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Examining Parental Involvement in Impoverished Schools

Tara Lynn Broadus
Walden University

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Tara Broadus

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Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

A decline in parent participation in one impoverished Pre-K through Grade 5 school in Texas over recent years has been an ongoing concern for school administrators. The purpose of this instrumental case study was to investigate parent perceptions of the school's efforts to involve parents in the school. Research questions focused on identifying factors that inhibited parental involvement concentrating on parent perceptions of school efforts. Constructivist theory and the advocacy/liberatory framework formed the conceptual framework for this study. A triangulation method for data collection included parent interviews, teacher questionnaires, and observations of parental involvement activities over 12 weeks. Participants were a typical sampling of 9 teachers and 9 parents. Observations were logged and coded. Teacher questionnaires were thematically coded and used to create probing questions for parent interviews. Interview transcripts were coded, and member checks validated findings. Results indicated that school practices for parent involvement were unclear to parents, inconsistently implemented, and poorly communicated. Parents reported that consistent communication and encouragement could help break down barriers to participation. As a result of these findings, a parental involvement project was formulated including research based goals, a plan for implementation, and a program evaluation. These findings and proposed project could lead to positive social change by assisting local staff to design a parental involvement program that gives parents a voice in school practices and by providing a model for other schools struggling to involve parents.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

There is a lack of research regarding factors that affect parental involvement in impoverished schools. While previous research studies discussed the importance of parental involvement in connection with student achievement, there is a lack of research with specific strategies beneficial to predominantly impoverished school populations. In particular, limited studies are available on impoverished schools with high minority populations that provide suggestions for changes in parental involvement programs and recognize the challenges of the population (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Definition of Problem

In the late 1960s, District X (a pseudonym), an urban district in Texas, created 16 learning centers to provide high quality education to minority students living in poverty in the southern and western sectors of the city. The learning center concept was an intervention method aimed at closing the achievement gap and providing opportunities for specialized instruction and enrichment activities within the school day (Dallas Independent School District, 2006). In contrast to traditional elementary schools in District X, the learning centers provided smaller class sizes, more opportunities for fine arts, extended school day instruction, and specialized teachers in reading and mathematics. Recently, these schools saw drastic decreases in teaching staff, programs, and the number of students continuously enrolled due to statewide budget cuts. The learning center concept was eliminated from the district's plans in 2006–2007 for a variety of reasons. Budget cuts prompted the idea that some schools be closed due to lack

of funding, declining student enrollment, and the lack of support that is needed to maintain the school. Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) and community meetings drew few parents to discuss issues on how to better serve students in these schools and how parents and the community can partner to encourage student achievement. Consequently, volunteer programs yielded little participation. In November 2011, 11 schools were named to be closed at the end of the 2011–2012 school year because of low enrollment. Two of these schools were from the original 16 learning centers. As a result of these closures, School X, which was a part of the 16 learning centers, received an additional 200 students from one of the learning center closings for the 2012–2013 school year.

In this study, I focused on impoverished schools with high minority populations. The demographic information provided gives insight into the appropriateness of this study to School X (a pseudonym). In the previous school year, before the addition of 200 students, there was a staff of 26 teachers, five teaching assistants, one principal, and an academic coordinator. For the 2012–2013 year, the school's teaching staff required 40 teachers and nine teaching assistants. Administrators include one principal, one assistant principal, and an administrative intern. The teaching staff was largely African American (24 teachers) with nine Caucasian and seven Hispanic teachers. Fine arts programs were limited to art and music only, and students attended physical education class every other day. Approximately 95% of the school was receiving free or reduced lunch. The school's primary population sources are two apartment complexes, and bus service is provided for approximately 250 students. There are several small homes within the area; however, many of the homes are unoccupied due to being condemned. The students that were

added due to school closing come from a neighborhood with a similar description. The only apartment complex that was in their area was populated with families who received governmental assistance. The complex was demolished 3 years ago thus depleting the population of the area. The school was predominantly African American (61.7%), with the Hispanic population being the next largest group (37.8%). There is a student representation for American Indian (.2%) and Hawaiian/Pacific (.03%). In the past 6 years, the school has gone from having no bilingual classes to having one to two bilingual classes in each grade. At one time the school had a population of less than 400 students. According to the school's report card at the beginning of 2011–2012, the school serviced 429 students from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. As a result of the school closings and the influx of students, the population of students grew to 640.

There were a variety of reasons why there had been a population decrease. Restructuring of school lines during the 2006–2007 school year sent many students to neighboring schools. Also during this school year, sixth grade students were relocated to middle schools throughout the district, lessening the population by approximately 60–70 students per school. The school is surrounded by many unoccupied homes as well as homes occupied by elderly lifelong citizens of the area. Many families have moved into areas that are safer or provide different educational and enrichment opportunities. Transient families are another factor that impacts the schools attendance. Community involvement was rich with many civic leaders visiting the school. There are limited businesses in the community, mostly small stores or small restaurants. Finally, charter schools near the area have been an alternative for some families who seek alternatives to

public education. While the closing of schools was unfortunate for many areas, for School X it created a population boost and the ability to receive additional resources.

Schools in District X were rated on the state's accountability system. Schools were rated: Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, or Academically Unacceptable (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Exemplary ratings were earned when a minimum of 90% of the students pass all sections of the state's standardized tests (Texas Education Agency, 2010). In addition, performance by sub-groups (i.e. ethnicity, economic status, language, special education services) and attendance are also calculated into the state rating (Texas Education Agency, 2010). In 2005–2006, the school had active extracurricular programs and was rated "Exemplary" in the state for academic achievement. In the past 7years, School X struggled to maintain an "Acceptable" rating (60%–70% passing rate) although it did receive "Recognized" status (minimum 80% passing rate) in 2009–2010. According to the school report card for the school year ending 2010–2011, the school had an academic rating of "Acceptable" decreasing from their previous year rating of "Recognized." In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was instituted in an effort to close the achievement gap in schools by creating measures of accountability and providing flexibility and choice for students with regards to education (NCLB, 2001) A portion of the NCLB Act was the requirement of public schools to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP; NCLB, 2001). The AYP measurement required all public schools to use the state's academic assessments for mathematics and reading to show achievement, and there are 37 categories that must be met (NCLB, 2001). At least 95% of schools' sub-groups had to be included in the

assessment (NCLB, 2001). The school failed to meet AYP for 2011–2012. Concerns for improving their rating were reading scores for those who were identified as economically disadvantaged.

During the 2011–2012 school year, District X was faced with a new, more rigorous statewide standardized test. This test was implemented during the spring of 2012. Because this was its first year of implementation, the data did not have an effect on the school's state academic rating. However, for the 2012–2013 school year, student data from this test was used to rate the school's academic achievement. School X had maintained an "Academically Acceptable" rating with its current student population; however, the influx of 200 students presented new challenges that may need the assistance of supportive parents. For example, two communities previously separated with their own school cultures were forced to create a new culture. Also, the implementation of a new statewide assessment presented the challenge of meeting AYP and acceptable academic rating. An increase in class sizes affects intervention opportunities such as in-class small groups and the manpower needed to conduct afterschool tutoring and enrichment programs. Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010) described the parent/school relationship as a necessary component to student achievement, both socially and academically. This relationship is viewed as symbiotic, where both parents and the school can have a positive influence on students separately as well as collectively (Nokali et al, 2010). In order for this relationship to flourish, parents must be aware of the needs of the school, and the school must be aware of the abilities and resources of the parents. While a positive parent/teacher relationship may not have a

direct impact on student academic and social achievement, indirect impacts such as motivation and/or improved discipline can assist with the progress (Nokali et al., 2010).

Bower and Griffin (2011) stated that parental involvement in schools is viewed as a successful method of improving school climate and academic achievement. Parental involvement is also a contributor to improving social competence (Bower & Griffin, 2011). When parents are actively involved in schools, there is evidence of an increase in resources for schools as well as social capital (Bower & Griffin, 2011). With regards to schools that are high in poverty, lack of transportation and lack of child care limits parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Despite efforts to participate in informal methods of parental involvement (e.g., non-scheduled conferences), many schools fail to design alternative forms of parental involvement, specifically for parents living in poverty, so that they can take a more active role in the school (Bower & Griffin, 2011). School X represents a school faced with this challenge as it addressed changes in the school within the following year.

Rationale

Evidence of the Local Problem

Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz (2008) suggested that academic achievement and social emotional development have positive outcomes when parents actively participate in schools. Further, parental involvement assists in building positive relationships with teachers (Arnold et al, 2008). Previous research sees parental involvement as necessary for the success of low socio-economic students (SES; Arnold et al., 2008). School X was demonstrating a trend in low parental involvement. During the

2011–2012 school year, a fundraiser in School X had less than 30 participants. The same statistics were present for the 2012–2013 fundraiser as well. The 2011–2012 school year began with no officers in the PTA. The 2012–2013 year began in the same manner; however, an election was held in which five officers were named. By winter break, the only remaining officers were the president and treasurer. Although many staff members joined, parent membership remained less than 20. The PTA was on the verge of losing both its local and national recognition as an organization. While parents were present for some activities such as parent conferences or family fun nights, volunteer programs for school-wide events or classroom assistance was low. Recruitment efforts continued and a parent outreach liaison (POL) was assigned to work with parents and teachers. The POL works specifically to listen to the needs of both parents and teachers and create unique ways for those needs to be met where both parties benefit.

With a need to boost academic achievement, increase school budget, and show evidence of support for the school, research was appropriate for finding out what factors were affecting parental involvement. The POL plays a role in this process by keeping the lines of communication open between the school and parents and presenting this information to both sides as a mediator. With the proposed closing of more schools in District X for 2012–2013, the school board members suggested that the school would continue to combine with others. School X had already received approximately 200 students from one of these closings. The need for parental involvement programs was crucial for this migration to be successful for faculty, parents, and students being forced to assimilate into another school's culture. In addition, the unfamiliarity of the local

community (i.e., homes, businesses, etc.) was a change for not only the students but the parents.

Evidence of the Problem from the Literature

In schools that are impoverished, parental involvement is limited for a variety of reasons. Fabricant (2011) stated that parents, particularly single mothers, may have a hard time including parental involvement activities into their day. Research suggests that long work hours, multiple jobs, and limited transportation prevent parents from participating in school activities (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo & Pituch, 2010). Another factor is that school parent involvement programs do not necessarily cater to the needs of impoverished parents but are designed for parents that are more educated or have more money (Cooper, 2010). The need for parental involvement programs in impoverished schools based on research becomes clearer as the challenges of the population are identified.

Teacher attitudes and levels of education can also impact parental involvement. NCLB requires the implementation of improvement plans for parental involvement (NCLB, 2001). Peske and Haycock (2006) suggested that highly qualified teachers are not always placed in impoverished schools where they are needed most to implement these plans. In Wisconsin, a study of parent programs showed that low performing schools had twice the amount of novice teachers compared to high performing schools (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Highly educated teachers tend to have more resources to encourage parental involvement compared to new teachers and this factor can be important when encouraging parental involvement (Cooper, 2010). School X not only

took in students but some faculty members. These teachers had a variety of experiences, some only having experience in the closing school with smaller class sizes. Teacher experience now becomes an issue as the population of the school increased as well as the student class sizes.

In the larger context, this research addressed the concern about parental involvement in other impoverished schools. In District X, particularly in the schools that were a part of the 16 learning centers, lack of parental involvement impacted whether or not schools remain open. For schools outside of District X and in other states that are faced with a crisis regarding parental involvement, documented research of possible inhibitors and collaborative methods serves as a possible means to a remedy. With little to no research regarding parental involvement in schools that include early childhood programs, this study benefits not only early childhood schools but traditional elementary schools as well (Cooper, 2010).

Special Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this study, several terms are clarified so that they will be understood in the context they are written. This following list consists of words that will be used repeatedly throughout the study:

Early childhood education/Early learning programs: Early childhood/early learning programs refer to prekindergarten classes within District X. Students must be 4 years of age by the first day of September in order to be considered for enrollment. In addition, students enrolled in pre-kindergarten qualify for early learning opportunities in School X based on factors that identify them as at risk. These factors are low SES

children, non-English speakers, homeless children, foster children, and/or children of parents/guardians who are active duty in the Armed Forces or have been injured, killed, or are missing in action while serving (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA): President Lyndon B. Johnson implemented The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 as a means of combating the war on poverty (ESEA, 1965). The act was created to provide support for students with physical and mental disabilities, learning difficulties, learners of English, and students living in poverty (ESEA, 1965). A component of ESEA is the inclusion of programs that will increase parental involvement (ESEA, 1965).

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA): President Barack Obama implemented The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 as a means of creating reform to NCLB (ESSA, 2015). This bipartisan act was created to provide continued support for NCLB but modifies the level of accountability placed on statewide assessment (ESSA, 2015). Additionally, it places emphasis on the need for early childhood programs such as prekindergarten (ESSA, 2015). Like its predecessors, parental involvement specifications are included as a component of ESSA (ESSA, 2015).

Impoverished: Impoverished is used in reference to those who are living in poverty. Poverty is defined as a having an income lower than the governmental standard to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing (Jensen, 2009).The term, low SES, also refers to poverty stricken (Jensen, 2009). As of 2013, the poverty level in the United States ranged from $11,490 for one person to $44,570 for a family of eight (Federal Register, 2013). For each additional family member $4,020–$4,620 is added (Federal

Register 2013). These figures are dependent on the geographical state in which one lives (Federal Register, 2013).

Inhibitors: Inhibitors are factors that limit the parents' ability to participate in parental involvement activities within the school. Some factors to consider are transportation, childcare, limited education, limited finances, and intimidation (Fabricant, 2011).

Minority populations: Minority populations are identified as American Indians, Alaska Natives, Hispanic or Latinos, Black or African Americans, Asian, Hawaiian, or other Islanders from the Pacific (U.S Census Bureau, 2010). As of July 2010, children living in poverty for each of these groups were reported as follows: African Americans 34%, Native Americans and Alaskans 33%, Hispanics and Latinos 27%, Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders 26%, and Asians 11% (National Center of Education Statistics, 2010).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): President George W. Bush implemented NCLB of 2001 as a means of providing education with accountability(NCLB, 2001). The act was created to ensure the proper assessment of student achievement, report the AYP of schools, and provide specific targets for assistance for disadvantaged students (NCLB, 2001). The NCLB act required accountability for parental involvement programs as well (NCLB, 2001).

Parent: A parent is defined as any person who is considered the primary caregiver, caretaker, or guardian of an enrolled student at School X by family relationship or legal documentation. Since the 1990s, the American family structure has changed, particularly for those living in poverty (Baker & Mutchler, 2010). A parent, therefore,

can be, but is not limited to a birth mother or father, grandparent, extended adult family member (e.g., aunt or uncle), or guardian who has gone through legal channels to obtain parental rights (Baler & Mutchler, 2010).

Parental involvement: Parental involvement commonly refers to efforts that the parents make to participate in school initiated functions (Bower & Griffin, 2011). These activities include, but are not limited to, volunteer programs, PTA, school-wide math and reading nights, field trips, field day, and/or parent conference nights.

Significance

While previous research studies have discussed the importance of parental involvement in connection with student achievement, many do not suggest specific strategies that are beneficial to predominantly impoverished school populations such as School X. Low income children are less likely to enter college after graduation or complete college if they do enter (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Burney and Beilke (2008) stated the need for addressing the academic and social needs of students as young as kindergarten, particularly those living in poverty. Burney and Beilke suggest the use of data to identify students who are talented and gifted, the creation of programs with accelerated instruction, and professional development for schools to better understand families living in poverty. At the time of the study, approximately 5% of the population at School X was identified as talented and gifted and another 4% received special education services.

Parents play a pivotal role in the overall success of students; however, poverty impacts the ability to provide resources within the home that can continuously nurture the

learning (Burney & Beilke, 2008). In 2008, the Unites States Census Bureau reported that 16,122 schools were high in poverty (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Continued research opportunities regarding parental involvement in impoverished schools are needed as a means of continued problem solving for a potential epidemic that impacts not only School X but other schools with impoverished populations.

Previous research on the subject of parental involvement and poverty yields information that calls for additional research with different variables. Of value with this study was the consideration of the early childhood population. Of the 640 students enrolled in School X, 100 students were in enrolled in pre-kindergarten classes. This was the second highest grade level enrollment under the 117 enrolled in kindergarten. These numbers reflected that the early childhood population plays a significant role in the student population. Using the entire school and including the early childhood population opens the door for faculty and staff to work together to redefine and create parental involvement programs that meet the needs of all grade levels in comparison to working in isolation. Previous research proves that parental involvement increases student achievement; creates environments for social growth; allows for opportunities to obtain additional resources for teaching and learning; and builds camaraderie between students, parents, schools, and communities (Brandt, 1989). For each of these stakeholders, the benefits of continued research at School X and the implementation of parental involvement programs that address the challenges of impoverished populations could bring about a rebuilding of the community in the hopes that the remaining schools in the area are not subject to closure.

While School X benefitted from its neighboring schools closure with an increased staff and additional resources, school closures for communities in poverty put revitalization of the community in jeopardy. For the 2012–2013 academic year, School X took in one of three schools that were closed at the end of the previous year. A fourth school closed at the end of the 2013–2014 school year. This means four schools that were once integral parts of the community no longer exist and the potential for revitalizing the community diminishes as businesses, employees of the schools, and families seek areas that are thriving. This study will provide insight into factors that may or may not be affecting parental involvement in schools with predominantly impoverished populations and serve as a foundation for collaboration opportunities between school and community.

Research Question

Past research suggests that there are many benefits for schools with high levels of parental involvement. These benefits include outcomes for parents, students, and teachers. For parents, self-confidence in parenting, more interaction with children, and having input in the policies and procedures of the school are among the benefits (Brandt, 1989). For students, an increase in respect for adults, achievement in skills, and increased learning can be seen (Brandt, 1989).For teachers, respect for cultures, respect for parents, and more interaction with parents become visible (Brandt, 1989).

In order to gain an understanding of possible causes for the decline of parental involvement in School X, there needs to be an understanding of how, not only, educators in the school define parental involvement, but of the issues that parents identify as

adversely affecting this involvement. The purpose of this examination of parental

involvement was to identify and include factors, as seen through the views of the parent,

which may reduce or impede parental involvement, specifically in schools with high rates

of poverty. In alignment with the research problem and purpose, I used the following

research question: What factors inhibit parental involvement in impoverished schools?

Parental involvement, for this study, referred to any opportunities that the school provides

for parents to volunteer; take on leadership roles; or interact with students, faculty, and

staff. I used one broad, open-ended research question in order to focus the study and at

the same time remain open to what emerged from the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

With the research that addresses both the parents and teachers, I used the following

subquestion for teachers: How do the views of educators in impoverished schools impact

parental involvement?

Review of Literature

Jensen (2009) stated that poverty can have multiple meanings. Jensen wrote that

persons who have funds lower than what is appropriate for food, shelter, clothing, and

other necessary items are considered poor; however, poverty can come in many forms.

Situational poverty is usually temporary and occurs as the result of a crisis (Jensen,

2009). Generational poverty occurs when at least two generations of a family have lived

in poverty (Jensen, 2009). Absolute poverty is when a person's priority is day-to-day

survival because basic needs are scarce in their environment (Jensen, 2009). Relative

poverty is when a family's income does not meet the average cost of living in their

society (Jensen, 2009). Urban poverty occurs in populations of at least 50,000 people and

those in poverty depend on the services of the city for survival (Jensen, 2009). Rural

poverty occurs in populations with less than 50,000 people and there is limited access to

city services (Jensen, 2009). Additionally, poverty is also measured by the family self

sufficiency standard (Aber, Morris, & Raver, 2012). This measure considers how well a

family could thrive without the assistance from the government (Aber et al., 2012). With

that, the terms deep poverty and low income are defined. Deep poverty describes

families whose income is lower than 50% of the current poverty line and low income

families have an income lower than 200% of the current poverty line (Aber et al., 2012).

For the purpose of identifying common themes related to the subject, I reviewed

current literature. This review revealed a gap in current literature regarding effective

parental involvement interventions and poverty-stricken public elementary schools that

includes the pre-kindergarten population in a public school. I studied specific grade levels

but few, if any, studies show research on schools that include all grade levels within one

particular type of school (i.e., high school, middle school, or elementary school). For

example, a study regarding reading and mathematics scores conducted on students in a

New Jersey school district showed significant differences in learning between

impoverished and wealthy students; however, this study was conducted only on third

grade students and not the school as a whole (Tienken, 2012).This gap in the literature

revealed the need for continued research on the subject that encompassed an entire

school. The literature review had common themes that included a historical perspective

of parental involvement in relation to poverty; parental involvement and academic

achievement; teacher perceptions of parental involvement; and methods for redefining parental involvement for impoverished populations.

I conducted an exhaustive literature review in order to find research that provided information on the topic of parental involvement in poverty stricken schools. For this study, I used various educational research databases. Among those used were the following: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), SAGE, ProQuest, and Education Research Complete. In addition, I also used one human services database (SocINDEX) for its relationship to studies about the effects of poverty. Keys words used for the search included *poverty, early childhood, education, parental involvement,* and *teachers*. I chose articles that were within the past 5 years at the time of this writing with the exception of one interview (Brandt, 1989). I used this article due to the expertise of the person being interviewed regarding the subject of parental involvement. Articles used were peer reviewed and/or have evidence of references to other studies. The other materials for the literature review included books used for providing emphasis of the topics being discussed.

Theoretical Basis

The theoretical basis for this research was the constructivist approach. In the constructivist approach, the researcher is more concerned with the values, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of the participants than with obtaining facts (Creswell, 2012). The researcher has values and questions of their own but is open to what is learned from the participants. The drawn conclusions are open for continued research (Creswell, 2012). For example, Knight (2008) used the constructivist theory while researching the effects

of poverty on families in the Philippines. I used the constructivist theory because the theory acknowledges many realities and possibilities with regards to the participants involved in the research. The theory also calls for the researcher to become immersed in the world of the participants to have a better understanding and appreciation for what they offer (Tuason, 2008). As a teacher, I am aware of the views of the educator. Dialogue with parents is often limited to academic conversation and/or observation. Using the constructivist theory put me in the position of observing what parents see and listening to their views. The theory also forced me to look subjectively versus objectively at how educators encourage parental involvement in impoverished schools.

The social constructivist theory was instrumental in identifying social, socio-economic, and cultural factors that may be impacting parental involvement (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010); however, the advocacy/liberatory framework was used to empower parents to work with schools so that their needs are met regarding school satisfaction (Lodico et al, 2010). The goal of this framework is to motivate the participants into action that will have a positive impact on their lives (Lodico et al, 2010). The results of the research are shared with the participants in hopes of stimulating change. Another feature of this approach is its interest in empowering groups that may feel they are being treated unfairly and encouraging them to become proactive in reformation (Lodico et al., 2010). Because impoverished parents may not feel they have a voice, the findings from my research can stimulate empowerment and encourage impoverished families to take an active role in schools.

History of Poverty and Parental Involvement

The issue of poverty in connection to parental involvement in education is not new. During the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson made the early education of children living in poverty a focus (Herman-Smith, 2013). Another concern for President Johnson was the lack of resources for impoverished parents that would allow them to effectively parent their children (Herman-Smith, 2013). As a result, federal lawmakers implemented Head Start programs for preschool children from economically disadvantaged homes (Herman-Smith, 2013). Head Start, much like free kindergarten programs and nursery schools during that time, focused on providing educational opportunities for young children prior to their entrance in mandatory schooling (Herman-Smith, 2013). In addition, Head Start made improving parenting through outreach programs a focus as well (Herman-Smith, 2013). The goal for this program was to develop school readiness skills and make level employment opportunities as well as increase social status (Herman-Smith, 2013).

In conjunction with the 1965 war on poverty originated by President Lyndon Johnson, the ESEA was created (ESEA, 1965). This act specified the need for parental involvement in schools and expectations regarding implementation of parental involvement programs (ESEA, 1965). Targeted schools were schools with high levels of poverty and were referred to as Title I schools (ESEA, 1965). Title I schools receive governmental money to support additional programs to close achievement gaps (ESEA, 1965). President Bush's NCLB act, while emphasizing the need for teacher accountability through statewide testing, included provisions for parental involvement also (NCLB, 2001). NCLB targeted Title I schools and their parental involvement

programs by a providing a checklist of requirements (NCLB, 2001). President Barak Obama continued the need for continuous reform in education programs by creating the ESSA that maintains the need for parental involvement in schools but requires annual evaluations of parental involvement programs (ESSA, 2015). While government intervention has occurred in an effort to provide schools with a guide for parental involvement in schools, there are concerns regarding the ambiguous definition of parental involvement and whether appropriate goals are set for schools that are impoverished (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, & McClowry, 2013).

Family income has a correlation to child development and can impact physical, biological, academic, and social outcomes (Aber et al., 2012). Income can affect student attendance; families that have higher incomes have dependable transportation, are in better health, and have family members that can participate in activities in the school, while parents with lower incomes are often reluctant about participating in school functions (Jensen, 2009). In some cases, parents raised in poverty currently live in poverty and did not develop a positive attitude towards school (Jensen, 2009). As a result, their children learn the same negative attitudes about school to avoid hurt and alienation (Jensen, 2009).

The institution of NCLB called for accountability in schools and attention to the quality of education being provided for all students which included preset outcomes that should occur in schools (Gosnell-Lamb, O'Reilly, & Matt, 2013). Of interest was the need for strengthening parental involvement in schools (NCLB, 2001). This mandate was

specific for schools, such as School X, that struggle to meet AYP (Kochanek, Wraight, Wan, Nylen, & Rodriguez, 2011).

The effects of poverty on parental involvement can be seen in the home. Children who live in poverty often do not have strong adult support systems compared to those who live in more affluent families (Jensen, 2009). Impoverished children depend more on their peers in their adolescent years (Jensen, 2009). Poverty is measured in the United States and, as previously stated, can be defined as extreme or deep (Shaefer & Edin, 2013). The application of these terms depends on things such as household size; income; gender of family members; and the age of family members (Shaefer & Edin, 2013). Because funds are limited, children in poverty are seldom able to attend enrichment activities, have few books at home for reading, and spend more time watching television (Jensen, 2009).   There is further evidence that children in poverty face some of the nation's largest social problems including health issues and gaps in academic success (Reardon, 2013). Because children in poverty often live in uncertainty, they develop adverse adaptive responses to situations and developing relationships with parents, teachers, and other caregivers can be stressful (Jensen, 2009). Jensen's (2009) research suggested that the limitations children experience due to poverty impact not only their home life but their ability to be properly prepared for entering a school environment and/or participating in activities that could encourage academic achievement and social development.

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Poverty has four primary risk factors that include emotional and social challenges; acute and chronic stressors; cognitive lags; and health and safety issues (Jensen, 2009). These risk factors make day-to-day living difficult and lead to many other issues for those living in poverty. One of these issues is the ability to parent (Jensen, 2009). Parenting is a crucial factor in children's development (Kiernan & Mensah, 2011). Parents living in poverty often work multiple jobs and have limited or no time for school visits or volunteer opportunities. Parents in poverty must devote more time to making sure they are able to meet their children's basic needs (i.e., food, clothing, and shelter; Fabricant, 2011). Because of this, children living in poverty are identified as having deficiencies in language and emotional responsiveness by the age of 3 (Jensen, 2009).

Previous research yields limited evidence that shows ineffective teachers or irresponsible parents are the cause of, what is considered by some, a failing education system in the United States (Krashen, 2011). There is much evidence that indicates that students who attend schools with ample monetary funding can score as high and even outscore students internationally (Krashen, 2011). The Programme for International Student Assessment is used to rank the educational systems of countries; conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, this analysis of a country's educational success considers the SES of the country (Rutkowski & Rutkowski, 2013). What is believed is that the gaps found in many of the educational systems compared to others is connected to a country's SES, more specifically, levels of poverty (Rutkowski & Rutkowski, 2013). When students that are impoverished are able to have access to the same resources and opportunities as those of the middle class and/or upper

class, the achievement gap can be closed (Krashen, 2011). The elimination of poverty

opens the door for all children to have the same advantages.

Poverty is not to be used as an excuse for low student achievement. However, it is

a dynamic that impacts the ability to achieve and close the learning gap with students

from higher socio-economic groups. Tienken (2012) stated that a study of students in

Baltimore showed that impoverished students do learn at the same rate as those in a

higher SES, but a gap still exists because of poverty. While students in higher socio-

economic categories are able to participate in enrichment activities during the summer,

students who are impoverished cannot afford these opportunities. As a result, the summer

causes a decrease in learning by 3 months for students who live in poverty and increase in

learning for those who do not. This places students in poverty at a disadvantage at the

beginning of the school year because a gap exists in what is known. The results of the

study showed that all students gained at least 1year of learning by the end of the school

year but were not necessarily at the same place due to the effects of poverty (Tienken,

2012).

Children show positive results due to high SES, especially in the area of academic

achievement (Jensen, 2009). For the student in poverty, the results are opposite. This is

pointed out in a study by Tienken (2012). In a Michigan state-mandated test of language

arts and mathematics, economically disadvantaged students scored 12% to 36% lower

than non-disadvantaged students (Tienken, 2012). Likewise, a study of third and fifth

grade students in New Jersey found the same trends in percentages scores between their

impoverished students and those not living in poverty (Tienken, 2012). The same pattern is seen in SAT scores and international scores (Tienken, 2012).

A review of current literature shows that parental involvement is crucial to the academic success of students in kindergarten through high school; however, there are few studies that are conducted on an entire school population that includes a preschool population. The purpose for creating parental involvement partnerships in early childhood years is because of the expected positive outcomes that should occur in later years as result of the involvement (Epstein, 1995). In fact, Title I schools, that is, schools with high levels of impoverishment, are required to create parental involvement programs to keep their funding (Epstein, 1995). Further, there are concerns on how poverty not only impacts student achievement but also impacts the ability of parents to become active participants in schools (Cooper, 2010). Early detection of disparities in the academic ability of impoverished and other children is possible, and parental involvement in education is considered key to closing the gap (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo & Pituch, 2010).

Parent and Teacher Perceptions

There are factors that influence parental involvement in poverty stricken schools. Often, there is a lack of communication between parents and teachers of how parental involvement should look (Young, Austin, & Rowe, 2013). In addition, some parents living in poverty do not see education as crucial to their everyday lives and participating in schools is not necessary (Loughrey & Woods, 2010). It is further suggested that social class, educational level, marital status and other factors influence the amount of participation that parents contribute to their child's school (Loughrey & Woods, 2010).

This evidence demonstrates that lack of interest is not the sole reason for low

participation but social factors and negative perceptions of schools plays a part.

Even though the United States public school system as well many international

school systems do not charge tuition, there are often monetary costs that are challenging

for parents living in poverty (Loughrey & Woods, 2010). The cost of supplies, school

uniforms, activities within the school as well as school field trips are difficult. The

inability to afford the extra items needed for school can lead to feelings of stigma,

affecting parents' desire to become more active in their child's school (Loughrey &

Woods, 2010). Friedman, Bobrowski, and Geraci (2006) illustrated the need for

encouraging parents' desire by identifying influential factors. Two important factors for

maintaining parental involvement in schools are parent satisfaction and teacher

experience (Friedman, Bobrowski, & Geraci, 2006). School success is often determined

by the satisfaction that parents have regarding the school and their willingness to

continue their child's education at that school (Friedman, Bobrowski, & Geraci, 2006).

Parent satisfaction includes satisfaction with staff quality; school atmosphere; academic

programs; social settings (i.e., extracurriucular activities); and involvement opportunities

for parents. Perceptions of parent empowerment (i.e., fundraising, PTA, volunteering,

parent centers) in the school environment also play a role in parent satisfaction

(Friedman, Bobrowski, & Geraci, 2006).

The positive impact on parental satisfaction is evident in research. "Sparking the

Imagination," a study conducted on three high poverty schools with low parental

involvement, aimed at creating activities for parents and children that were innovative;

had adequate follow-up activities; and considered the needs of the impoverished parent (Loughrey & Woods, 2010). In addition, the program aimed to assist parents by creating an environment within the school where parents felt comfortable and invited (Loughrey & Woods, 2010). The results of the program showed an increase in parent involvement as well as a change of attitude in how parents perceived schools (Loughrey & Woods, 2010).

Some researchers believe that teacher effectiveness is determined by experience and that this experience can influence how parents become involved in schools. Rice (2013), for example, wrote that inexperienced teachers (e.g., first year teachers) often teach poor and/or minority students. At the same time, Rice stated that retention of qualified teachers is difficult because of the level stress that can come with teaching schools with large, minority populations coupled with poverty. But, research suggests if schools include effective parental involvement programs teacher retention will increase (Hughes, 2012). This is important in that schools with high levels of poverty and minority populations need highly qualified teachers with positive attitudes because of the experience they possess in comparison to first year teachers (Becker & Epstein, 1981). Encouraging parent involvement is a significant aspect of teacher experience, which is not limited to the number of years a teacher has taught but includes how teachers encourage parental involvement and maintain positive relationships with parents. Therefore, teacher experience is influential in continuously promoting parental involvement, particularly in impoverished schools. More importantly, teacher involvement is instrumental in creating parental involvement.

Indeed, Cooper (2010) noted that highly-educated teachers demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy and tend to have more resources at their disposal that can be used to boost parental involvement. The connection of highly educated teachers working with low income families could have a direct or indirect positive influence on early achievement because parents are more likely to be involved with schools because of the teacher's influence (Cooper, 2010). The challenges, however, of working in impoverished schools affect teacher retention. Darby et al (2011) stated that the first 3 years of teaching are viewed as the most advantageous in regards to teacher retention. One in five teachers leaves the field of education during this time, particularly those who work in impoverished schools (Darby et al., 2011). Stress, work overload, testing, lack of support, student misbehavior, and the inability to establish positive relationships with coworkers as well as parents are among the reasons for leaving (Darby et al., 2011). First year teachers felt appreciated and were more likely to remain in the profession when parental support was provided in contrast to teachers who had low parental support (Darby et al., 2011). What is concluded is adequate teacher support, particularly for inexperienced teachers, is needed in order to retain teachers and impact parent involvement programs (Darby et al., 2011).

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs about parental involvement are also factors to consider. To help parents become more involved, several researchers suggested that teachers are responsible for establishing an engaging environment. Pryor (2009) stated through an investigation of teacher and parental involvement that teachers' intentions did not always match end results. The theory to reasoned action (TRA) approach was used.

Created by Fishbein and Azjein (1975), this method identifies the intent of an individual in regards to a specific situation. This method also determines the attitude of the participants (Byrd-Blake et al., 2012). Fishbein and Azjein's study showed that there were intentions by teachers to provide updates on students; homework explanations; nights for teaching reading and math strategies; home activity calendars; and other parental support activities; however, teachers did not always follow through (Pryor, 2009).

In a current study using TRA, however, the findings showed that the attitudes of teachers in an urban poverty stricken school were that parents did not support their children's education; showed little support for their children at home regarding education; and made little effort to attend conferences and other school activities (Byrd-Blake et al., 2012). The study specified that teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience and/or teachers in elementary schools were more likely to have a negative attitude towards parental involvement (Byrd-Blake et al., 2012). Moore et al (2011) stated that continuous professional development for teachers and leaders is necessary in order to effectively work in schools with the challenges of poverty. Research supports the need for effective professional development to contribute to positive change in school practices and instruction (Moore et al., 2011). Both teachers and principals are in need of continuous professional development to assist with developing a school culture that better assists the needs of the impoverished student and parent (Moore et al., 2011).

Again, teacher experience is influential in terms of encouraging parental involvement; however, teacher attitudes are important also. Pryor's (2009) research showed that teachers have good intentions but do not always follow through. In addition,

teachers view parent participation negatively when parents do not follow through with attending conferences or attending school events (Pryor, 2009). A possible method to improve parental involvement is continuous professional development for teachers, particularly those who work with students living in poverty. Perhaps, the research that was conducted on School X will encourage teachers to consider regular professional development opportunities in order to positively impact parent participation.

Redefining Parental Involvement

Traditional definitions of parental involvement have included parents participating in activities designed by the school that occur at the school. There are various factors that hinder impoverished parents from attending these events. What is becoming necessary for schools with high poverty levels is a definition of parental involvement that considers the population that is served. Rutherford, Hillmer, and Parker (2011) noted that there should be high expectations for parents and students in poverty and building a culture of what is needed for that school is necessary. Alameda-Lawson, Lawson, and Lawson (2010) stated that a barrier that prohibits this from happening; however, is the teacher opinion that parents are not dedicated to their children and their education. A common trend in education is blaming parents and students, particularly those living in poverty, when schools do not meet academic achievement goals, gain additional resources for the school, or have an overall negative reputation compared to other schools (Rutherford et al., 2011). Research has proven that these negative attitudes can create a cultural divide if they are not addressed (Lawson-Alameda et al., 2010). With that, the Rutherford study encouraged consideration of the culture of the school as a

method of creating new programs that include high expectations and promote parental involvement (Rutherford et al., 2011).

In an interview with parental involvement expert Dr. Epstein, five methods to promote parental involvement were outlined and their expected outcomes (Brandt, 1989). The methods described five types of involvements that include different supplies; methods; and different outcomes (Brandt, 1989). One of the suggestions was acknowledging that parental involvement does not necessarily have to occur within the schools but can happen with parents working from home (Brandt, 1989). This suggestion falls in line with Fabricant (2011), who stated that many reasons why parents living in poverty do not always become involved in schools is lack of time; money; and transportation. Fabricant added that demanding that parents can only be involved within the school walls is inequitable, and schools must find other ways to include parents and utilize their capabilities (Fabricant, 2011). In addition, when students and parents have inequitable resources and opportunities, the achievement gap widens. With the connection between family income and student achievement, schools need equitable resources to close the achievement gap, particularly for students of color who are more often found to be low income (Hawley, 2007). Thus, Brandt's (1989) interview with Epstein confirms the need to redefine parental involvement to meet the needs of the population of individual schools. Epstein (1995) provides methods that can be used to begin this process; however, the idea of a one-size-fits-all approach to parental involvement may no longer be acceptable, particularly for School X

Regarding this, Parker, Grenville, and Flessa (2011) supported redefining parental involvement in their case study of Canadian schools and poverty. Recognizing the inequality of current parental involvement programs, understanding the needs of the parents through dialogue was a primary source of information for their research (Parker et al., 2011). Each community has its own set of circumstances, and schools should work to accommodate those circumstances (Parker et al., 2011). Schools with predominantly impoverished populations should make considerations and accommodations so that they cater to not only the needs of the teachers and students but consider the parents (Jensen, 2009). In addition, parental involvement programs should meet the demands of the parents in the school population; understand their daily lives; consider their families background and culture; and understand the need for diversity (Epstein, 1995). Schools should create partnerships by building a sense of community and not relying solely on traditional methods for involvement (Parker et al., 2011). Instead of parents living in poverty being seen as people in need of resources, they should be seen as possible suppliers of new resources (Parker et al., 2011). There should also not be a one-size-fits-all approach to parents in poverty (Parker et al., 2011). Finally, consistent communication with parents; understanding the community and its resources; learning the native language of the community; involving parents in the curriculum and enrichment activities; and identifying the needs of families are some suggestions for making these accommodations (Hawley & Nieto, 2010).

In connection to the local problem, the literature provides evidence of the need for continued research regarding parental involvement, specifically in impoverished schools

and early childhood programs (Cooper, 2010). Within the past year, District X implemented full day pre-kindergarten programs in every elementary school in the district. With the addition of 200 more students due to school closings at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, School X in District X opened an additional pre-kindergarten class and now has six kindergarten classes. Parental involvement would be beneficial as the school expands its early childhood program; however, research would assist in developing programs for the school that cater to the needs of the existing parents as well as a new population of parents that will be a part of the school. The need for empowering parents to play a more active role in their child's school is crucial to closing the achievement gap (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1992) wrote that parents who feel that their involvement will positively impact their child's future are more likely to become involved. Basically, self-efficacy determines how a parent may or may not participate in their child's school (Hoover-Dempsey et al , 1992). Also, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teachers plays a role in parents' willingness to participate in schools (Cooper, 2010). Whether or not parents are satisfied with School X is unknown, but literature supports satisfaction as a factor.

Conclusion

Current literature shows that parental involvement in impoverished schools, while not a new topic, is an ongoing topic. The lack of parental involvement in School X demonstrates that the current literature is not enough and that more literature is needed to be able to reach different audiences. What is necessary for this research in regards to School X is identifying the inhibitors, whether it is lack of education, funds, or teacher

effectiveness that are preventing parent involvement. The literature also shows that there are many factors that can impact parental involvement, particularly in impoverished schools. School X could be addressing one factor or multiple factors. This literature review reveals a sampling of studies, and, for School X, shows that the concern regarding parental involvement is not unique but is common. The literature provides not only a foundation for understanding but a sense of direction regarding what factors are commonly found as inhibitors in impoverished schools.

Implications

Previous research has yielded a variety of suggestions for poverty stricken schools with low parental involvement. Improving communication between teachers and parents and proper training of school staff and faculty are recommended (Arnold et al., 2008). Understanding whether or not parents are satisfied with their child's school provides an opportunity to create focus groups with parents that can lead to more collaboration and involvement (Friedman et al., 2006). Finally, understanding how social status impacts what people need, decision making, and levels of motivation can play a role in knowing how to better connect with parents and students living in poverty (Tuason, 2008). While these implications were derived from research in a variety of schools, the findings did not include the early childhood population. Implications from this research includes what was found in the early childhood population.

Previous research shows there is a willingness from parents living in poverty to know how to better partner with schools (Brandt, 1989). While the information in this study provides insight into the immediate issue of parental involvement in School X, it

also opens the door for continued studies within the school. These studies include but are not limited to examinations of how School X collaborates with parents to create new parental involvement programs that acknowledge the characteristics of impoverished communities; studies of the decline or increase of parental involvement in School X after the school closing merger; and/or a program evaluation of parental involvement recruitment efforts. What is believed is that the first inquiry will lead to continued studies in the school that will create remedies for the future.

Summary

The decline in parental involvement in School X was investigated in this study. Of importance in this research was to discover what factors have caused this decline. The social constructivist theory was used in previous research with regards to the subject of poverty and parents. What was found through the use of literature is that parental involvement and poverty is a persistent issue in schools. Common themes are the impact of parental involvement on academic achievement; understanding how teachers and parents perceive the involvement; and the need for redefining parental involvement. While previous research has yielded a variety of implications to assist with a remedy, what is needed is more research that includes the early childhood populations connected with the transitional grade levels within one school.

For the purpose of this study, an appropriate research design method will be presented in Section 2 as a means of investigating this topic. Discussed along with the identification of this design are the methods of data collection; data analysis; and ethical

considerations. Finally, in Section 2, I will state the limitations that could have occurred during the research process.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This section provides an explanation of how the study was implemented. Content for this section includes the research and design approach; participant selection process; and observations, questionnaires, and interviews as data collection methods. Data analyses describes the common themes found in the data collection methods. In order to support the themes, interview transcripts are included as evidence of data. Finally, the conclusion is a synopsis of the methodology and evidence of quality for the study.

Research and Design Approach

For the purpose of this study, I used a qualitative research approach with a case study design. Case studies are common when investigating a specific person, group, activity, and/or event (Merriam, 2009). Case studies are bounded because the objects of the study have defining characteristics (Merriam, 2009). In this case, the parents of School X were the objects of the study because of two characteristics. First, there was a high level of poverty in the school. Second, low parental involvement in the school was an issue. In this study, I sought to discover if poverty affects the ability of the parents to be active participants in the school. Because there was an investigation regarding a specific case (parents living in poverty) with an issue (lack of parental involvement in School X), an instrumental case study was the appropriate design. This design allowed for the understanding of the issue and reconsidered possible factors that inhibited the involvement (Merriam, 2009).

While an ethnographic study could have been an effective design for research because of its focus on a particular group of people, its focus is more on understanding a cultural group and how society impacts the group (Lodico et al., 2010). Phenomenology focuses more on the past and day-to-day experiences of the objects of study (Lodico et al., 2010). Grounded theory was not appropriate for this study because the grounded theory design uses theory as the basis for research and has specific procedures for data collection and analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). For example, grounded theory uses a theoretical sampling as its first step (Merriam, 2009). This study of School X called for a typical sampling. Grounded theory also uses the constant comparative method for data analysis initially (Merriam, 2009). This method of data analysis was not necessary for the study of School X because data collection would not be segmented. In addition, grounded theory does not emphasize rich descriptions as a form of data collection and is often used to study a topic over time (Merriam, 2009). For this study of School X, data collected came directly from the participants' descriptions to provide a clear picture of their perspective.

I also considered mixed methods approaches and practical action research. A mixed-methods approach could have been beneficial in collecting quantitative data to be compared to the qualitative data. While this could provide a comprehensive grasp of the topic, one form of the data collection could be overemphasized (Lodico et al., 2010). For this study and for the purpose of implementing the advocacy/liberatory framework, qualitative data was where the emphasis lied to provide a voice to the participants and increase their desire to become active within School X. Researchers use practical action

research to identify and address issues at a local level and make minute changes (Lodico

et al., 2010). While the purpose of practical action research is for solving small problems

within a school, the liberation of the participants is not necessarily the goal with this

method. However, the results can show the need for continued research to completely

eliminate the issue (Lodico et al., 2010).

Participants

The participants for this design were a purposeful sampling of both parents and

teachers. The specific sampling strategy used was a typical sampling. Typical sampling

provided data regarding participants in a location that may be unfamiliar to others

(Creswell, 2012). This sampling strategy was also used in order to represent a sample of

both parents and teachers who are a common or "normal" representation of School X

(Creswell, 2012). While defining what is "normal" for School X varies depending on

perspective, the demographics of the school represent a large population of parents and

students living in poverty and teachers with at least 5 years of service. Hancock and

Algozzine (2006) suggested that participants for case studies should be individuals whose

experiences with the issue could provide details that would be insightful. Therefore, a

typical sampling strategy represented the most common populations within the school

and allowed them to provide personal details of their experiences with regards to the

issue of parental involvement.

In qualitative research, sampling sizes should remain small so that an in-depth

representation is provided (Creswell, 2012). Larger sample sizes can make data analysis

unpredictable and difficult to interpret (Creswell, 2012). Because of this, I invited nine

teachers and nine parents to participate in this study. The nine teachers represented one

teacher for each grade level in the school (pre-kindergarten through fifth grade) including

two bilingual teachers (one teacher representing prekindergarten–second grade and one

teacher representing third–fifth grade). The nine parents represented one parent for each

grade level (prekindergarten through fifth grade) including two non-English speakers so

that the bilingual population was included in the research as well.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is in place for the protection of the

participants that chose to be a part of the study (Creswell, 2012). Upon approval from the

Walden University IRB (approval number 02-06-14-0195051), I notified District X of the

research that would be conducted at School X. Parents and teachers received invitations

to participate in the study through written notification. I randomly selected participants

from these notifications. To establish a researcher/participant relationship, I contacted

participants by phone to arrange times that were convenient for their participation in the

study. During these conversations via phone, I answered participants' questions regarding

the study to ensure trust.

Participant selections represented individuals that were willing to participate in

the study. Because District X has a clear policy that school resources (i.e., students, data

information from school records, teachers, etc.) cannot be used for recruitment of

participants in research studies, I conducted all recruitment. Teacher participant

recruitment was through hand-delivered invitation. Of 25 invitations provided, 23

teachers responded with a willingness to participate. Parent participants were recruited at

school assemblies/events; PTA meetings; before and after school; and at random

opportunities at the school (i.e.,volunteers, field trips, etc.). Over 200 invitations were made available; however, 15 parents responded to participate. One grade level, third grade, had no respondents through the aforementioned methods. A participant for this grade was recruited through community contact.

The IRB also works to ensure that measures are taken prior to the study to protect participants from harm (Lodico et al., 2010). Because of this, I used the following ethical considerations. Prior to any data collection, all participants signed an informed consent document that described in detail the nature of the study and their willingness to participate . The informed consent document also provided written documentation of the confidentiality of the study and that participants may withdraw at any time. Because the study included teachers who worked in School X and parents who live in poverty, protection from harm was also an ethical consideration. I reassured participants that their participation would not yield negative consequences. Finally, confidentiality was an ethical consideration because of the dynamics of the school and the nature of the data collection. I informed participants that all data collected would remain private and used only for the purpose of the research (Lodico et al., 2010). Collected data will be stored for 5 years and then destroyed. Faculty and staff members remained anonymous with no identifying factors (i.e., name, grade level, years of service, etc.). To protect the identity of the participants, I assigned parent participants numbers identifiable only to me (Creswell, 2012). Parents were numbered chronologically by the order of their interview. Teacher participants were numbered chronologically by grade level.

Researcher Notes

I have served as the lead prekindergarten teacher in School X for 9 years. Within

the past year (at the time of the study), I had worked specifically as the POL, serving as a

mediator between the school (faculty and staff) and PTA. These roles have made it

possible for me to observe the current methods for parental involvement within the

school as well observe the outcomes of the approaches. At the same time, I have been

open to parental concerns about these opportunities. Despite my direct involvement with

both faculty/staff and parents, remaining impartial was a necessity in order to serve in the

POL capacity. Therefore, my role for this study was to remain objective and open to the

themes that came from the interview process and observations made regarding parental

involvement opportunities in School X. One recommendation in a research study is that

the researcher should establish their role with the participants prior to collecting the data

so that no boundaries are crossed in the course of the data collection (Creswell, 2012).

My purpose was to primarily listen and ask questions that would bring to light any

information that would assist in better understanding the issues.

Data Collection

Characteristics of qualitative research include the collection of data through the

use of observations; interviews; and the development of protocols to provide rich

narratives and descriptions of the researched topic (Creswell, 2012). For this study,

observations, questionnaires, and interviews were the primary sources of data collection.

Upon IRB approval, the data collection process began. For a period of 12 weeks, I

observed and documented any events that included parental involvement during that time

period. The events documented included only events that occurred at the school level

such as family nights, PTA programs, field days, and/or volunteer opportunities with the

school. For the observations, questionnaires, and interviews, I ensured the confidentiality

of teachers and parents by eliminating identifying factors such as teacher names, parent

names, or teacher room numbers and used codes identifiable only to me. I invited and

selected participants as well as had willing participants sign informed consent

notifications. The following subsections are a description of how data were collected for

each method.

Observations

I used observations to assess what parental involvement opportunities were

available and how the faculty and parents responded to these opportunities. Specifically, I

documented correspondence to parents, parent participation in school events, and

interactions between faculty and parents during the events in observation logs. Being a

teacher in the school allowed me access to observing how communication was sent home

for school wide activities that occurred during the school day (i.e., field day,

grandparents' day, etc.) and after school hours (i.e., family fun night, parent conference

night, etc.). This access also allowed me the ability to view the number of parents that

attended these events. As the POL, I had frequent contact with the school's PTA and

attended all of their meetings. This role allowed me access to observe how the PTA

communicated to the parents and created opportunities for parental involvement

throughout the year. I was also able to monitor parent attendance at each meeting.

Observations were detailed in an observation journal. While notes were written as

observations were made, a full analysis could not be completed to document patterns and trends until the 12-week observation period was complete.

Questionnaires

Teachers involved in the questionnaire process received their forms, hand delivered, within the first week of data collection upon approval from the IRB. Teachers had 1 week to complete the form. The nine teachers received questionnaires regarding their experiences with parental involvement, what they defined as parental involvement, and what factors they considered as inhibitors of parental involvement. The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions; therefore, teachers could provide descriptions to their responses (see Appendix B). Teacher participants were assigned a number identifiable only to me in order to conduct follow-ups. Teachers did not include identifying factors on the questionnaire such as name, grade level, or room number. Responses to the questionnaires were submitted by the end of the first week of data collection. Data analysis of the questionnaires began as each questionnaire was completed during the second week of the data collection process.

Interviews

I interviewed the nine parents one-on-one. One-on-one interviews, in contrast to focus group interviews, were used so that participants would feel comfortable with talking and so that their point of view was heard (Creswell, 2012). While focus groups are used for this same purpose and allow for observation of participant interactions, participants that are not as vocal as others may feel intimidated or reserved during the interview process (Creswell, 2012). One-on-one interviews allowed participants who

were reluctant a more comfortable environment (Creswell, 2012). I had an interpreter with me for non-English speakers. The purpose of the interviews allowed for the collection of multiple perspectives regarding parent satisfaction, views of parental involvement, and views of how schools encourage parental involvement (Lodico et al., 2010). I used audiotape to record interviews.

The interview with parents contained five questions, two general questions and three of which were specific to identifying factors that inhibited parental involvement based on the themes identified in the teacher questionnaires. With this study, I sought to understand the viewpoint of the parents in the interviews and create collaboration between parents and the school for effective parental involvement opportunities. I ensured impartiality by creating the three questions, or probes, after teachers had completed the questionnaires. In fact, probing questions are not created prior to data collection because of their dependency on the response of participants (Lodico et al., 2010). If questions for the interview were created prior to data collection, the threat of my personal opinion could influence what was being asked. By waiting to create the three questions until after the teacher questionnaires, I ensured that what was being asked was based on what was developing from the study and eliminated the possibility of bias (Lodico et al., 2010).

Participants arranged interview times according to their schedules and in locations where they were comfortable. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Participants were free to conduct the interviews in one sitting or in multiple sittings if needed. Prior to the interview, I reminded the parent participants of my role as the

researcher, that is, to have an open-minded view of what comes from the interviews. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix C) to provide instructions, format questioning, and assist with maintaining the flow of the interview (Creswell, 2012). I used audio-tape recorders to document interviews. Transcription of the interviews occurred upon completion and I maintained the transcripts in a research log labeled with the participant number for data analysis. My analysis of the interviews began as each interview was completed beginning the second week.

<div align="center">**Data Analyses**</div>

This qualitative case study had three forms of data collection for analysis. In a quantitative research study, data analysis methods determine the objectivity, reliability, and validity of the study; however, qualitative research analysis methods determine the transferability, credibility, and dependability of the study (Anfara, 2001). Coding, member checks, and triangulating data are common methods of data analysis for qualitative research studies. In particular, coding is used to identify common themes seen in data and create an audit trail in the analysis (Anfara, 2001). Coding looks for repetitive words and phrases throughout the data. These are identified as common themes. When the words or phrases are first presented, they can be identified and separated by color or other methods. The initial categories can then yield smaller themes that are compared and assist with generating findings for the study (Anfara, 2001). For the three types of data collection, coding was the primary source of analysis, followed by member checks, and, eventually, triangulation to show a connection in all of the forms of data.

Observations occurred for a period of 12 weeks and were documented in an observation journal. Data was recorded on an observation log sheet within the journal. The log detailed the date and time of the event, what took place at the event, and a description of how parents and faculty/staff interacted at the event. Individual faculty/staff and/or parents were not identified on the log sheet. Logs were maintained chronologically in a binder. While notes were written as observations were made, a full analysis could not be completed to document patterns and trends until the 12-week observation period was complete. At the end of the 12-week observation period, the logs were highlighted and coded to note themes that were seen in relation to parent participation in the school. Identified themes were color coded (i.e., yellow for communication, pink for motivation, orange for engagement).

Questionnaires had a similar analysis process. The time needed for completing the questionnaire was dependent on the responses provided by the participants. Time completion was estimated at1 hour. The one week time frame was intended to allow adequate time for completion of all questionnaires. Teachers hand-delivered questionnaires in a plain, sealed envelope upon completion. I analyzed the questionnaires to find common themes, that is, responses that reflected similar beliefs. The color coding system was used for questionnaires as well. Follow-ups were conducted only if clarification was needed regarding responses. From this analysis, I created three probing questions specific to parental concerns regarding parental involvement to discuss with parents in the parent interviews. Because this research was seeking to examine factors that inhibit parental involvement which could include teachers' perspectives, these

probing questions were formulated based on identified themes from the teacher

questionnaires and were directly related to questions two through four of the parent

interview.

Finally, the parent interviews were analyzed through coding and color coding

system used for observation and questionnaires. I used audio-tape recorders to document

interviews. Interview transcriptions occurred upon completion and were maintained in a

research log labeled with the participant number for data analysis and coding. Upon

transcript completion, a summary was written for each interview. Parents were invited to

member checks to read transcripts and summaries. A negative case analysis would be

used if parents did not agree with summaries; however, parents did not find discrepancies

or errors in their transcripts of summaries.

Results

The following is a summary of the results of the data collection and analysis for

each method used for this study. A qualitative design, specifically a case study, was used

because it provided the opportunity for rich descriptions and narratives (Creswell, 2012).

Data were generated from observations, teacher questionnaires, and parent interviews.

The following is a breakdown of each method, what was collected, and the themes that

were identified. The results also reflect findings that were not necessarily thematic but

made a connection to study.

Observations

During the 12-week observation period, School X held five activities that

involved direct invitations to parents. These activities were three PTA meetings, one

school wide Fun Day, and the annual end-of-the-year award's day ceremonies for each grade level. There were also observations of daily routines such as pick-up and drop-off procedures. Specifics such as time, date, location, method of communication, parent interaction, and school interaction were documented and analyzed for themes (see Appendix D).

PTA meetings were scheduled for the first Thursday of the month; however, one meeting was rescheduled due to severe weather and occurred a week later. Each PTA had a grade level(s) assigned to perform at the meeting. Because of PTA regulations, School X is required to have their meetings the same time each month (the first Thursday at 6:00 p.m.). While individual grade level teachers may have informed parents of their child performing, School X sent school wide notification of the PTA meetings for only two of the three meetings. These flyers were sent home the day before for one meeting and the day of for another meeting. For each meeting, there was an average of 60 parents in attendance with the performing grade being the primary parents in attendance. Faculty and staff attendance consisted primarily of administrators and the teachers from the participating grade level for that evening. Agendas were created by the administrators with the meeting facilitated by one of the administrators. No parents or PTA representatives were on the agenda. Agendas were dominated with school related concerns such as testing, attendance, and upcoming school events. Teachers for the grade level performing for the evening were provided an opportunity to give updates of grade level concerns. The floor was not opened for questions/answer opportunities nor did parents ask to have the opportunity. A translator was provided for two of the three

meetings. Meetings lasted no more than an hour and were concluded with the grade level performance. On one occasion, a raffle was conducted.

The Site Based Decision Management team (SBDM) meets monthly to discuss issues within the school. Meetings are scheduled to occur prior to the PTA. Teacher representatives from each grade level as well as administrators, community leaders, and parents are invited to attend to have open dialogue on school related issues. During the 12 weeks of observation, SBDM did not meet prior to the PTA meetings or invite parents to attend.

School X held its annual Fun Day the week prior to the end of school. The event is considered a major fund raiser for the school. Flyers regarding the event were distributed school wide three weeks prior to the date of the event and were sent at least twice a week. The flyers information included an explanation of pricing for tickets and the date in which ticket sales would end. Ticket sales ended 2 weeks prior to the event and could not be purchased the day of the activity. The flyer did not contain information regarding parent participation. Despite not having a direct invitation, some parents attended the event with the largest number of parent participants in the lower grades (prekindergarten–1st grade). Parents were provided visitor badges for the day and allowed to engage in activities with their children. Children who did not have a parent remained with their teacher during the activities or, if they were older, were free to participate in the events on their own. Even though the student may have had tickets to participate, some parents were not able to purchase items for themselves such as food or drinks. Parents who volunteered with their children were unable to make purchases for

themselves and were not offered any refreshments. Activities were facilitated by the school's gym coach, teacher assistants, and adopters of the school. There were no parent volunteers assisting in the creation of the day's events or the facilitation of the activities.

The annual awards day ceremonies were held for 2 days with kindergarten through fourth grade on 1 day and prekindergarten and fifth grade on another. Despite a large monthly calendar in the office that noted the scheduled awards day events, a school wide flyer was sent home with four day notice detailing the times, dates, and expected apparel for the ceremonies. The school has an awards day ceremony each 6 weeks (two were held during the observation period); however, the end-of-the-year awards ceremonies were the only days where parents were invited to attend. Parents were in attendance for each ceremony. Ceremonies were held to 1 hour and 15 minutes and there were no activities that involved parents after the events were concluded.

Due to statewide testing, School X had 4 days designated for school wide field trips for students who were not testing. Parents were observed participating in school wide field trips assisting as chaperones (primarily prekindergarten through second grade). Parents were also observed attending meetings related to student achievement and attendance that were scheduled by the school's guidance counselor. In terms of willing volunteers, parents must have cleared background checks with the district before being able to chaperone or volunteer in classrooms. One parent was observed on a regular basis volunteering in a kindergarten classroom.

Of note was the method for daily drop-off and pick up procedures at School X. Parents were permitted to escort their children to the door in the morning but were not

allowed to enter the building. At the end of the day, parents came to the doors to pick up their children but could not enter the building unless given approval for a specific reason. Students were called to the doors by their teacher who then released the student to their parents outside. Parents who had more than one child in different grade levels walked from door to door. During the course of the school day, doors are locked for safety purposes and parents must be allowed in by school personnel. Parents wishing to see children could visit in the classroom or are allowed a 30 minute visitation period with their child in the classroom or lunchroom. Parent conferences must be scheduled during the teacher's planning period.

Questionnaires

The results for the questionnaires and interviews are the thematic responses that were provided for each open-ended question. A synopsis is being provided to explain the themes that were found in the questions provided to teachers. Common phrases were identified for each of the participant's responses to the questions (see Appendix E). When teachers were asked their view of the parental involvement efforts of parents in School X, the responses described low effort by parents. Teachers' description used phrases such as "drastically dropped," "drastically declined," "not a top priority, " "scarce, " "minimal, " and "not involved". Teachers acknowledged the issue of poverty as a possible reason for this decline citing parents did not see the connection to parental involvement and their child's success. Teachers noted the low turnout of parents in school events, particularly with students who were second grade and older. Teachers also stated that parents did not willingly come to the school but only came "when requested" or "if an issue arises."

In regards to factors that inhibit involvement by parents, teachers' responses acknowledged that many parents lacked resources (i.e., money for gas, means of communication such as phones) to be able to participate. Several teachers felt that parents did not have the knowledge to know how to be involved as a parent and "lack strong academic foundations," "lack confidence on how to communicate," and "lack respect towards educators." In connection to the issues of impoverishment, teachers recognized that conflicting work schedules, single parenting, and even criminal backgrounds could hinder parents from taking active roles in their child's schools. One teacher noted the following:

> Some parents make a sincere effort to attend school meetings or support school initiative in spite of their hectic lives. They sacrifice the only time they have to rest or their only day off at work in order to be more involved with the school, and a few of them go as far as asking for a day off at work in order to attend their child's school performance or an award ceremony. However, understandably so, those parents are in the minority. For the majority of our parents, taking an unpaid day off is not an option.

Of note were the concerns that school discouraged parents from participating. Teachers noted that there were not consistent facets for parents to be committed. Additionally, the school's policy regarding parents in the building was cited as a possible discourager. One teacher stated that:

> When parents are not allowed to walk their children to class in the mornings and not allowed in the building after school to pick them up there seems to have been a very

discomforting rise in the parents that I'm not wanted here, even though they are educating my child here, so I'll just stay away.

Regarding the impact of poverty, teachers discussed the concerns parents have regarding resources such as money and education and psychological issues such as shame, discouragement, intimidation, and low self-esteem. Resources were described to impact transportation efforts as well as the ability to contribute monetarily to the school. Also, one teacher noted that many children have parents who are incarcerated and "because they are poor and can't afford lawyers are not present and leave the children to older grandparents or cousins or distant relatives to raise and oversee the education." Teachers described parents who do not recognize their contributions to the school and do not see the value in parental involvement. Further, the issue of generational poverty was presented as source of reluctant attitudes toward parental involvement due to low educational levels and lack of access to information. Noticed by teachers was the number of younger, single parents who may be less informed due to age.

Teachers described the ways they make parental involvement a part of their ideology. Common ideas were making sure school-wide handouts were distributed, monthly newsletters within their classroom, encouraging membership and e-mail, writing, or phone, and encouraging home activities through daily binders. Teachers stated that they encouraged classroom visits and volunteering. One teacher specified a push to incorporate more dads in parental involvement activities but had little success.

Finally, teachers were asked to describe how the school encourages parental involvement. Although many of the activities were not observed during the observation

period, they were stated as regular options for the school. Activities such as PTA, school newsletters, Fall Carnival, Fun Day, Family Fun Night, field trips, volunteerism, parent conference night, SBDM, and awards day were mentioned. Teachers noted high levels of involvement for Fun Day and Family Fun Night but low levels for other activities. Ways for parents to monitor student academic efforts were other alternatives. Parent portal, a system that allows parents to monitor grades, and student led conferences, where students set and discuss their goals, were named. Parent workshops and volunteer trainings were included as well. Teachers considered the opportunities provided as sufficient.

Interviews

A synopsis is being provided to explain the themes that were found in the interviews with parents. Common phrases were identified for each of the participants responses in the interviews (see Appendix F). When parents were asked their view of their own parental involvement efforts in School X, the responses described efforts to attend school programs, meetings, chaperone field trips, and make sure that their children completed homework assignments. A resounding theme was that parents became involved "when asked" or "when the school let them know about activities". Parents also discussed how they did not feel limited to only what the school provided and felt they could do more to be involved. Parents also stated that being involved in their child's learning was "non-negotiable" and that they wanted to be involved "as much as possible."

When describing possible inhibitors, parents discussed how employment impacted their ability to become more involved. Work schedules and the ability to take

off work were the primary factors. One parent noted that as a working mother she needed ample notice in order to take days off for school related functions so that her employer could make adjustments in her schedule. Another parent mentioned that not only was she a working mother but she was a student so her evenings were not always free to attend school events. Parents also discussed how raising multiple children can impact the ability to be at school activities. One parent discussed how she often has conflict with school events because her middle school child and elementary child have events on the same evening. While she acknowledged this was not a school related issue but more of a district issue, she stated that she often has to make the choice of whose function to attend. Also, a factor that was noted by one parent was the lack of diversity in the school functions. Even though the participant tried to attend functions, there were times when an interpreter was not present to translate what was being discussed or able to interpret their questions. As a result, the participant did not feel compelled to participate and noticed others who were also discouraged.

Parents viewed lack of money and lack of education as primary concerns for the impoverished. One parent noted that the costs of field trips as well as the cost for Fun Day were large for her budget. Despite being able to pay, the participant acknowledged that others may not be able to do so. This brought up the concern of whether or not the school utilizes the community enough for the school in terms of monetary donations and if the current fundraising practices were benefiting the school. Parent participants felt that, despite living in an impoverished community, there were still enough businesses in the community that could support the school. In terms of lack of education, participants

described many parents as not knowing they have voice in schools and not knowing they have rights. One participant acknowledged that many parent are younger and have not "learned how to be involved." While all of the participants interviewed recognized impoverishment and lack of resources as an issue, most felt that it was not excuse for lack of participation in the school. Participants felt there were "ways to work around it," that "good habits" such as saving money could help, and that "knowledge is power." Basically, parents felt that people had a responsibility to seek out resources to meet their needs.

In addition to the discussion of resources, parents discussed their views on the level of sympathy that school exhibits to the issue of poverty. Parents felt that the school did show some level of care but not consistently. While one parent described observing a teacher assisting a student who was lacking supplies another parent stated that teachers did not always "have good manners" and did not treat parents fairly. One parent stated that "not all teachers show their best."

When parent participants discussed how School X ensures parental involvement, a common concern was the method of communication used by the school. Parents discussed how notifications are often sent home too late for parents to be able to participate and how they have to have time to ask for days off of work. Parents also discussed that they were unaware of some of the activities provided by the school and what, specifically, the school wanted parents to do in these activities. One parent noted that she was unaware that there was a parent center in the school.

Parents also discussed how this lack of communication seems to be common with all facets of the school including how things are communicated from the front office. Parents described "quick answers" and "breakdowns" when questions are asked related to school events. Also, lack of motivation from some teachers was observed. It was noted that as students get older, the lack of motivation of teachers gets higher. Parents discussed how this lack of motivation from teachers impacts the morale of parent and that parents would like to see "more teacher involvement." Parents also discussed how they do not feel welcomed in the school due to constantly locked doors and the inability to enter the building in the mornings and the evenings. One parent pointed out that a discussion with other parents regarding these procedures brought descriptors such as "unfair" and "not being acknowledged." While there is an understanding regarding safety issues, participants feel this could be handled in another way instead of making parents feel "they can't come in."

Another point made by participants was the disparities in who is invited to be involved. Parents acknowledged that there are many activities but, at times, only some parents are invited to participate. Case in point, only parents of some of the students who participated in the African American History program were informed to attend. This disparity, according to one parent, seems as if "not all are allowed the same privileges." Further, parent participants also recognized lack of parental involvement in the planning stages of many activities. For example, a parent stated that she no longer attends Fun Day with her children because "they don't ask us anything. There is not an invitation to

organize and things seem disorganized. The activities are more for adults than kids."
Because of this, parent participants mentioned feeling that their opinion was not valued.

Parents were provided the opportunity to make suggestions on how to better implement parental involvement. Again, better communication was the common theme. Parent asked for more open communication and a better explanation of programs within the school. Parents suggested a suggestion box so that parents can relay concerns and ideas without feeling intimidated by face-to-face confrontation. Parents also mentioned having more staff available in the evenings so that parents can ask questions if necessary when picking up students. Parents discussed the need for knowing they have access to the school and creating regularly scheduled events where parents have the opportunity to interact with one another and build relationships. One parent noted that this could increase involvement because activities could be delegated to parents at these meetings. On the same note, another participant suggested regular rallies with incentives to boost attendance. Finally, parents suggested that teachers show enthusiasm by not only sending home flyers but constantly encouraging students and parents verbally to attend functions at the school. While one parent stated that "it doesn't matter what we have. People will either come or not", most of the participants felt that a better rapport between teachers and parents could be built with regards to parental involvement if these suggestions were considered.

Themes

From the data analysis of the three methods of data collection, four themes emerged. The themes are communication, lack of parent input, lack of motivation from

School X, and redefining parental involvement in School X (see Appendix G). This section will unpack these themes through the use of parent interview transcripts. The excerpts are used in alignment with the research question and the advocacy/liberatory framework in that they provide a voice to the parent, the primary source of data collection for this study. Additionally, the excerpts are used to provide the rich descriptions and clarity to the perspectives of the parent participants.

Communication

A lack of communication to parents was seen regarding school related events and how parents could be involved. This includes communication not sent in enough time for parents to respond or communication not sent at all. Participants were vocal in their concern for a lack of communication that gives them preparation time for events at the school describing "a lack of communication at this school when it comes to letting parents know," and noticing "that it's the day before and if you can't prepare to be involved or to help your child or come and visit, you just can't do it." Additionally, parents stated that the lack of communication does not acknowledge that they may have other obligations and impacts participation because "if you're having to work, if you're having another obligation, you can't do it within a short amount of time so there's a lack of communication."

Some data were not necessarily thematic but demonstrated a connection. A lack of diversity in the school such as a lack of interpreters at all school events or parents not being asked to serve on committees was perceived by parents, particularly parents of

Hispanic students. This impacts the schools ability to communicate to diverse populations as described in the following:

> Sometimes when we come to school they don't have somebody who speaks the same language as me. I am referring to Spanish but I have seen other schools. Sometimes they speak different languages but I speak Spanish. When I come to school, they don't have anybody that speaks Spanish that is available. When I am coming just to ask something in the office. When we have activities. Sometimes when we come here we only have half an hour to be here. They have nobody to speak the language so we have to wait for the interpreter so that shortens the time we are allowed to stay. We only have a limited amount of time. For example, family night. We have to go to the classrooms. We were all confused because we didn't understand the instructions about going to this classroom and the next. When we get into the classroom and we are trying to be a part of the activities, for example, we were given a science experiment, we did not understand the instructions. And I noticed people started leaving because they were not understanding. They were confused and they had to be looking at other people. They had to be observing how other people were doing next to them to be able to do it. That shortens the time where we have to be involved in the activities.

Finally, teachers felt that they individually encouraged parental involvement by supporting school related activities and classroom practices. But, parents observed a gap in the knowledge of the school as a whole regarding what goes on in the school and how to relay it to parents. One participant stated that there needed to be "more open

communication" so "when a parent calls, you don't just give them a quick answer like,

oh, I think that's what they wanted to hear."   In another interview, a participant discussed

the inability to contact teachers and misinformation provided by the front office being

told "oh, teachers don't call parents back" and eventually writing a letter to the teacher in

order to get a call back.

Parent Input

No parent participation in the planning of school events or on decision making

committees was mentioned. Examples were no parents involved in PTA and parents not

being asked to help plan school wide events such as Fun Day and Family Night. Parents

described teachers encouraging parent input at "50% instead of 100%" and "not feeling

that our opinion is valued." One parent noted the lack of parental input of the annual Fun

Day feeling it appeared "disorganized" and "it looked for the parents instead of the kids."

Parents further stated that they would like to be more involved and provide opinions in

the planning stages of school events but "the school doesn't allow us and we are not

involved in the decision making of the school."

Connected to this was the concern regarding parents being permitted in the school

for drop-off, pick-up, or visitation causing feelings of discouragement. One participant

stated, when approached by another parent regarding this subject, that she tried to

encourage dialogue with school personnel and compliance with the schools request as it

relates to the safety of students. Another participant, while understanding of the safety

concerns, felt that "something could be done differently," especially for elderly

grandparents who are forced to stand in varying weather conditions, but was hesitant to speak with administrators because they could not provide a better solution.

Motivation

Teachers discussed a lack of motivation in parents; however, parents stated that there was a lack of motivation in teachers. The concerns of being welcomed in the school and feelings of inadequacy were raised because many of the parents "might not have degrees or high school diplomas, might not even have jobs." Feeling judged for these inadequacies was stated as a possible reason for parents feeling too uncomfortable to attend school related activities. Parent participants admitted needing teachers to motivate and encourage them to attend events. Additionally, parents observed inconsistencies with how individual grade levels encouraged parent participation:

> I know when I first got here, the teacher was very adamant as to help us join, help us, you know, join with us, come to the PTA. Every class does not get that enthusiasm from the teacher. So, some parents do not know. Some parents you hear about only when your child is on program so that's the only time they might come out to PTA. Maybe if we had a rally once a month. I don't know honestly. I don't know what can be done but I do know that the enthusiasm of the teacher does a whole lot.

> Parent participants further noted that teachers attitudes towards parents was apparent and that teachers "should try to have a better outlook on the people that are involved in your school."

Parent Involvement Redefined

Low parent participation in school functions such as PTA and volunteerism was observed. Parents and teachers attribute this a to lack of communication, a lack of parent input as well as a lack of motivation. Data also showed that what parental involvement should look like for School X was ambiguous. Teachers felt that parents only participated when they were requested. Ironically, parents only felt participation was wanted when the school informed them and asked them to be involved. One participant specifically defined parental involvement as "when somebody invites me from the school to participate in an activity at the school and we come to investigate what programs are available." Teachers stated that there were ample opportunities for parents to participate in the school. Parents, on the other hand, felt that many of the activities did not consider work schedules or financial resources and did not consider the challenges that many parents face. One parent, who did not specifically experience any hardships, recognized the impact resources can have on participation stating "maybe other people, they do have the issues, because they do not have the help to go, the time because of their job, or they don't have the money."

In addition to the lack of a definition for parental involvement in School X, parents noted the growing number of younger parents as a factor that inhibits involvement noting that the decrease in involvement could be due to "children sending children to school because a lot of the mothers are young" and a "younger group that really don't know if I do get involved and do this, you know, I have a voice." This youth hinders parents because they do not know "you are a voice for your school," "don't take

the time to get to know what their rights are," and do not discover "how they can impact the school or the community itself."

The issue of education was also discussed as a factor that is overlooked by schools when creating parental involvement programs. In addition to not understanding how to get involved, parents observed lack of education and limited opportunities for parents to become educated as negative factors. Parents understood the importance of education not only for their children but for them to be able to assist their children with homework and projects. One parent felt that the school could provide more resources for parents who lacked education and/or resources so that they can work one-on-one with students and be aware of current practices and expectations. Specifically, parents believed that schools understanding the educational needs of parents was important because "some parents don't know the new math so it's hard for them help their child if they don't know."

Despite many of the concerns described in interviews, participants expressed some positives regarding present practices. Still, others had concerns regarding the schools lack of attention regarding limited resources for parents, incarcerated parents, and parents with criminal backgrounds. Collectively these issues are creating misunderstandings regarding the definition of parental involvement from the viewpoint of both teachers and parents at School X.

Conclusion

Based on the three methods of data analysis, communication, lack of parent input, motivation, and redefining parental involvement are identified as common themes. As a

method of explaining these common themes, transcripts for parent interviews were used to provide rich descriptions of their viewpoints. These transcripts were used not only to gain knowledge from parent participants regarding inhibitors in parental involvement but to give them a voice. The transcripts revealed that what teachers view in one way is viewed in another way by parents. Many parents found deficits in the current practices.

The revelation of these themes shows that there are practices within the school that contribute to a lack of participation by parents. Further, communication is a continuous issue as well as the level of motivation that is being perceived by both parents and teachers. Clarity regarding ways parents should be involved in the school has not been specified, largely in part, because parents feel limited in the times they are invited to the school. Finally, despite the perception that parental involvement opportunities are available, there is no consistent plan in place that engages parents, teachers, or the community and includes diversity.

Evidence of Quality

A triangulation design is commonly used in studies where both quantitative and qualitative data are being collected (Lodico et al., 2010). The methods increase credibility because of multiple collection methods and its effort to see if similar findings can be obtained (Lodico et al., 2010). It is not uncommon, however, for this same method to be used in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012). Collecting data from multiple sources ensures that a variety of sources are fairly represented and that there are ample facts to support themes that arrive in the research (Creswell, 2012). For this study, three methods

of data collection were used to meet triangulation. They were researcher observations, teacher questionnaires, and parent interviews.

Another common method of data analysis used in this qualitative research study was coding. Coding found common themes within the data that was collected from questionnaires and interviews (Creswell, 2012). I looked to find relationships between themes that occurred and reoccurred within the data. I sorted the themes and placed them into categories and subcategories to determine the significance of the findings. While the use of technology methods such as computer software for the data analysis process is now common, technology can only assist with what is determined and directed by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). This study was to provide an accurate and rich description of the participants' perceptions: therefore, I determined what was coded and how it was categorized. In addition, small studies do not necessarily yield the need for computer software to assist with data analysis and can be an unnecessary expense financially as well as with the time spent attempting to properly use the software (Merriam, 2009). I was ultimately able to bring to life reasons that impacted the study, in this case possible inhibitors of parental involvement in School X (Glesne, 2011). Data analysis looked for themes that were expected or unexpected, themes considered key to the analysis, and themes that arose but had no specific connection. After coding occurred, I wrote a summary for each interview.

Finally, another effective method of data analysis used in this study was the inclusion of colleagues and participants in the analysis process. Studies suggest that researchers relay their findings to the participants in their study and that participants have

the opportunity to confirm or dispute the findings (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Participants participated in member checks, that is, the reading of their transcript and

summary to confirm the accuracy of the findings. The summarization of the interview

transcripts were based on my interpretation of the participants' perspective and reflected

the participants' beliefs regarding the study. The purpose of member checks was so that

the participants could see themselves in the summaries (Merriam, 2009). In the event of

discrepant cases, I was prepared to use a negative case analysis. This method would have

allowed me to review conclusions and hypotheses that were formulated as a result of the

analysis and determine why they were not accurate with regards to the data (Lodico et al.,

2006). This analysis also would have required a reexamination of the data to look for

contradictions and discrepancies in how the data were interpreted (Lodico et al., 2006).

After member checks, there were no discrepant cases.

     Using each of these methods for analysis, the results showed consistency with

themes that were found. Observations showed limited opportunities for parents to be

involved in the school setting, limited communication used, and lack of a structured

parental involvement program where parents, faculty/staff, and community collaborate.

Questionnaires revealed a concern regarding parent motivation, consistent school

communication, and parents' willingness to be engaged. Parent interviews revealed

concerns over teacher motivation, fair opportunities for parents to be engaged, lack of

communication, and concern regarding current school practices. The themes that were

commonly mentioned with all three data collections, after coding, and member checks

were lack of communication, motivation, concern over school practices, and parental

engagement. Thus, the triangulation method of data collection, relying on multiple sources of data, was effective in producing thematic results adding to the credibility and accuracy of this study (Creswell, 2012).

There were some limitations to consider regarding the analysis of the data. First, the data collected represented a small sampling of the population. Qualitative research practices commonly suggests smaller sampling sizes, however, they may not always be representative of every person in the population being studied. Second, the observation period for this study did not encompass the entire school year so the observations only represented a portion of the efforts made regarding parental involvement for this year. Finally, the data collected represented an impoverished school in large urban district. The data collected and analyzed may not be generalizable to other populations such as suburban and rural areas. Regardless, the findings are significant for School X and the catalyst for addressing and rectifying an issue that has continued over several years.

Conclusions

A description of the methodology for the research study that examined factors that inhibit parental involvement n School X was provided in this section. The research and design approach was a qualitative study, specifically a case study. Participants for the study consisted of teachers currently employed by School X and parents who had children enrolled at School X at the time of the study. Teachers and parents represented each grade level in the school (Prek–5th grade) as well as the bilingual population. While teachers were used to gain an understanding of their viewpoint regarding parents and parental involvement in School X, parents were the primary source of data collection. A

typical sampling method was used for recruitment. Data collection methods consisted of questionnaires for teachers, interviews with parents, and my observations for a 12-week period. My personal observations provided a third perspective of parental involvement in the school. Coding, member checks, and triangulation were the methods of data analyses to discover common themes. Data analyses revealed issues in the areas of communication, motivation, school practices, and an appropriate definition for parental involvement in School X. In the event findings were not conclusive or the three methods of collection did not correlate, I was prepared to conduct a negative case analysis to find discrepancies. The negative case analysis was not needed for this study as the three methods of data collection correlated. Because of this, the research demonstrates evidence of quality.

School X, a school in an urban district with high levels of impoverishment, has experienced a decline in parental involvement. This study was created to research factors that inhibit the involvement of parents in the school. Of particular interest was the viewpoint of parents to identify ways that the school is successful or needs improvement. Parents identified concerns over practices and attitudes of school faculty and staff. Ironically, teachers had the same concerns regarding parents. At the same time, my observations found similarities with the same issues. Communication in the school was limited and lacked timeliness and sensitivity to culture. Parents had little if any input in the creation and/or implementation of school activities. School practices were not consistent or were implemented with little regard to parent needs. Motivation from teachers and parents was minimal with both relying on each other to be encouraged to

participate. Finally, there was no clear definition of parental involvement in the school

and the current definition only allowed for parents to come when invited. With that,

School X is in need of a parental involvement framework that involves teachers, parents,

and community members to be active participants and have a voice in creating parental

involvement opportunities that are catered to the population being served in the school.

The next section will provide an overview of the recommended project to assist with

remedying the parental involvement decline in School X and how it can be successfully

implemented.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Based upon the data collected regarding parental involvement in School X, the

need to redefine parental involvement in the school and create a program that caters to

the needs of the school is prevalent. While there was evidence that efforts had been made

within the school, a program designed by both parents and teachers is needed in order to

initiate collaboration and cooperation with regards to the issue of increasing parental

involvement. In this section, I provide an overview of a parental involvement project

designed for School X, its goals, plan for implementation, and program evaluation.

Description and Goals

The project recommendation for School X is the implementation of a parental

involvement committee that uses the six types of parental involvement described by

Epstein (Brandt, 1989) as a model and uses their outcomes as a means of monitoring

progress. This committee would be comprised of six teachers, one teacher for each grade

level in the school (prekindergarten through fifth grade) and one member of the support

staff. Additionally, one administrator will be a part of the committee in order to have

approval of various programs. Ultimately, parents and community members will be

involved (two representatives each). The goal of this project is to have parents and a

group of teachers representing various grade levels and subjects that meets to create and

implement parental involvement activities based on the Epstein model. Committee

members would design programs and outcomes for each type of parental involvement

based on the needs of the school population, implement the activities, and monitor the progress of the activities.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) wrote that despite the negative impact impoverishment can have on parents and their ability to be active participants in schools, such as lack of finances and/or education, teachers can be instrumental in involving parents from all walks of life to be active in schools. Epstein's continuous research on parental involvement found six types of involvement that should be included in a school's framework in order to demonstrate cooperation between teachers and parents (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). This framework, entitled Keys to Successful Partnerships, includes basic parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Each type of involvement provides examples of ways to promote the ideas and outcomes to gauge success (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). What is necessary is that schools, particularly School X, vary the practices used in implementing parental involvement programs and work to continuously create programs that are beneficial to all parents (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Rationale

Parental involvement in School X has continuously declined in the past 5 years. Data collected from teachers, parents, and observations acknowledges this decline; however, these perspectives yielded differing views of reasons for the decline and remedies to solve the problem. Despite an increase in the student population due to school closings and mergers, parental involvement has not increased. Evidence of this decline was seen through observations in the number of parents that volunteered in the

school as well as low attendance at PTA meetings and parent workshops. While some teachers felt that parents lacked motivation to be active in schools, parents felt that teachers did not motivate them to participate. Many teachers felt the current communication methods should produce active parents within the school. Parents, on the other hand, felt the current methods of communication lacked consistency and needed revision. Finally, teachers in School X believed that there were ample opportunities for parents to be actively involved and that these opportunities considered the varying needs of the impoverished population. However, parents felt that the activities were provided but did not always consider the schedules and financial abilities of the parents. Further, parents felt that many activities selected for the school lacked the voice of the parent in terms of preparation planning.

These opposing views demonstrate the need for a unifying parental involvement model in the school to improve current practices. By implementing a project that includes the Epstein model of parental involvement, School X will use researched practices that have a focus on collaborative methods for teachers and parents and work to empower parents by giving them a voice within the school (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Further, schools using this model are able to monitor the successes and failures of their programs based on the outcomes for each type of involvement and modify their current practices as needed (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Admittedly, parents play an integral part in the success of student achievement and should have input in various factors of the school community; however, due to limitations within the school systems, personal commitments and, at times, the lack of

education regarding how to be participatory, parents have limitations (Martz, 1992). In a study by Epstein and Dauber (1991) conducted on inner-city elementary and middle schools, the purpose of the research was to create a program that focused on teachers improving the present parental involvement plan and systems. Over a 3-year period, teachers were supported in implementing the six types of involvement and monitored. Implementing the six types of involvement found that elementary schools showed an increase in parental involvement in the areas of workshops, volunteerism, home/school connections, and involvement in school decisions (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). For School X, implementing a project where teachers focus first on how to implement better practices can ultimately yield more involvement in the school from parents.

Review of Literature

The results of the data collection find the need for the implementation of a parental involvement framework that will clearly define the goals of School X while considering the needs and interests of the parents. The primary area of concern for School X is the need for a research-based framework to guide implementation of a project that will not only inform teachers on how to be involved but will incorporate and encourage parents. The Epstein model for school partnership is the suggested researched framework for the project. Additionally, the areas of parental engagement, motivation, communication, and parent input are supplemental areas of concern. The following literature provides explanation of how each of these concerns is a necessary component to successful parental involvement programs in schools and how each component is theoretically tied to the proposed project for the school.

Epstein Partnership Model

It is understood that parental involvement is needed in schools; however, what and how parental involvement in schools should look continues to vary (Christianakis, 2011). Smith (2008) encouraged schools to explore reasons why parents do not participate more in schools, particularly where there are large populations of minorities and low-income families. Smith added that many schools use an assimilationist framework, that is, a framework that is created based on what is normal for one culture, usually Anglo-Americans (Smith, 2008). When schools do this, they identify the behaviors of the one group as what is "normal" and anything counter to this behavior as "abnormal" (McCoy, 2010). Misconceptions such as lack of interest in their children and not valuing education are the results of this type of framework and parents' feelings of estrangement continue (McCoy, 2010). Research regarding parental involvement urges the use of a framework/model when designing a program for schools; however, the framework/model should be mindful of the needs of the population that it is serving (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Because the School X population is primarily impoverished and comprised of ethnic minorities, the parental involvement framework for the school should consider the data that were gathered regarding their perspectives about current practices.

Two distinct models used in the creation of parental involvement programs are the parent empowerment model and the parent-teacher partnership model (Christianakis, 2011). The parent empowerment model aims to incorporate decision making as a primary component (Christianakis, 2011). Parents are encouraged to not only make decisions

within the realm of the school but also within the community (Christianakis, 2011).

Models built on empowerment yield school environments where children learn, play, and

feel secure and parents can define their involvement (Christianakis, 2011). Parents feel a

connection to the school because they have a voice; however, using this model can be

difficult (Christianakis, 2011). Teachers willingness to interact with parents frequently is

a must and parent willingness to be sacrificial with time and resources is necessary

(Christianakis, 2011). Moreover, school officials must be open to parent empowerment

(Christianakis, 2011).

The parent empowerment model has proven success. The results of a study using

the parent empowerment model in a Midwestern suburban area revealed an increase in

collaboration between parents and teachers as well as parents becoming active in reform

in the school (Murray, Handyside, Straka, & Arton-Titus, 2013). Parents were trained on

ways to interact with teachers and provided opportunities to work collaboratively with the

school (Murray et al., 2013). As a result, issues such as critical views of faculty and staff,

feelings of fear, distrust, and hopelessness were diminished and positive views of staff

and school were observed (Murray et al., 2013). Another study in rural Mexico showed

that the implementation of a parent empowerment program had similar success. The

program called AGEs trained parents on developing skills for participating in parental

involvement programs and ways to assist children with academics. Additionally, the

schools received funding and training on how to properly use funds. As a result, there

was a decrease in school failure and/or retention of students in their grade level (Gertler,

Patrinos, & Rubio-Codina, 2008). School X faces many of these challenges, that is, lack

of training, lack of knowledge regarding appropriate use of funds that benefit children, and understanding ways to assist their children academically. While one study was conducted on a Midwestern suburban area in contrast to an impoverished rural area, it does show that the teacher-parent empowerment model can be effective with improving parental involvement. Parent empowerment programs could put them in the position of better serving their children as well as the school.

In contrast, the parent-teacher partnership model works to parallel the lives of parents to the school environment (Christianakis, 2011). The belief is that schools partnering with parents result in better schooling for students; however, the concern with this model is that it does not consider if parents have the ability, time, or willingness to change their home to the school environment (Christianakis, 2011). Also, these models often employ the use of middle class beliefs and do not always consider the impoverished (Christianakis, 2011). These beliefs are often connected to Anglo-Americans. Historically, families that do not adhere to the values of Anglo-Americans have been viewed as abnormal (Smith, 2008).   Ultimately, parents that do not conform are misjudged and the programs that are designed to help them are not beneficial because of the misconceptions regarding what is normal (Smith, 2008). What is believed, however, is that parents and teachers working collaboratively should begin as early as possible, as early as nursery school, and continue through the primary years (Webster-Stratton & Bywater, 2015). In a study of pre school children, Incredible Years (IY), a technology based program, was used as a tool for parents and teachers to partner and provide learning opportunities for children (Webster-Stratton & Bywater, 2015). The program

was successful in allowing parents and teachers to work towards mutual objectives for their children (Webster-Stratton & Bywater, 2015). Further, the IY program encouraged positive parent, teacher, and peer interactions and further professional development opportunities (Webster-Stratton & Bywater, 2015). Despite its cons, the parent-teacher partnership model is frequently used and is evident in the six component framework created by Epstein (Christianakis, 2011). What is to be understood is the goal for School X which is to not only empower parents but to present chances for partnership while creating opportunities for training and involvement regarding what the school needs.

In addition to the previously identified six types of parental involvement in the Epstein model, there are seven principles designed based on Epstein and Sheldon's (2006) research of over 1,000 schools. The principles were created to allow for continuous study and documentation of the effectiveness of school parental involvement programs and assist schools with designing programs that maintain partnerships with parents (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). These principles include changing language from involvement to partnership in order to demonstrate shared responsibility in the school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Seeing partnership as a multidimensional concept that is subject specific and not too broad is key (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Documenting school actions, using a variety of leadership levels in the school, focusing on student growth and education, and ensuring equity in the school are evident in good programs (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Finally, continuously monitoring successes and failures in parental involvement programs ensures that programs are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis and adjustments are made to better the program (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Effective programs that include Epstein's six types of involvement and seven principles are not random acts of superficial activities but well-planned, obligatory programs that are improved from year-to-year (Cottrell & Shaughnessy, 2005). In order for these programs to be effective, Epstein suggested creating an Action Team for Partnership (ATP) that includes teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders to spearhead the creation of a tailor-made parental involvement program (Cottrell & Shaughnessy, 2005). Among the roles of the ATP are seeking funds from community partners to obtain resources; providing professional development for team members to have a universal understanding of the goals and concepts; identifying present practices in the school; creating an action plan for the next year that details the roles of all partners in the plan; requesting the assistance of other staff, parents, and students to help with activities; appraising the success of the program; celebrating the successes annually and reporting on progress; and continuing to modify and adjust so that the program continues to work towards inclusiveness (Cottrell & Shaughnessy, 2005). School X does not have a committee of people that oversees parental involvement in the school. As a result, yearly planning does not occur nor does formal discussion of the previous year's successes and failures. Thus, incorporating an ATP would be novel for the school.

Opponents of partnership models state that these programs are misled by the idea that parents and teachers possess the same decision making power (Christianakis, 2011). Despite this belief, implementation of Epstein's model has been successful in many schools, including those with high levels of poverty (Dyer, 2009). Ultimately, the goal for School X is that parents and school work collaboratively; however, there is no evidence

that School X has a specific parental plan in place to make this happen. Because of this, the Epstein model with the creation of an active ATP is the researched-based method that I suggest for implementation at School X to assist with bettering parental involvement in the school.

Examples of Epstein's model and its success are seen in a variety of school levels and cultures. In Atlanta, Georgia, implementation of the Epstein model assisted one elementary school with better communicating with Latino parents (Dyer, 2009). Teachers, who were predominantly English speaking, sought the help of Latino community leaders to survey parents about what they needed to become more involved (Dyer, 2009). Parents were then invited to become a part of a facilitation team; trained through professional development; and allowed to become leaders within the team (Dyer, 2009). The school, with a large English language learner (ELL) population and students on free or reduced lunch, was able to increase AYP with its ELL population by designing a program that catered to the needs of the population and, despite previous ideas about partnership models, empowered parents (Dyer, 2009).

Epstein's model also has success with technology and parental involvement (Piper, 2012). After conducting surveys of the parents in its over 1,000 student population, a Palm Springs middle school found that 87% of the parents had a home computer (Piper, 2012). The school created a website, implementing each type of parental involvement. Parenting was displayed by making the website user friendly with easy to find links. Additionally, trainings on the school website were provided monthly to parents and students (Piper, 2012). Communication was shown in the form of updated

calendars, forms and documents available for print, and language options for ELL parents (Piper, 2012). The website also posted regular volunteer opportunities within the school as well as the home and offered a once a month survey for parents to discuss the opportunities they were provided (Piper, 2012). Learning at home provided parents links to daily homework; curriculum; video attachments; and video lectures (Piper, 2012). Decision making for the website was evident in the forms of regular surveys of school programs, surveys regarding Title I within the school, and documentation of meeting agendas and minutes. The decision making area was two-way so that feedback was provided and responded to between parents and staff (Piper, 2012). Finally, a community service link was available for parents and the public to note community activities and ways to volunteer within the community (Piper, 2012). Even though technology is not considered a rich form of communication, the creation and implementation of the school website using Epstein's model allowed for better two-way communication between parents and teachers (Piper, 2012). When considering the challenges of poverty in School X, finding ways to use technology could be difficult; however, this does not mean dismissing the idea of using technology for parents that may have internet access.

Opinions vary over which model is most effective when it comes to parental involvement. While some encourage empowerment models, others suggest partnership models. Epstein's research, however, demonstrates a model that has been continuously tested and proven effective in the past and with the new age of technology. Epstein's research has also been proven to work effectively at schools who are at the beginning stages of creation and implementation. School X needs a framework to begin the process

of creating a parental involvement program that is mindful of engagement; motivation; communication; best practices; and research-based outcomes in order to increase parental involvement in the school.

Parental Involvement/Engagement

Schools, in general, create and implement programs that are geared towards making parents' active participants in school-related activities; however, Title I schools in the United States, that is, schools that are predominantly impoverished, were required to create parental involvement programs (NCLB, 2001). Among activities commonly seen are workshops; volunteerism; PTA meetings; school carnivals; and family academic nights. The model suggested for implementation at School X, the Epstein model, includes six types of parental involvement that range from parenting to community connections (Fan et al., 2010). Yet, an alternative model, the Fan model has seven types of parental involvement that include television rules, supervision as well as educational aspirations (Fan et al., 2010). Parental involvement has many dimensions and, at times, schools focus on only one aspect to determine the success or failure of their parental involvement programs (Fan et al., 2010).

The term, parental involvement, is often used but does not necessarily depict parents as actively engaged in activities. Ferlazzo (2011) stated that while these activities encourage attendance and participation, the activities do not necessarily build parents confidence in their efficacy or contribute to the academic achievement of students because parents are not engaged in the parent opportunity as creators or collaborators. Clearly defining the difference between parental involvement versus parental engagement

allows for the creation of programs where parents have an active role in the activities that are created and consider the abilities and limitations that parents, particularly those in poverty, possess (Ferlazzo, 2011). For example, schools that involve parents tend to give directives by letting parents know what they need and how it should be done. The school makes the decisions and relays the message (Ferlazzo, 2011). But, when schools engage parents, the goal is to allow parents to be part of the creation of programs within the school. The school listens to parents and works to gain them as cohorts (Ferlazzo, 2011).

Ultimately, there is a need to define parental involvement in the context of what is needed in a specific school. Part of the seven principles associated with the Epstein model for partnership is changing or redefining language to match the beliefs of the ATP and school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). Schools must create activities and programs where ideas are built on making parents feel welcome through listening and shared decision making takes place despite factors that can impede participation such as impoverishment (Ferlazzo, 2011).Terminology changes such as parental involvement to parental engagement could be evidence of this effort.

Additionally, what becomes the focus of a school can vary. While some schools focus on the school-to-home connections, another school focuses on school functions. Still another focuses on parent values. With so many pieces to the definition and schools focusing on different dimensions, parent confusion about their roles becomes more prevalent (Fan et al., 2010). We know that there are positive outcomes for students, schools, and parents when emphasis is placed on certain aspects. For example, in a study of teachers engaging African American parents in a Title I school, there was an increase

in communication, parent decision making, and parents creating a home environment that encouraged learning (Bartel, 2010). Teachers admitted, however, that they placed little emphasis on inviting parents to school events or supervising homework. As a result, an increase in these areas was not observed (Bartel, 2010).

Finally, another study of ethnic populations and parental involvement showed strong negative outcomes with regards to parent-school contacts, especially when it concerned student problems. In fact, the outcomes impacted the motivation that students had towards various school subjects such as English and mathematics (Fan et al., 2012). Thus, schools must be conscious of the specific needs of their school and population in order to know what specific parental involvement aspects should be explored and emphasized (Fan et al., 2012). Evidence shows that when schools target specific methods of engagement and have a common language, the benefits help the school in multiple ways including academics (Fan et al., 2012). In the case of School X, these priorities are not clearly identified and no language has been established. An active ATP has the capability of working collaboratively to create language and priorities for School X so that goals can be established.

Motivation

There is a new interest in how motivation impacts parental involvement. A growing concern is the significant lack of parental involvement displayed by minority parents, especially those living in poverty. In the previous literature review, Fishbein and Azjein's (1975) TRA theory was introduced to provide details of how the intentions of teachers with regards to parental involvement does not always present the intended

outcomes. The same holds true with regards to parents, especially those in poverty. Anglo parents are observed more often participating in school activities in comparison to minority parents. Research regarding parents of Asian American students shows a higher interest in student achievement in participation in schools than minority parents. Misconceptions about reasons why impoverished and minority parents do not participate are often misinformed and based on lack of understanding. Often, the lack of participation from minority parents is viewed as a lack of motivation (Shah, 2009). Another common misconception regarding low participation by impoverished parents is that they lack interest in their child's school (Usher, 2012). What is not considered is how academic input is viewed culturally (Fan et al., 2010).

The theory of planned behavior (TPB), a second theory of Azjein, focuses on ways to foretell and describe the behavior of individuals in specific circumstances (Alghazo, 2013). In contrast to Fishbein and Azjein's TRA theory, which focuses on the attitude of participants, TPB also relies on the understanding of motivational factors that may or may not cause particular behaviors such as interest or lack of interest in parental involvement (Alghazo, 2013). Azjen's TPB theory was used when researching a district of 6,300 students in an impoverished district (Bracke & Corts, 2012). In this three-phased study of parental involvement, the first phase, using TPB, sought to define obstacles to parental involvement in the district's schools (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Participants of the study were parents who were seen as "involved" and parents who were seen as "not actively involved." What was found was that all parents had positive attitudes towards parental involvement, that parents intended to be active in schools, and that the barriers

that limited "involved" parents also limited "not actively involved" parents (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Thus, the TPB theoretical framework showed that attitudes, intentions, and outcomes do not always match just as TRA proved this with teachers dismissing the idea that nonactive parents simply do not care (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Interestingly, phase two and three of this study were to find ways for parents and teachers to work collaboratively on ways to improve parental involvement based on the data from phase one of the TPB model and establish long term positive outcomes for schools (Bracke & Corts, 2012).

In a second study of TPB and parental involvement, parents in Taiwan participated in research to determine how their knowledge of educational policies motivated them to be active in schools (Lin, 2012). Researchers provided parents from kindergarten through high school questionnaires about their knowledge of policies, attitudes towards policies, and behavior towards policies (Lin, 2012). What was found was that, while parents had a positive understanding and attitude towards educational policy, negative parental behavior was exhibited. What is believed is that there were unidentified barriers that prevent parents from being actively involved proving again that lack of participation does not mean lack of motivation (Lin, 2012).

Continued research shows a difference in how minority parents, particularly Latino parents, view their role when it comes to their children and education believing it is the school's responsibility to educate their children (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011). The unfair assessment that parents lack motivation does not consider the cultural, educational, financial, and linguistic barriers that inhibit parents from being

more active and how many schools fail to provide remedies to these issues (Walker et al., 2011). While many parents in poverty often feel powerless due to the lack of financial resources, lack of education, and feeling as though their voices will have no influence over decision making, research proves quite the opposite showing that parents, regardless of race or socio-economic status, can benefit children in both the academic and non-academic environment (Hayes, 2011). Teachers in School X identified a culture of indifference and helplessness with regards to parental involvement in their questionnaires. On the contrary, parents, in general, understand their responsibilities regarding their child's education and possess a certain level of confidence in their role (Bartel, 2010).

The school has a responsibility to create an environment that is inviting so that parents, especially those who feel powerless, are motivated to visit and participate. Negative school experiences, not being sure of protocols and procedures, and not knowing how to help can increase discouragement, continuing the cycle of little to no participation and misunderstandings regarding motivation (Bartel, 2010). Additionally, schools must stray from superficial parental involvement activities that are not meaningful and create activities that demonstrate the desire to share control with parents (Bartel, 2010). With participation low in schools with high minority populations, the goal should be assisting parents in discovering for themselves how they can contribute to the school environment and increasing the prospects (Ferlazzo, 2011). School ATPs open the doors for parents to be involved and work in areas of strength. Schools, however, must motivate parents to take on these roles.

Latino parents often view school related functions not as an opportunity to collaborate with teachers, but as an opportunity for schools to focus on the parents' lack of knowledge (Shah, 2009). Lack of representation from ethnic and racial groups also discourages many parents from participating (Shah, 2009). In a study of how symbolic representation impacted Latino participation in schools, parents were more willing to participate when they saw images of themselves being represented in the orchestration and implementation of school related activities (Shah, 2009). Further, Latino parents were motivated by seeing Latinos in roles as administrators or other positions of power (Shah, 2009). This detail expands further into the fact that many parents do not participate, not because of what they are being asked to do, but because of who is asking (Shah, 2009). Creating a school ATP opens the door for a variety of grade levels and cultures to merge into one group, sharing power, and working in concert to better the school.

Motivation, then, for parents in impoverished schools, is dependent on the attitudes of teachers and administrators. Epstein discovered that teachers who have successful parental involvement practices tend to share their knowledge with other teachers and influence peers to be proactive in implementing parent opportunities (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In order for schools to improve motivation levels of parents in impoverished schools, teachers and administrators must come to understand what inhibits parent involvement and work in collaboration with parents to include them with the resources, time, and education they possess. Schools that value parental involvement create a welcoming environment and invite parents to take part in decision making

(Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents tend to be more involved if they feel invited and feel that their voices will be heard (Young et al., 2013). ATPs call for regular interaction between committee members that include parents and community and the viewpoint of the parent is considered necessary to the success of the school (Epstein et al., 2002).

The clear connection between parental involvement and children's success academically and socially has been proven repeatedly in a plethora of research (Usher & Kober, 2012). Additionally, students have been proven to develop a level of intrinsic motivation as a result of parents taking an active role in schools (Usher & Kober, 2012). While students are motivated by the presence of their parents, there is a concern regarding what appears to be a lack of motivation from parents to be willing participants in schools. Impoverished parents tend to experience more stressors, such as lack of time and lack of resources, in comparison to middle class and wealthy families (Usher & Kober, 2012). Additionally, many impoverished parents are unsure of what role they play in schools (Usher & Kober, 2012). Studies of preschool parents showed that parents were motivated to be affiliated in the school if they felt that they had influential power in the school (Young et al., 2013). Even though parents may not have the resources, time, or education to be more active in schools, this does not mean they do not care about the success of their children, a common misconception of schools (Usher & Kober, 2012). This is especially significant for School X where data from teacher participants showed many teachers felt parents did not care enough to participate in schools.

Communication

Communication is considered one of the most important factors to the success of parental involvement programs (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Communication is a means of getting parents involved in schools (McMahon, 2014). A common misconception when it comes to parents in poverty and schools is that, despite efforts by schools to communicate with parents, there is no response or interest and that parents do not make time to participate in parental involvement activities (McMahon, 2014). In reality, communication methods by schools often lack clear messages or may not even reach their destination (McMahon, 2014). Communication efforts, then, should consider the cultural backgrounds of its parents, their education levels, the diverse socio-economic levels, and language differences (McMahon, 2014). Communication should be clear about what is expected and encourage the expertise of parents (McMahon, 2014). Finally, communication should reassure parents that they will learn more about school operations and their role in its functions (McMahon, 2014).

Not only are there cultural barriers in communication but there are also language barriers (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). A growing number of minority parents are ELL. Parents who are learning English as a second language are less likely to be active participants in schools due to the language barriers (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). ELL parents are often not able to communicate with their child's teacher, who frequently speak English. Additionally, cultural differences can lead to opposite views regarding when and how much parents should be involved in their child's schooling (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). This does not mean that ELL parents are not interested in the progress of their children, but that the level or type of parental involvement may be within the home

versus within the school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). In a study of parents of ELL

kindergarten students, there was a tendency by teachers to only acknowledge behaviors

that were observable such as participation in school related events; however, many non-

recognizable activities, such as assisting with homework and talking to children about

school, are effective forms of parental involvement (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). What is

needed to make these non–observable methods more effective are teachers that provide

clear communication on how to make these activities impactful and beneficial to both the

student and the school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010). Furthermore, continuous professional

development regarding parental involvement with minority populations, such as ELLs, is

critical (Vera et al., 2012). Professional development provides the opportunity for

research and dialogue about the impact of culture and socio-economic status on various

academic subjects and opens the door for teachers to widen their own views on how to

better engage parents in school activities (Lynch, 2010).

     Parent-teacher communication is a concept that impacts the effectiveness of

parental involvement programs in schools (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). Traditional forms

of communication such as newsletters, face-to-face parent conferences, and phone calls

are still used; however, the age of technology has afforded more options such as weekly

e-mails and text messaging (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). Despite the advancements in the

ways in which schools communicate, there are still many barriers that exist with regards

to communication and how it impacts parental involvement (Thompson & Mazer, 2012).

This is definitely true for schools with high levels of poverty. The expectation is that

schools correspond with parents in multiple ways and that communication is two-way

from school to parent and parent to school (Vance, 2014). In an ATP, a committee member is specifically assigned to a particular aspect of the Epstein models six types of involvement. Type two, communication, specifies ways for ATP committee members to ensure communication happens in schools and meets the needs of all people. Examples of practices are translations of school information for ELLs; clear information about school activities; effective and regular methods of communication such as newsletters, memos and phone calls; and parent input on parental involvement surveys (Epstein et al, 2002).

The efforts made by teachers as well as administrators provide a forecast of the willingness of parents to be involved in school-related activities (Shah, 2009). Simply communicating, that is sending information from one party to another, is no longer enough (Ferlazzo, 2011). Today's schools require conversation, dialogue that resonates that parents are invited by the school to take part in parental involvement opportunities (Ferlazzo, 2011). For parents in poverty, communication, at times, determines the level of involvement they have in schools (Shah, 2009). Moreover, for minority populations, observing how leaders who are symbolic representations of themselves communicate, is more powerful (Shah, 2009).

How parents are motivated is influenced by the ways school communicate (Young et al., 2013). There was an increase in parents involved in a middle school music program largely due to the level of communication that was extended (Poliniak, 2010). Instructors created invitations to participate that explained clear instructions about the program, provided the resources that were necessary for participation, and offered parents the opportunity to give regular feedback about concerns (Poliniak, 2010). Additionally,

involved parents were given specific roles in the class and were also offered lessons about what was being taught (Poliniak, 2010). In contrast, a study of communication in middle schools showed a lack of communication in all levels of the school (Griffiths-Prince, 2009). While administrators and teachers felt they communicated effectively about parental involvement, stakeholders had a different view citing teachers' attitudes and the overall school climate as factors that created negative response (Griffiths-Prince, 2009). Further, the lack of consideration regarding socio-economic status increased the disconnection regarding communication (Griffiths-Prince, 2009). School X is a an example of this scenario where teachers and parents had different perspectives regarding attitudes and the effectiveness of school communication.

Media richness theory (MRT) aims to identify communication methods that work best for a particular population (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). The premise behind MRT is that communication is only effective if the sender and receiver achieve the same meaning. This applies to face-to-face methods or computer-mediated communication (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). In order for a communication method to be rich, four components must apply. Firstly, the method must allow for immediate feedback. Secondly, social cues, such as tone and gestures, must be obvious. Thirdly, natural language must be used to express a wide range of ideas. Finally, there must be a personal focus in the communication method (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). Communication methods that incorporate these components are considered rich methods that promote productive parental involvement (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). With this in mind, when creating invitations to participate in school events, schools should be selective about the

media that is used. Not every parent, particularly impoverished families, has access to technology (McMahon, 2014). Considering the level of poverty within School X, technology could not be used solely because many parents may not have access to technology such as home computers, laptops, tablets, or even cellular phones.

While technology affords easier methods to send information (i.e., e-mail, written documents, text messaging), these methods are considered lean because immediate feedback cannot occur (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). For example, in a study of parents and online grading systems, parents expressed a desire to hold conversations about what objectives their children were learning and how they compared to other students. An element that was missed by parents was conversation that provided details and descriptions of how their children progressed (Webber & Wilson, 2012). On the other hand, face-to-face communication is the richest method because the four components of MRT can occur (Thompson & Mazer, 2012). But, the Epstein model proved that when the six types of involvement are implemented and ATPs are in place to monitor successes and failures, lean method programs, such as the computer website mentioned previously, can be successful and beneficial (Piper, 2012). School X does have an online grade system available to all parents in the school. How many parents have signed up to use it and how often parents access the information is not known. Additionally, the system does not allow parents the ability to send messages and get responses.

Parents in School X expressed a lack of communication in the school that often led to confusion about what is expected and needed from them. Communication must be clear and rich, with the opportunity for immediate response from either party.

Additionally, diversity and language barriers must be addressed in communication so that all populations are reached and feel welcomed. What is also important is that communication expresses what is expected of parents and demonstrates that parents are being invited to the school. Thus, communication is a necessary component to successful parental involvement programs. An ATP at School X would oversee the six methods of involvement with communication being one of the target areas (Epstein et al, 2002).

School Practices

How parents are invited into schools is important. But, more importantly, the environment of the school can play an even greater role (Lynch, 2010). Past research proves that parents' participation in parental involvement is vastly impacted by the practices of teachers and schools rather than socio-economic status and/or ethnicity (Lynch, 2010). A study of ELL parents in a Midwestern metropolitan area school showed that the school climate had a direct impact on communication regarding students, developing relationships with the community, and communicating with teachers (Vera et al., 2012). Additionally, the impact that parental involvement has on a child's emotional growth is influential (Richardson, 2009). According to the Broffenbrenner theory of emotional growth, a child's world is a network of many joined associations, events, and circumstances (Richardson, 2009). Moreover, the types of institutions, such as churches, community facilities, and schools, can affect the outcome of a child's life (Richardson, 2009). Schools, then, have a responsibility to incorporate parents in the creation of parental involvement programs and build a constructive environment in the school if the expectation is to be a positive influence on children's lives (Richardson, 2009). School X

has a Site Based Decision Making team that is open to faculty, staff, parents, and community; however, during my observation time, this team did not meet despite having a regular monthly meeting scheduled.

In order for school practices to be effective and beneficial regarding parental involvement, each person in the school must understand the importance of their role and how it contributes to the school climate. The principal is essentially the visionary leader who works to convince teachers, parents, and the community to accept the plan and work collaboratively and cooperatively (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). This includes being a part of a school ATP but not leading the committee (Epstein et al, 2002). Likewise, principals must devise parental involvement strategies and programs that arouse parents desire to participate (Richardson, 2009). This means that principals must oversee, promote, financially support, and be aware of parental involvement activities to make them successful (Richardson, 2009). Creating annual goals rather than using a one-size-fits-all plan helps develop strategies for continuous growth and reflection (Richardson, 2009). Principals should encourage parents to be a part of advisory committees that actively assist in the creation of these plans and also encourages nonactive parents to become involved (Richardson 2009). The principal, then, creates empowerment for parents and enhances their enjoyment regarding participation (Richardson, 2009). To create this type of involvement that encourages egalitarianism, the principal opens the floor to parents as decision makers; has awareness of community standards; and makes connections between families, community, and resources (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). All of this falls in line with the formation and goals of a school ATP and how it runs (Epstein et al., 2002).

The role of the school in implementing parental involvement programs is just as impactful as the role of the principal with the school environment. Additionally, the ideologies of the staff can determine success (Richardson, 2009). It is noteworthy that the attitudes of school personnel can either encourage or hamper involvement (Richardson, 2009). Beliefs that involving parents is too much work or that as children get older parents do not need to be as involved further distances parents from taking active roles in schools (Richardson, 2009). Further, assumptions about why parents are not involved can be harmful; however, when the school takes a positive position in promoting parental involvement, the positive impact is noticeable (LaForett& Mendez, 2010). Parental participation improves when school personnel consider ways to provide parents with appropriate time to be involved, build efficacy in parents, and have knowledge of specific approaches that help (Richardson, 2009). Parents at School X mentioned a lack of motivation from teachers and a need to feel wanted in the school.

Continuing education for parents on how to be better involved, identifying the needs of families through needs assessments, and school personnel in continuous training on how to better service parents are elements that are commonly seen when the school, as a whole, works to improve parental involvement programs (LaForett & Mendez, 2010). Understanding culture, respecting religions, and becoming familiar with traditions builds relationships (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). In a study of the effects of providing the culturally relevant language program, Dichos, for parents of Latino students, the findings demonstrated that incorporating language and culture into the learning not only developed language but encouraged parents to participate (Sanchez et al., 2010). An

observation by one bilingual parent at School X was that lack of interpreters at many of the school events limiting the ability of parents to effectively participate. Thus, successful programs incorporate cultural factors into their parental involvement activities and understand the importance of recognizing diversity (Sanchez et al., 2010).

In the primary years of schooling, the need for parental involvement is great and its continuity assists with active participation in schools as children get older (Griffiths-Prince, 2009). Recent studies of parental involvement show that parents who are actively involved in schools when their children are young are likely to continue being involved when their children attend college (Kennedy, 2009). In fact, institutions of higher education are now having to create policies for parents because of the increase in parents who want to be active in the college/university setting (Kennedy, 2009). What still exists, however, is a decline in involvement as children leave primary school and migrate to middle school due largely to parents' lack of confidence in their ability to properly assist children in middle and high school (Griffiths-Prince, 2009).

The holistic view of parental involvement appreciates the contribution of parents and understands that these contributions come in the form of home or activities in the building (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). Generally, parental involvement is observed by what parents do in the building such as volunteering. Additional opportunities for parents within the school should be as decision makers and an expectation that parents will respond to communications sent home (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). For the impoverished parent, working in the school may be difficult due to barriers such as lack of transportation, conflicting work schedules, lack of childcare, and even psychological

barriers such as low self-esteem regarding their own education (Rapp & Duncan, 2011).

Parents, then, can be experts in working with their children at home setting academic

goals, engaging in meaningful conversation, providing educational trips, and supplying

educational materials within the home (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). Parents involved in

homework is considered a common form of parental involvement in the home because of

the level of parent-child interaction (Epstein, 1983). This may be the only time that

parents and children discuss what happens at school and how children feel about what is

happening at school (Epstein, 1983). Thus, the parents role in parental involvement

should be creatively designed and include flexibility to cater to the obstacles that hinder

parents in poverty from being more active (Rapp & Duncan, 2011).

School practices contribute to a parent's sense of self-efficacy. Each person in the

school, including parents, must know their role and understand how their contribution

impacts the synergy that is needed in a successful parental involvement program. The

project designed for School X that includes the Epstein model and an ATP puts them in

place for designing a tailor made program that considers the data that was gathered by

parents and teachers. Parents are not bystanders but become necessary to bettering school

practices. Also, schools should not limit parental involvement to what is observed in the

school but understand that home activities, when carefully designed, can be effective and

impactful forms of parental involvement. When schools, such as School X, create flexible

ways for parents to be involved, the opportunities for increased parental involvement is

available.

Conclusion

I conducted a second exhaustive literature review in order to find research that provided information on the issues of not only involving but engaging impoverished parents in school, creating school practices that are sensitive to the needs of the parents, and examples of parental involvement frameworks in practice. I also searched for articles related to communication and motivation. Specifically, articles that showed the Epstein model used were researched. As with the initial literature review, I used various educational research databases. These databases included the following: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), SAGE, ProQuest, and Education Research Complete. Additionally, the human services data base (SocINDEX) was used for its relationship to studies about the effects of poverty. Search terms included *poverty, early childhood, education, parental involvement, Epstein model, motivation, communication, environment,* and *school practices*. Articles chosen are within the past 5 years at the time of this writing with the exception of articles and books written by Epstein, who is considered a guru in the field of parental involvement, an interview with Epstein, and articles that are specific to the origin of a theory or framework. Articles are peer-reviewed and/or have evidence of references to other studies. The other materials for the literature review included books used for providing emphasis of the topics being discussed. A review of the literature shows that the concerns for School X are profound throughout many schools with high levels of poverty.

The Epstein Project

The Epstein model for school, family, and community partnerships is the model that will be used for the implementation of a parental involvement project at School X.

The primary focus is to create an ATP that will focus on implementing the six levels of involvement identified by Epstein. The model, based on Epstein's handbook for action, is a research-based framework to guide schools with creating a parental involvement program that caters to the needs of their school (Epstein et al., 2002). The model has been used in many schools to implement parental involvement programs and/or focus on a particular area of weakness in their present practice (Epstein et al., 2002). For example, an elementary school in Ohio focused only on the parenting aspect of the model when encouraging parents to update their child's vaccinations prior to their transition to middle school. The ATP coordinated efforts for accurate communication that yielded high levels of response as a result (Epstein et al., 2002). In another scenario, a New York elementary school's ATP focused on better communication with parents by creating school notebooks for two-way communication with parents. The notebooks were brightly colored with the school's logo and provided spaces for the school to communicate with the parent and the parent to respond. The notebook design was a collaborative effort by members of the ATP. Both parents and teachers praised the communication project for providing a way for teachers and parents to make contact with each other and be informed of school events (Epstein et al, 2002). Other examples can be provided for the implementation and effectiveness of the Epstein model in not only elementary schools but middle schools and high schools. Whether the model is used focusing on all six types of involvement simultaneously or on specific areas, its continuous use in elementary and secondary education verifies that this method has historic success and is a reliable framework.

Needed Resources, Existing Supports, and Potential Barriers

With impoverishment a major concern for School X, it is necessary that a project with minimal expenses be selected. In the case of the Epstein framework, no financial resources will be necessary for the creation of the ATP but a thorough understanding of the model is important in order to encourage and motivate involvement. Epstein's handbook supplies details of how to successfully create an ATP, resources for professional development that can be used for committee members as well as program evaluation for progress monitoring. The handbook is available for purchase online or in selected bookstores for less than 10 dollars.

Currently, School X maintains a PTA and SBDM that meets monthly. The input of these existing supports will be necessary for the newly structured ATP to discuss what has been attempted and the outcomes in terms of parental involvement. Additionally, School X has received partnership from a local church that provides some financial support to the school. Eventually, School X will need financial resources as the ATP becomes more established and begins to focus on specific areas of parental involvement. This partnership can help alleviate potential costs that impoverished parents cannot afford and that the school does not have to pull from their present budget.

In terms of potential barriers, what has been and continues to be an existing barrier is motivation. Data analysis proved that teachers and parents alike viewed motivation as low or nonobservable in School X. Both parties will have to demonstrate an understanding of the current problem, its impact on the success of the school, and a willingness to be a part of the solution. With the issue of poverty always present, an ATP

will have to be sensitive to the needs of parents who participate. It is understood that impoverishment impacts transportation, if a parent can pay for childcare, take off of work, or even feelings of adequacy. ATP committee members work collaboratively and with equity and must be willing to compromise so that all members have an active, fair chance to contribute. Finally, the risk of members changing throughout the year is a potential barrier. Faculty and staff can change. Parents may transfer. An ATP has to be open to accepting new members if necessary so that the committee can continue with an adequate number of participants.

Implementation

Regular meetings on an achievable schedule are essential to the success of an ATP. They should meet at least monthly for up to two hours. Meetings are used for planning and scheduling activities; organizing events; appraising the outcomes of previous events; and problem solving (Epstein et al, 2002). Additionally, the ATP creates a 3-year plan to set broad goals, a 1-year action plan that is monitored at these regular monthly meetings that demonstrates efforts to meet the 3-year plan goals, and also conducts an end-of-the-year review to plan for the next year (see Appendix A for the Epstein Model's Documents for Implementation; Epstein et al., 2002). The involvement of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to take on roles in the committee is essential. Effective committees are comprised of 6–12 members that are assigned to various roles in the committee (Epstein et al, 2002). The Epstein model provides detailed steps of how to formulate an ATP. The first step is to simply select committee members.

An ATP should consist of a variety of people such as parents, faculty (i.e., administrators, teachers, and support staff), parents, and community members (Epstein et al., 2002). Students are usually invited to participate at the secondary level (Epstein et al., 2002). For School X, the goal is the creation of an ATP at the beginning of a new school year when staff is finalized and enrollment for the year is established. Faculty/staff in School X are required to participate in a minimum of two committees per year. ATP will be one of those committee options. Initial parent participants will be pulled from the PTA and/or SBDM.

The committee openings will consist of six teachers (one teacher for each grade level), one administrator, and one member of support staff, two parents, and two community members. Representation from each of these groups is necessary in order to ensure that everyone is participating and has a voice. Additionally, having committee members from all aspects of school life ensures access to information and venues. For example, an administrator on the committee can ensure that time and space is available monthly for meetings, promote activities that the ATP is working on, and work with individuals at the district level to receive additional resources. Teachers, especially when there are a variety of grade levels, provide regular communication from grade levels and can communicate with parents. Parents are a bridge to the neighborhood and can relay information regarding parental concerns (Epstein et al., 2002). All committee vacancies will be filled by the end of the second week of the new school year.

Roles and Responsibilities

An ATP should meet monthly (Epstein et al., 2002). The first meeting of the year, which will occur during the first full month of the new school year, will be used to select the chairperson(s). The chairperson(s) can be any member(s) of the committee but is not usually an administrator (Epstein et al., 2002). The chairperson has several roles. They include scheduling monthly meetings or meetings as needed; creating agendas and overseeing the meetings; providing minutes for each meeting; assisting in the creation and implementation of the 1-year action plan; providing needed documents to all members; supporting the committee members with their responsibilities; replacing members that leave; familiarizing new members; and preparing the next chairperson (Epstein et al., 2002). The chairperson of the ATP reports information to the school (i.e., PTA or SBDM) to let them know of the efforts being made and their outcomes (Epstein et al., 2002).

Once the chairperson(s) is established, the committee can divide remaining members into subcommittees. Epstein has two structures for assigning the roles and responsibilities that are dependent on the focus for a school (Epstein et al., 2002). If a school is focusing on academic goals, then subcommittees are created for the number of goals that are created. Goals could include improving homework, reaching an academic goal in a particular academic subject, or improving behavior. If a school is focusing on implementing the six types of involvement, then subcommittees are created for each type of involvement. School X will focus on the types of involvement, therefore, there will be six subcommittee chairs and working members on each of the committees. Each of the

subcommittees will need a chairperson or cochairs. The roles of the chairperson or

cochairs for the subcommittees are similar to the chairperson for the ATP. Their work,

however, is done specifically for their committee and reported to the chairperson of the

ATP (Epstein et al., 2002). The subcommittee chairpersons and members will also be

established during the initial meeting of the ATP.

As a whole, the ATPs role is to create and take responsibility for parental

involvement opportunities in the school (Epstein et al., 2002). The ATP reports to other

organizations within the school about its goals and progress. Unlike other organizations,

its primary goal is to strengthen parental involvement. In addition to creating a 1-year

action plan, the ATP should review present practices to know how to direct committees.

They should also work collaboratively on a 3-year outline of ideas that need to develop

over time. Finally, the ATP should create and conduct a "kickoff" to inform the

community of the organization (Epstein et al., 2002). While School X has a PTA and a

SBDM, it lacks an organization that focuses solely on parental involvement. Epstein has

clearly defined instructions for the start of this committee within School X.

<div align="center">**Program Evaluation**</div>

Just as the Epstein model provides details for creation and implementation, the

model also provides details for evaluation of the committee and its projects. The

evaluation process begins with an inventory of present methods for school, family, and

community partnerships (see Appendix A for the Epstein Model's Documents for

Implementation). The process then extends to two planning tools, the 3-year outline and

the1-year plan, that define the vision, long-term goals, and short-term goals for the.

Success or progress needed is determined by an end-of-year evaluation. The Epstein

model provides an end-of-year evaluation for both types of ATP, type-oriented or goal-

oriented. School X will use the type-oriented evaluation system. Evaluations should

occur during the spring of each school year and influence the plan created for the next

school year (Epstein et al., 2008).

The initial inventory (Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships)

assists in identifying current routines related to the six types of parental involvement (see

Appendix A for the Epstein Model's Documents for Implementation). The inventory

utilizes a rubric for determining practices that are never used to practices that are

frequently used. Questions range from ways that the school communicates with parents to

how the school respects cultures. The purpose is to know how to maintain what is

working and continue with improving present practices (Epstein et al., 2008).

The 3-year plan and the 1-year action plan are created when the ATP is initially

formed; however, their purposes are unique. The 3-year plan evaluation is for creating a

long-term vision for the ATP regarding parental involvement in School X. The plan is

updated after it is evaluated and its status is discussed with the school and community.

The 3-year plan should be evaluated each spring and its updates should include input

from stakeholders (Epstein et al., 2008).

In contrast, the 1-year plan is for the creation of short-term goals. Committee

members determine what they plan to achieve, how they plan to achieve it, and the dates

of completion. The plan also discusses the resources needed for the activities to be

successful. Despite monthly meetings that discuss the progress of the 1-year plan

activities, an evaluation is necessary for a comprehensive look. The evaluation, then, determines the success of the planned activities as a whole and to know how to better approach 1-year planning in the upcoming year (Epstein et al., 2008).

Finally, the end-of-year evaluation rates the excellence of the overall ATP and evaluates how each parental involvement type was addressed. A description of the outcome of each planned activity under the different types of involvement is detailed. The ATP uses this evaluation in conjunction with the findings from the 1-year evaluation as well as the vision of the 3-year outline to assist with writing the new 1-year plan and modifying the 3-year outline if necessary (Epstein et al., 2008).

School X is in need of a research based design that not only provides steps for creating and implementing but for evaluating also. The Epstein model incorporates all of these in a systematic way so that a school, such as School X, who has not had the benefit of a successful parental involvement program, has detailed steps with suggested timelines and an evaluation system in place that incorporates dialogue from stakeholders that includes parents and community leaders (Epstein et al., 2008). ATP members meet and discuss regularly. Additionally, the evaluation system is qualitative in nature meaning that descriptions from members are used as evaluative methods in comparison to simply conducting surveys. For School X, this evaluation system is ideal as there will be limited need for creating plans and evaluations and energy can be devoted to implementing successfully proven practices. Moreover, School X will use discussion and description as a method of making accurate analysis of successful programs to better plan for future parental involvement activities.

Project Implications

The implications for the project study demonstrate that social change is achievable. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that inhibited impoverished parents from being more involved. These conversations yielded results that showed clear deficits at School X in areas of parental engagement, motivation by staff and parents, communication, school practices that incorporate parent input, and a framework to guide parental involvement programs. Epstein's model incorporates school, parents, and community as collaborators in improving parental involvement. What is unique is that parents are not bystanders in the process but are a voice and can take on significant roles in creating and implementing. Additionally, parents are invited and expected to take roles in leadership. Parents are not undermined because of financial status but are recognized and needed as resources that positively impact schools. Parents as partners in the Epstein model is not optional but required. Thus, social change at School X is rendered by the direct involvement of parents in poverty taking an active role in the school and their involvement not being a possibility but a requisite.

In the larger context, the project study provides the opportunity for continued research on the study of parental involvement and impoverishment. Previously mentioned was the gap in literature regarding parental involvement, poverty, and studies done on schools holistically. While there is documentation of studies of particular grade levels or subjects, there are few of schools that include all grade levels, both elementary and secondary. Additionally, few studies include early childhood grades such as prekindergarten. The inclusion of all grade levels at the elementary level, including

prekindergarten, is a step forward in closing the gap in literature, research, and projects created and implemented in schools with regards to the subject. Implementation of this project at School X and reporting its findings opens the door for schools in similar situations with parental involvement to have a frame of reference for implementing their own projects. School X is part of a large urban district that, as a whole, is over 95% impoverished. The assumption can be made that other schools within the district may suffer from the same issue as School X regarding parental involvement. So, at the district level, this study can be of benefit. Additionally, the Epstein model provides the framework that can be used and is not limited to just urban populations but can be used in any population (i.e., rural, suburban) where there is a need.

Conclusion

The goal for the research study was to identify factors that constrain parents in poverty from taking a more active role in schools. The study focused primarily on School X located in District X. The study proved necessary for School X because of a continuous decline in involvement in the school. Because of the identified gap in literature and research regarding an entire school that includes early childhood education, a study of this sort was needed to target remedies for the issue and provide another form of research regarding the subject. The results demonstrated deficits in parental engagement/involvement, motivation, communication, school practices, and an identified framework for parental involvement in the school. Because of these findings, the Epstein model for school, family, and community partnerships was suggested as a project study for implementation in the school. Specifically, the need for an ATP to implement the six

types of involvement was suggested. The Epstein model provides details for

implementation of roles and responsibilities as well as evaluation methods to determine

success and the need for progress. Naturally, professional development will be necessary

to properly implement the plan but, once implemented, the implications for social change

include parents having a voice which was one of the goals of the study. Finally, the study

benefits the local school, the district at large, and a variety of populations. The next

section of this study will be an overview of the project study's strengths, limitations, and

alternative project designs. Additionally, I will provide a self-reflection regarding how

this study has impacted by views on scholarship, project development, leadership,

change, and how I have evolved as a scholar and practitioner. The section will conclude

with the projects implications for positive social change.

Section 4: Reflection/Conclusion

Introduction

In Section 4, I will provide an explanation of the project study's strengths and limitations. In this section, I will also present my recommendations for alternative methods to address the issue of parental involvement in impoverished schools and what I learned about scholarship, project development, evaluation, leadership, and change over the course of completing this study. Additionally, I provide my personal reflections regarding my abilities as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. This section concludes with a discussion of the importance of this study, what was learned, implications for social change, and applications and directions that influence future research.

Project Strengths

The strengths of the project are present in a variety of ways. The Epstein model for parental involvement is research based and practiced at many schools. For School X, this is important because of their lack of any type of consistent parental involvement program. Having a predesigned plan means School X simply focuses on implementation versus the creation of the project. For the first year, only implementation will be crucial to the continued success of the model.

Another strength is the number of participants involved in the ATP. With up to 12 participants that come from a pool of teachers, administrators, paraprofessional staff, parents, and community, a variety of voices are heard. The original premise behind this study was to ensure that parents had a voice. The ATP requires parents to participate.

With the Epstein model, parents can lead the ATP, chair a committee, or participate as a member of a committee of their choice.

Finally, the Epstein model allows the committee members to focus on a common agenda. Committee members discuss priorities for the school and each committee creates a plan and goals to meet. Because the administrators are not expected to be the ATP chairperson, school leadership alone does not set goals or push their own agendas. Collaboration and cooperation is available and the school is limited in its ability to take over the committee.

<div align="center">**Project Limitations and Remediation**</div>

I was also able to identify a couple limitations to this project. With little to no literature that demonstrates the successful implementation of the Epstein model in a school holistically, identifying negative factors that might lessen the ability to implement the concept is considered a limitation. Many of the Epstein model's examples of the implementation deal specifically with a specific grade level or subject. School X, basically, will be learning as they go. Additionally, lack of motivation by both parents and teachers was identified in data analysis. Persuading teachers and parents to make a yearlong commitment to the ATP requires continuous enthusiasm on the part of the chairperson. Without having a successful model of any type in the school, this could prove difficult for a chairperson who may be new in the role of leadership and for members who may lose interest.

The key to successfully implementing this project and addressing its limitations is ensuring that professional development is done on a regular basis. School X has created

parental involvement activities but has had limited success in retaining individuals to continue to the programs. It is understood that professional development must occur at the beginning of the year for the staff and parents so that there is a clear picture of the problem in School X and that everyone has a fair opportunity to participate. However, what has to occur after the creation of the ATP is continuous professional development for committee members so that questions are answered and topics of interest are discussed. By doing this, committee members constantly build knowledge on how to effectively serve on the ATP. While the Epstein handbook provides documents for initial professional development and workshops, ATPs will need to discuss future professional development based on the needs of the committee.

Alternative Project Designs

While School X would benefit most from a research-based design, there are other models mentioned in the literature review. The parent empowerment model designed by Christianakis (2011) is designed to ensure that parents have decision making power. Christianakis' model is devoted to parents having a voice, the primary focus of this study. However this model was not selected for two primary reasons. First, it did not guarantee collaboration with teachers and parents (Christianakis, 2011). In fact, one of the model's limitations was that teachers would not want to work closely with parents (Christianakis, 2011). Second, the parent empowerment model did not have a researched framework to support it and also lacked an evaluation method (Christianakis, 2011). While there are many models that are used to encourage parental involvement, Epstein's method is researched based and evaluative, supplying all the materials that would be needed for a

school that is initiating a parental involvement program. This made it the better choice for School X.

Scholarship

Prior to beginning my study, my view of scholarship was limited to creating a thesis statement, validating it with three points, and concluding with a statement that supported my original thought. I often found articles to cite that supported my thesis and provided no contrast to the topic. Since then, I know that true scholarship is not only proving my point but looking for the contrasting views of what I am researching. Scholarship for me now, is digging deep and not for just what proves my point. It is also about accepting differences of opinions and deciphering between what is valid and invalid. I am careful about what I accept as valid and credible. I am careful about what I share with others without having done my own level of study. Scholarship for me is now an obligation and a representation of my commitment to higher, continuous learning.

Project Development and Evaluation

Creating a project for a school with a social issue is not simply selecting a design and implementing it. Using a one-size-fits-all approach to project development does not ensure that the needs of the school are met and that a potential remedy is found. When selecting a design for School X, I had to consider the areas of concern defined in the data analysis. This means that I had to look at several options and select what was the best possible method for the school. What I learned was that project development is more than a good idea applied to any situation. It is a good idea that has been selected for a particular situation because it best meets the needs of that particular cause.

Evaluation, then, guarantees that reflection takes place. As a project developer, I had to guarantee that there was some level of evaluation to determine if goals were being met and what would be needed to move forward. The design used for School X has an evaluation method embedded in its design, making it the most viable project for the school. This means that a project developer thinks of more than just creating a project. They think of how to determine the success of the project as well.

Leadership and Change

In the past, I have been a reluctant leader, not sure or confident of what my contributions were to the field. Now I see leadership as an opportunity to share ideas and collaborate with colleagues on unique agendas. Leadership requires me to not simply direct but to organize my peers so that we can work cooperatively on a set of goals. Leadership also requires servitude. I have to be available as a listener, model of good work, and open to ideas and suggestions from others. Leadership also requires the acceptance of change. Being in leadership, I recognize when change is necessary and when the overall vision requires some level of change. While change can be intimidating, in leadership I recognize it as an integral part of progress. My role is to make the transition of change smooth by buying into the vision and guiding my peers.

Self-Analysis as a Scholar

This project study experience has empowered me as a scholar. I understand that being credible is important and needed in the field of education. It is not enough to know, one must also be able to prove. Because of this, I read more and apply more so that I can defend my practices and my beliefs. At the same time, I read more so that I can discover

new methods and be informed of opposing views. Being a scholar does not mean I know everything but that I am constantly seeking more knowledge. Having researched a topic thoroughly, I am now aware that scholarship entails continuous learning and that true scholars are never satisfied with what they already know. They desire to know more. The doctoral journey is often viewed as termination of the learning career. However, for the scholar it is the stage of enlightenment that learning is unceasing and the beginning of learning for constant growth.

Self-Analysis as a Practitioner

A practitioner is someone who is a specialist in their field. The expectation, then, would be that this person has expertise that their colleagues come to depend on for guidance. I strive to have that expertise. Once a reluctant leader, I now find myself more in the forefront, sharing information with colleagues and modeling. I also find myself reading more so that I am aware of current research practices and trends as they relate to my area of expertise. As I worked on the project for this study, I found myself repeatedly referring to articles and texts that showed my plan in action. The surface knowledge I once used to guide me was no longer enough. My understanding had to be greater and deeper in order for me to convey to my colleagues what we needed to do and why it had been planned in a particular way. What I have learned about myself as a practitioner is what I have learned about myself in many other areas, and that is that lifelong, continuous learning is a necessary part of me and impacts who I am as a specialist in my field.

Self-Analysis as a Project Developer

There are many great ideas generated that never come to fruition because they lack proper project development and an evaluation system that uses reflection as a method to work toward continuous progress. A personal barrier I had during the course of my research was finding a project that best suited the needs of my study as it related to School X. I knew what was needed but was not sure how to implement it. I discovered that project development, that is good project development, takes time and a vested interest in solving the initial issue. This means that I needed to have a thorough understanding of the problem, investigate it historically, discover its present impact, and then create a project based on the gathered information. It is not enough to use what has been done without knowing if it is applicable to the current issue. When thinking of my own project for this study, I researched several possible methods and contemplated creating my own project. However, my selection of a research-based framework was based on my understanding of the needs for School X.

Additionally, the evaluation component of my project was important. A project developer does not simply create and then hope for the best. They implement and reflect on continuous ways to make progress. Evaluation provides an opportunity to correct what is not working and continue with what is working. Project development cannot be impactful without evaluation and one's willingness to self-reflect. Now that I am overseeing a project, I know that the success of its implementation is dependent on my understanding the role of the project developer and using evaluation to examine its strengths and weaknesses.

Overall Reflection of Research

The purpose of this study was to examine parental involvement in impoverished schools and determine factors that inhibit more involvement at School X. Of particular interest was the viewpoint of the parents and their perspective regarding current school practices in School X. The intent of the study was to not only identify the factors but to give parents in poverty a voice as it relates to a particular topic within the school and create a possible remedy that involves collaboration between parents and school personnel. I learned that research, in itself, is not beneficial without extensive review of what has been done and how it relates to current conditions. While there were many studies done on the subject, they did not necessarily draw conclusions that were apropos to the state of School X. The final plan for School X was based on sorting previous research and deciding what was best based on the data collected from this study.

In an initial literature review, it was identified that studies regarding parental involvement and poverty on an entire school were rare. Therefore, the importance of this particular study is found in three ways. First, it provided the opportunity for parents to express their views in a research-based study and be contributors to the school. While teachers were used for the study, parents' perspectives were the primary component used for the creation of the project for School X. Second, every grade level and/or subject within the school was used for the study. There is a lack of research on schools, parental involvement, and poverty with a holistic viewpoint. This study contributes to the closing of that gap. Finally, the study is important because it now provides a research-based framework for School X to begin using as a solution to their issue of parental

involvement. The research-based framework is especially important because it focuses on

parents and teachers as collaborators of equal value rather than parents in subservient

roles in the school.

This study opens the door for, not only School X, but other schools like School X

in District X to address a growing parental involvement issue. With over 95% of the

population in District X considered impoverished, this research can be used as a model

and create change district wide if successfully implemented. In the broader context,

schools in rural and suburban communities where impoverishment and lack of parental

involvement is present can use this research as a guide for future steps within their

environment.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The voice of the parent was a strong piece to this study. Many studies regarding

ways to reform school rely on the opinions of educators but stakeholders, such as parents,

are not represented in changes that primarily impact them as well as their children. In the

case of this study, parents not only had opportunity to describe their concerns but make

suggestions. What was found was that their views did not vary much from the opinions

of teachers or the observations that were made. What this says is that parents are aware

of positives that occur in the school and are aware of the disparities that occur also. For

those who read this study, perhaps a new frame of mind regarding the importance of

parent opinion will drive changes within their own schools.

The purpose of this study was to give voice to parents. Previous research on the

study of parental involvement and its relationship with impoverished schools has been

limited to isolated studies about specific grade levels and/or specific content areas. Few

studies, if any, incorporated an entire elementary, middle, or high school. Moreover,

there was little evidence of studies that included early childhood education. In addition

to the lack of research of parental involvement on an entire school was the lack of

research regarding the subject that emphasized the voice of parents. This study

considered the missing variables and intentionally included them as integral parts of the

study. What this shows is that not only can all grade level and content areas be

considered in a study simultaneously but the voice of the parents can assist with reform

so that all grade levels, content areas, and parents can be considered in the creation of

new programs and benefit from the changes that aim to create a positive culture and

climate.

Future Research Opportunities

The field of education benefits from having continuous research on the issue of

parental involvement and poverty. Additionally, this study served to close a gap in

research by conducting an all-inclusive study of the entire school. Now that a holistic

study has been completed, there are several opportunities for continued research on the

topic of parental involvement in impoverished schools at the local level as well as a

broader context. School X is now in a position to continue studying its relationship with

parents and the effectiveness of the ATP once it is in place. In the broader context, this

study serves as the model for District X to study other schools within the district and

create a larger parental involvement plan for all schools within the district. Moreover,

recent statistics show that suburban communities in Atlanta are home to 88% of the cities

impoverished families (Samuels, 2015). Suburbs are now the new face of poverty and

their schools will no doubt be impacted by this change in some ways that an urban

school, such as School X, has been impacted by poverty. Findings from this study could

be generalizable even to a suburban area and encourage further research on how poverty

in the suburbs is impacting parental involvement.

Conclusion

As a result of this research, there are strengths and weaknesses identified in not

only the study, but the project selection for School X. What has been determined,

however, is that various methods have been examined to establish an appropriate plan to

be implemented in the school to address its immediate issue of parental involvement.

School X is now in a position to work in collaboration with parents as a result of

conversations with parents that allowed them to express their opinion. What is needed

now are eager participants to implement the project and stay motivated so that the ATP

will not fade away as other parental involvement programs in the school have done

historically. The contributions to social change as it relates to this study were also

identified. Finally, the reflection process explained my personal growth as a scholar,

practitioner, and project designer. These reflective thoughts identified lifelong learning

and the need to be an expert in my field as necessary components to my personal success.

Implications for future research identified the need for extending research on the

subject in School X. Significantly, a discussion of the importance of this research

recognized that the universal approach of the study closed a gap in literature. While

District X does not require a report of the research conducted at School X, presentation of

the information to leaders would benefit the district due to the fact that the majority of the

district is impoverished and these findings could be relevant to many schools that are

struggling with parental involvement. Furthermore, information from this study benefits

not only School X but schools in rural and suburban schools as poverty is prevalent in

these communities as well.

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Appendix A

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Getting Started Checklist:

❖ Open membership for ATP. Identify 6–12 members (teachers, parents, administrators,

and/or community).

❖ Open nominations for chairperson or cochairs of the ATP.

❖ Designate a chairperson or cochairs for each subcommittee in the ATP. School X will

focus on the six types of involvement, therefore, will need six committee chairs.

❖ Committee members, teachers, and parents should complete the inventory of present

practices regarding the six types of involvement.

❖ Committee members should complete a 3-year outline focused on the six types of

partnerships. The goals for each type should be broad and develop over time.

❖ Committee members should complete a 1-year action plan describing activities for

each of the subcommittees focuses on the six types of involvement. The plan should

state who is facilitating the activities, when they will occur, and the expected

outcomes for each event.

❖ Committee members should create a reasonable schedule for where all ATP members

can meet regularly. These meetings can occur monthly or every other month.

Additionally, sub-committees should establish a meeting schedule. If the ATP meets

as a whole every other month, then sub-committees can meet during the months that ATP does not meet. If the ATP meets as a whole monthly, then sub-committees should meet during the month as well.

❖ Committee members should decide what and how they will report the progress of the ATP to various groups in the school. These groups should include but are not limited to the following: SBDM, PTA, the entire faculty, all parents, community, and division offices.

❖ Committee members should create a "kickoff" activity. This activity should let teachers, parents, and the community know about the ATP and its goals for school-wide partnership.

First ATP Meeting Agenda Topics:

❖ Leadership

➢ Establish leaders for the ATP. Leaderships should be shared. Leaders for sub-committees should be established as well. Leadership roles can include: Chairperson or co-chairs of the ATP, recorder (documents meeting minutes), liaison (informs school of ATPs plans and informs ATP of the school's concerns), liaison (informs PTA of ATPs plans and informs ATP of PTAs concerns), publicist/promoter (creates advertisement of ATPs activities), chairperson or co-chairs of the ATPs subcommittees (at least six for the six types of parental involvement), and other leadership roles as needed.

❖ Communication

> ➢ Document all committee members' names, addresses, and phone numbers. Each committee member should have this information.

> ➢ Establish a regular schedule for meetings (dates, time, and place).

> ➢ Establish ground rules for the meetings.

> ➢ Determine a way for members to report when they are unable to attend meetings.

> ➢ Determine how to keep members who are unable to attend meetings updated (how will they receive meeting minutes).

> ➢ Determine how the ATP will keep school, community and parents aware of partnership activities and their progress.

> ➢ Organize team-building activities.

❖ One-Year Plan

> ➢ Review the responsibilities of the ATP committee for school year.

> ➢ Make revisions to the plan throughout the year as needed.

❖ Partnership Activities

> ➢ Each sub-committee plans activities for the year.

> > ▪ What activities are planned?

> > ▪ Which sub-committee is in charge of the activities?

> > ▪ What resources will be needed for successful implementation?

> > ▪ Who will facilitate the activities?

> > ▪ What will be the evaluation method to determine if the activity was successful?

❖ Determine the date, time, place, and agenda for the next ATP meeting.

Three-Year Outline

(What is the vision of the school for each type of parenting?)

❖ Type 1 (Parenting)

   ➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in parenting over the next 3 years?)

      ▪ Year 1 goal

      ▪ Year 2 goal

      ▪ Year 3 goal

❖ Type 2 (Communicating)

   ➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in communication over the next 3 years?)

      ▪ Year 1 goal

      ▪ Year 2 goal

      ▪ Year 3 goal

❖ Type 3 (Parenting)

   ➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in parenting over the next 3 years?)

      ▪ Year 1 goal

      ▪ Year 2 goal

      ▪ Year 3 goal

❖ Type 4 (Learning at Home)

➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in academic learning

activities over the next 3years?)

▪ Year 1 goal

▪ Year 2 goal

▪ Year 3 goal

❖ Type 5 (Decision Making)

➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in parents included in

decision making over the next 3 years?)

▪ Year 1 goal

▪ Year 2 goal

▪ Year 3 goal

❖ Type 6 (Collaborating with the Community)

➢ Vision (What is the broad goal for making improvements in community

relationships over the next 3 years?)

▪ Year 1 goal

▪ Year 2 goal

▪ Year 3 goal

One-Year Action Plan

(The ATP discusses present practices and then creates activities to be completed in a 1

year that will assist in meeting the 3-year goals. The 1-year plan should include the type

of activity, whether it is new or a continuing activity, what grade levels are involved,

what the activity should look like, what committee members will facilitate the activities, and what are the measures of success.)

- ❖ Type 1 (Parenting)
  - ➢ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)
  - ➢ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)
  - ➢ Grade Level(s)
  - ➢ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)
  - ➢ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)
  - ➢ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)
- ❖ Type 2 (Communicating)
  - ➢ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)
  - ➢ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)
  - ➢ Grade Level(s)
  - ➢ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)
  - ➢ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)
  - ➢ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)

- ❖ Type 3 (Volunteering)

  - ➢ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)

  - ➢ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)

  - ➢ Grade Level(s)

  - ➢ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)

  - ➢ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)

  - ➢ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)

- ❖ Type 4 (Learning at Home)

  - ➢ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)

  - ➢ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)

  - ➢ Grade Level(s)

  - ➢ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)

  - ➢ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)

  - ➢ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)

- ❖ Type 5 (Decision Making)

- ➤ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)

- ➤ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)

- ➤ Grade Level(s)

- ➤ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)

- ➤ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)

- ➤ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)

- ❖ Type 6 (Collaborating with the Community)

  - ➤ Activity (ATP will plan a reasonable amount of activities for the type of involvement.)

  - ➤ Date of Implementation (Determine potential dates that are best suited for the activity)

  - ➤ Grade Level(s)

  - ➤ Planning (What will resources are needed? How much preparation time will be needed? What will the activity look like?)

  - ➤ ATP Facilitators (Who is in charge? Who will assist?)

  - ➤ Results (Was the activity successful? How were the results measured?)

End-of-Year Evaluation

(The entire ATP participates in the end-of-year evaluation. The evaluation contains one section of general questions and another section of questions that pertains to each of the

six types of involvement. The end-of-year evaluation assists with planning the 1-year

action plan for the upcoming year.)

General Questions

1. What changes have occurred in the past year as a result of work on the six types

    of parental involvement?

2. Rate the school's quality with regards to programs related to the six types of

    parental involvement?

        a. Weak/Just starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

        b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

        c. Good (Well developed and covers all six types of involvement and

            addresses the needs of most families at most grade levels.)

        d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, covers all six types of

            involvement, and addresses the needs of all families at all grade

            levels.)

3. List the members of the ATP for this year. Mark the members who are

    completing terms or leaving the school and will be replaced by new members for

    the next year. List their position in the school (i.e., teacher, parent), role in the

    ATP (chair, co-chair), and the ATP committee they were assigned for the current

    year.

Evaluation: Type 1 (Parenting)

1. Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 1 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 1 that the school is currently implementing.

    a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

    b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

    c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

    d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 1 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

    a. Describe the Type 1 activity in detail.

    b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

    c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

    d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

    e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

    f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)?

What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

Evaluation: Type 2 (Communicating)

1. Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 2 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 2 that the school is currently implementing.

   a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

   b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

   c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

   d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 2 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

   a. Describe the Type 2 activity in detail.

   b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

   c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

   d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)? What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

Evaluation: Type 3 (Volunteering)

1. Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 3 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 3 that the school is currently implementing.

    a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

    b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

    c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

    d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 3 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

    a. Describe the Type 3 activity in detail.

    b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

    c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

    d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

    e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

    f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)? What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

Evaluation: Type 4 (Learning at Home)

1.   Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 4 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 4 that the school is currently implementing.

    a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

    b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

    c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

    d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 4 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

a. Describe the Type 4 activity in detail.

b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)? What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

Evaluation: Type 5 (Decision Making)

1.   Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 5 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 5 that the school is currently implementing.

a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

     d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 5 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

     a. Describe the Type 5 activity in detail.

     b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

     c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

     d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

     e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

     f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)? What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

Evaluation: Type 6 (Collaborating with the Community)

1. Based on the 1-year action plan, list two or three activities for Type 6 that are or could be beneficial to the school.

2. Rate the quality of activities related to Type 6 that the school is currently implementing.

a. Weak/Just Starting (Not well developed. Needs a great deal of work.)

b. Fair (Implemented but needs improvement and expansion.)

c. Good (Well developed and reach most families at most grade levels.)

d. Excellent (Well developed and implemented, reach all families at all grade levels, and meet other major challenges.)

3. After selecting one Type 6 activity that demonstrates the school's best effort to address this type, complete the following information:

   a. Describe the Type 6 activity in detail.

   b. Indicate how many people were involved (families, students, teachers, others)

   c. Describe the main goal of the activity.

   d. Describe how well the activity was implemented. Was this a new activity or an extension of a previous activity?

   e. Describe the outcomes of the activity for this year as it relates to students, teachers, parents, and the community. How were the outcomes measured for success?

   f. What steps can be done to make the activity more successful for the next year? Who was not involved (students, teachers, parents, community)? What can be done to involve these groups in the next year? What can be improved?

End-of-Year Workshop Possible Agenda Topics

(The end-of-year workshop can be a half-day, full-day, morning, or evening activity. This should be determined by number of participants involved and the times they are available. The goal of the workshop is to share ideas and prepare for the upcoming school year.)

❖ Best Practices (Breakout sessions occur every 30 minutes. Focus for each session determined during advanced planning.)

  ➢ Type 1-Parenting and Type 2-Communicating

  ➢ Type 3-Volunteering and Type 4-Learning at Home

  ➢ Type 5-Decision Making and Type 6-Collaborating with the Community

❖ Gathering Ideas

  ➢ Video clips of practices that occur at other schools

  ➢ Handouts of practices that occur at other schools

❖ Meeting the challenges (Topic should be determined in advanced planning.)

  ➢ Solving challenges connected to each type of involvement

  ➢ Organizing leadership

  ➢ Report to school organizations

  ➢ Linking partnerships to school improvement

  ➢ Evaluating results for school practices

  ➢ Parent contribution and viewpoints regarding school partnership

❖ Creating a new 1-year plan

❖ Awards and appreciations

Appendix B: Teacher Questionnaire

Instructions: This study is an examination of factors that prohibit parental involvement in impoverished schools. Based on your willingness, you have been selected to participate in a questionnaire. I am asking for your input to gain an understanding of the perspectives of teachers with regards to the subject. There are five open-ended questions to this questionnaire. When answering the questions, please be detailed in your responses; however, do not leave any identifying factors (grade level, name, or room number). Upon completion return this document to me in the sealed envelope (do not write any identifying factors on the envelope). Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

1. How would you describe the efforts parents make to be actively involved in your school?

2. Detail factors that you believe prohibit parental involvement in your school

3. Describe the impact that poverty has on parental involvement in your school.

4. In what ways do you encourage parental involvement opportunities?

5. In what ways does your school encourage parental involvement opportunities?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Parents Participating in Parental Involvement Study

Instructions read by the researcher: This study is an examination of factors that

prohibit parental involvement in impoverished schools. Based on your willingness, you

have been selected to participate in an interview. I am asking for your input to gain an

understanding of the perspectives of parents with regards to the subject. There are five

open-ended questions to this interview; however, I may ask questions throughout the

interview for clarification. When answering the questions, please be detailed in your

responses. You will not be identified during or after this interview. You will be asked for

a follow-up after completing the interview in order to clarify what has been interpreted

from this interview. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If there are no questions,

we will begin:

1. Please describe the efforts that you make as a parent to be actively involved in
   your child's school.

2. What factors do you encounter that impact your ability to be involved?

3. In what ways do resources impact the ability to be successful with regards to
   parental involvement (i.e. money, education, community connections)?

4. Please describe the efforts made by the school to ensure parental involvement
   opportunities.

5. What message would you like to leave regarding the current parental involvement
   opportunities that are provided in your child's school?

Conclusion to be read by researcher: Thank you again for you participation in this study. You will be asked for a follow-up within the next week. Please let me know of a date and time that is convenient for this follow-up. If there are no questions, this interview is now concluded.

Appendix D: Observation Synopsis

Event	Observation 1 Date/ Time of Event	Observation 2 Location	Observation 3 Communication	Observation 4 Parent Interaction	Observation 5 School Interaction
PTA	First Thursday of the month (3 months) at 6:00 p.m.	School auditorium	Flyer sent home the day before or the day of the meeting	No parent input in planning agendas, performances, or speaking at the meetings	Students scheduled to perform Administrators Facilitated meeting Teachers from the performing grade level in attendance. Agenda about school related events
Daily Drop Off/Pick up	Morning from 7:20-8:10 Afternoon 2:55-3:10	Cafeteria door Classroom hallways	None observed	Parents not permitted in the building	Teachers have sign out sheets and lower grades Older children are released from the cafeteria.
Field Trip Volunteers	Four days during testing (April)	School assigned classroom	Parents created their communication	Parents assisted with keeping students organized	Teachers facilitated field trip.
Awards Day	Last week of school year	Auditorium	Flyer sent home 4 days prior to the ceremonies with times and instructions for dress	Attending only their event	Teachers participated in the program. No activities were provided after the program
Fun Day	During school day last Thursday in May	School	Flyers sent home at least 3 weeks prior to the event twice a week Provided prices Did not state requirements for parental involvement	Parents observed student activities. Could not make purchases Were not volunteering	Teachers remained with students All other staff was assigned to booths or games
SBDM	First Thursday of every month 5:00 p.m.	School meeting room	No communication sent	Did not meet	Did not meet

Appendix E: Teacher Questionnaire Synopsis

Interviewee	Question 1 Parent Efforts	Question 2 Inhibitors	Question 3 Impact of poverty	Question 4 Teacher Efforts	Question 5 School Efforts
Teacher1	Majority of parents are not involved	Intimidation Do not feel this is real school	Incarcerated parents Lack funds Older grandparents raising children Transient parents	Binders for communication Phone calls for concerns and/or praise Open door policy	PTA meetings Curriculum night Field trip chaperones
Teacher 2	Support school activities Unwillingness in some cases Do not see clear connections in parental involvement	Personal responsibilities Low educational level Single parent homes	Economic constraints Work long shifts Low level of education Do not see the long term value in school Higher crime	Teacher organized workshops for parents Invite parents to activities Tried to build a rapport	PTA meetings HIPPY for prekindergarten Fall Carnivals Family Fun Night Field Day Technology integration
Teacher 3	Scarce involvement No effort made	Bad personal school experiences Lack of time Economic constraints Cultural issues	Lack of finances Work long shifts	Tried to recruit volunteers Encourage parent involvement on homework	PTA Family Fun Night Volunteer opportunities
Teacher 4	Participate when requested Comes to the school when there is a problem	Lack education Lack confidence Lack respect for education and educators	Lack of transportation Work hours Many children in the home Single parents	Encourage class visits Attend school meetings Encourage volunteerism	PTA Family Fun Night Parent Conferences Parent Surveys
Teacher 5	Extremely limited	Lack of knowledge Preconceived notions about educators Lack of resources	Lack of sufficient transportation Lack of communication	Send home flyers Monthly newsletters Make phone calls when necessary	PTA Carnivals Field Trips Newsletters Flyers
Teacher 6	Very low Parents do not feel obligated	Young parents Parents that struggled in school Parents are not concerned	Lack funds Insecure parents	Encourage field trip volunteers Weekly newsletters Email	PTA Newsletters Parent Portal
Teacher 7	Minimal at best Comes to the school when there is a problem	Lack of time Intimidation Lack of awareness	Restricts ability to support child Job restraints Reluctant due to lack of education	Creates relationships with parents Open door policy Phone calls at the beginning of the year Encourage volunteerism	Parent Workshops Student led conferences
Teacher 8	Very low	Working parents No financial means	Lack education Do not realize the importance of involvement	Encourage volunteerism Send home flyers Homework Reading projects	PTA Volunteerism Field Trips Field Day Fundraisers Carnival Early Child Classes
Teacher 9	Drastically declined Not a top of priority	The school does not allow parents in Parent perception School lacks avenues for parents to participate Background checks	Discouragement Low self-esteem Disparities in treatment of children Work constraints Money constraints	Encourage volunteerism Encourage dads Book projects Field trips Homework activities that require parents	PTA SBDM Awards programs at the end of the year

Appendix F: Parent Interview Synopsis

Interviewee	Question 1 Parent Efforts	Question 2 Inhibitors	Question 3 Resources	Question 4 Efforts of the School	Question 5 Suggestions
Participant 1	Encourage good behavior at school	No Inhibitors	Plenty of resources available	Flyers sent home PTA offered	A suggestion box for parents to communicate More teacher interaction More parent invitations
Participant 2	Lacks time to attend events Schedule conflicts	Language barrier at school events and school staff	Many lack transportation Many lack money Many lack time	Only 50% effort Do not value opinion of parents Events lack parent input	More opportunities for parents to meet each other Clearer communication with events
Participant 3	Attend PTA Help with homework	No Inhibitors	Incomes can vary	Likes school effort Doesn't like standing outside at pickup	No suggestions
Participant 4	Children participate in afterschool activities Support school functions	Employment Older child Scheduling conflicts Younger parents	Finances	Need to allow parents in the school Encourage volunteers Breakdown in communication Disparities in treatment	Build a better rapport with parents Open door policy More communication
Participant 5	Makes teacher contact about homework and behavior	No inhibitors	Recognizes that work and money can impact involvement	Lack of communication about activities Not enough time to prepare Some activities are too expensive	Need more motivation from the school and teachers to attend activities
Participant 6	Meet the teacher Provide supplies Makes sure child attends school regularly Volunteer if possible	Working mother Lack of communication Lack of time to attend functions	Lack transportation Lack of education	Lack of communication	Open communication Enthusiasm from teacher
Participant 7	Tries to keep open communication Attends school related events (PTA, parent conferences, programs)	Working parent Raising a family Scheduling conflicts	Lack of funds	Lack of communication Disparities in cultures Lack of motivation from teachers in upper grades	More incentives More motivation for parents
Participant 8	Attending school programs, parent meetings, field trips, and after school activities		Lack of funds	Lack of communication	More fundraisers to deter costs More encouragement from teachers
Participant 9*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Participant 9 declined to interview after signing consent

Appendix G: Final Coding

Final Coding	Initial Coding
Communication	Lack of communication
	Communication not sent in time
	Unclear flyers
Lack of parent input	PTA lacked parent representation
	No parents involved in planning
	Suggestion box needed
Lack of motivation	Upper grade teachers lack motivation
	Encourage parents
	Awards and incentives for parents
	Parents seem unconcerned
	Intimidated
	Low self-esteem
Redefining parental involvement	Older grandparents
	Younger single mothers
	Incarcerated family
	Time
	Money
	Culture
	Work constraints
	Lack of education