students who receive RTI Tier II intervention to become involved with their child's education at home and at school, the families' perceptions of their opportunities for involvement at the elementary school and what recommendations they offered for enhancing these opportunities, and to what extent the existing opportunities for family involvement met the needs of the families at the school. This process has had profound impact on me as a teacher, a project developer and as a learner. I have become an expert on family engagement and I am confident that I will be able to implement my project study successfully with the goal of increasing the achievement of students who receive RTI Tier II support by engaging families through partnership with the school and community by defining parent needs and meeting those needs through personalized workshops and regular, meaningful communication so that the students will meet grade level expectations as determined by grade level assessments, and will ultimately be dismissed from receiving RTI Tier II support. I look forward to the relationships I will make with both the families at the school and with colleagues that share my passion for creating meaningful, trusting relationships with parents to help them help their child to achieve academic success.

Appendix B: The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Involvement (2005)

Level 5

Student Achievement

Level 4

Student Attributes Conducive to Achievement			
Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn	Self-Regulatory Strategy Use	Social Self-Efficacy Teachers

Level 3

Mediated by Child Perception of Parent Mechanisms			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

Level 2

Parent Mechanisms of Involvement			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

↑

Parent Involvement Forms			
Values, goals, etc.	Home Involvement	School Communication	School Involvement

Level 1

Personal Motivation		Invitations			Life Context		
Parental Role Construction	Parental Efficacy	General School Invitations	Specific School Invitations	Specific Child Invitations	Knowledge and Skills	Time and Energy	Family Culture

The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Involvement. Adapted from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 2005. Reprinted with permission from the Family School Partnership Lab, Vanderbilt University.

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005)

Appendix C: Family Involvement Questionnaire

Adapted with permission from Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). Parent and Student Surveys of Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

How to Support Families in Urban Communities
Open Ended Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS
1. Purpose of the Questionnaire
This open ended questionnaire offers family members an opportunity to find effective ways to support families in urban communities. Your opinion is very important. Your answers will enable us to make decision regarding supporting families at the school.

2. How to Answer Each Question
Please answer each question to the best of your ability. There is no wrong answer. Please respond to each question with a detailed response. If the question does not apply to you or you have no knowledge of it please write "does not apply" in the answer space provided below the question.

3. Parent Information
To the best of your ability, please provide information in the boxes below. Please be assured that your answers will be treated confidentially.

How are you affiliated with the school: (please circle one)
 	
    a. I have a child enrolled at the school
    b. I am a nonparental family member of a child enrolled at the school
    c. I am a community member and live in the area of the school but have one family member currently attending the school.
    d. I am not currently affiliated with the school but have had previous experience within the past year.

Number of years affiliated with the school: (please circle one)
 	
    a. three years or less
    b. more than three years

Grade levels you are associated with: (please circle all that apply)   a. First Grade

b. Second Grade
c. Third Grade
d. Fourth Grade
e. Fifth Grade

Gender: (please circle one)

a. Male
b. Female

I am a member of PTA at the school: (please circle one)

a. Yes
b. No

4. Completing the Questionnaire

The questionnaire time will vary dependent on the length of each response. To avoid repetition, please read all questions before responding. Please feel free to ask any questions that may arise as you complete the questionnaire for clarifications.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your opinion matters. You may now begin.

Communication

What do you think is the best way to communicate with families on general information such as daily student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings and non academic information?

How do you feel the school should communicate with families on more important topics such as school reforms, assessment tools, discipline procedures, and school goals?

If you do not speak English, please explain the best way for the school to communicate.

Parenting

Please briefly explain some of your parenting issues.

What are some of the resources you need to help offset some of the issues you and your family may experience?

How would you like to receive support on parenting from the school? (ex. workshops, private session, written information, emails, etc)

Student Learning

List any areas that your family struggles with to support student learning.
What can the school do to support you with student learning?

Volunteering

Describe how you find the atmosphere of the school towards parents and family members.
What should be done to get more parents involved in both academic and nonacademic activities?

If you are unable to physically volunteer at the school, what are some other ways that the school can provide you with an opportunity to volunteer at the school?

School Decision Making and Advocacy

Do you feel the school involves parents in school-related decisions? Why or why not?

Would you like to be involved in major school decisions? If so, how?

What type of workshops and/or resources do you need to help your child be successful at school?

Collaborating with the Community

What are some types of community activities that are important to you and your family?
Briefly explain your greatest needs in the community.
What type of family-oriented social services should the school provide to assist you in helping your child at school?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this important questionnaire!

Please indicate below if you would be willing to be interviewed on family involvement by Catherine Roy. (Interview would last approximately 45 minutes)

Yes! I would be willing to be interviewed. Name:_____ Phone number: _____	No, thank you.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

One participant will be chosen from each grade level for an interview, for a total of five

interviews. Each interview should last approximately 45 minutes. Each participant will

be asked the following questions:

- What are your hopes and dreams for your child at B____ Elementary

  School?

- What inspires you to become involved with your child's education at

  home and at school?

- What do you think about the opportunities for involvement at the school

  and what recommendations do you have for enhancing these

  opportunities? (A list of all family involvement opportunities will be

  available.)

- Do the existing opportunities for family involvement meet your needs?

  Why or why not?

- What else could be offered at the school to help you and your family be

  even more involved with your child's learning?

Appendix E: Observation Protocol

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
Catherine Roy

Program Name: _____
Observer's Name: _____
Date: _____   Time Observation Began: _____   Time Ended:
_____

1. Subject of the Observation (What is expected to be observed and why I selected it.)

2. Program Setting (color, size, shape, number of desks/tables, number of windows, furniture or equipment in the room, temperature, noise level)

3. How the session begins (Who is present? What is said at the beginning?)

4. Chronology of events

15 mins	
30 mins	
45 mins	
60+ mins	

5. Interactions

5a.Who is interacting?

Youth with Adults	Youth with Youth	Adults with Adults
Girls with Boys	Boys with Boys	Girls with Girls
People with same racial/ethnic background	People with different racial/ethnic background	

5B. How do they interact? (1-2 examples)

5C. Are there any changes in interaction during the observations.

6. Nonverbal communication (How do participants get attention? How much do they fidget or move around? How do participants physically place themselves in the setting?)

7. Program activities and participant behaviors (What is happening during the session? How are participants responding?)

8. Engagment (How do participants respond or react to what was happening in the program during the observation? Were some, most or all actively engaged?)

9. Ending (What are the signals that the activity is ending? Who is present? What is said? How do participants react? How is the completion of this activity related to other activites?)

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Appendix F: Letter of Support

June 4, 2016

Dear Catherine Roy,

 Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled <u>Increasing Parent Involvement in an Elementary School</u> within the <u>XXXXXX Elementary School</u>. As part of this study, I authorize you to <u>obtain names and addresses for families whose children receive RTI Tier II intervention</u>. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. In addition, I authorize you to observe school events as discussed in your observation protocol.

 We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Use of the conference room or Family Resource Center for holding interviews. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

 I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

 I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

 Sincerely,

Mary Lou XXXXXXXX

Principal