

2017

Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs

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Malia DeCourcy

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs

by

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MA, University of San Francisco, 1998

BS, University of San Francisco, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2017

Abstract

Studies have shown an increase in student achievement when educational partnerships between families and schools exist. At the elementary school that was the focus of this study, there had once been a thriving family involvement program; however, the number of family-school partnerships had declined in recent years. Students, families, and teachers needed improved knowledge of the types of family involvement programs that everyone would be willing to participate in to increase student learning and achievement. The purpose of this case study was to determine whether the types of involvement currently offered to families at the elementary school matched the types of involvement in which families would be willing to participate. The study also determined which types of involvement teachers were currently providing and which they would be willing to provide. Epstein's 6 types of family involvement were used as a conceptual foundation for this case study. The study used questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews to collect data from 14 teachers and 25 families. The key research question involved determining what teachers and families were willing to participate in to increase partnerships and involvement. Surveys, focus group transcripts, and interview transcripts were analyzed for themes. A data spiral was used to analyze the data, and triangulation and peer review were used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. By implementing the suggestions from this study, including more communication and family input, the elementary school may form more partnerships with families and the community, which may help to increase involvement and ultimately improve student achievement. This study offers implications for social change by helping create an atmosphere where the school, families, and community work together to help students succeed.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family for their support throughout this process. Thank you for the encouragement and support.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Ellen McPeck Glisan for encouragement and support throughout this process. Your belief in me helped me through the challenges of completing this study.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Butcher and Dr. Michael Brunn for serving on my committee and your help in completing this process.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Families play a significant role in the education of children. Research has shown that involving family members in the education of children increases student achievement in language arts, math, and science (Bailey, 2006; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Jeynes, 2016; Senechal, 2006; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Sirivani, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011a, 2011b). VanVoorhis (2011a) and Bailey (2006) showed that when students were given homework with a family involvement component, their standardized test scores were higher. Additionally, Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) found that family involvement increases motivation, which also increases student achievement. Teachers, families, and children must embrace family involvement so that partnerships can form to help children become proficient in all academic areas. Many schools seem to be missing the important component of involving families.

The mandate of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was that all children must be proficient in reading and math and all third graders must be reading at grade level by 2014 (Rosenburg, 2004), with the reauthorization of NCLB as The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) the states are now required to set their own goals on proficiency (American Federation of Teachers, 2015). The numerous laws and policies that are a part of NCLB outline programs expected to increase student achievement as well as family involvement. Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) suggested, “it is wise to pay careful attention to the law’s obligations for parent involvement, for they can offer resources to make that adequate yearly progress” (p. 9). Once educators within

schools realize that families are underutilized resources that can help schools make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and increase student achievement, schools should create programs to help develop families' understanding of the curriculum being taught and embrace the role families can play in the educational process.

Family involvement should be a focal point to help schools increase student learning and achievement. In NCLB, *family involvement* is defined as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, n.d.). Carlisle, Stanley, and Kemple (2005) suggested numerous ways that families can become involved, such as “volunteering, helping with homework, attending school functions, visiting classrooms, being a guest speaker, serving in a leadership role in the school, and sharing information about the child with the teacher” (p. 155). In Section 2 of the current study, I reviewed research on the many types of involvement for families, addressing the benefits of family involvement as well as why teachers and families may not embrace it. Educators need to recognize the importance of becoming partners with families to help children become more successful learners and attain greater academic achievement. Family involvement can no longer be thought of as “cookie-baking, word-processing, candy-selling, paper shuffling, showing-up activities” (Jones, 2001, p. 37), but must be thought of as a partnership whereby families are actively involved with their children in the educational process.

Schools that receive Title I funding must provide opportunities for families to become involved by spending at least 1% of their funding on parent training and

programs to educate parents (Title 1 State Parent Advisory Council, 2011). Sometimes, school leaders try to involve families, but they provide opportunities that families are not attending for various reasons. Carlisle, Stanley, and Kemple (2005) noted that many families may not become involved because of work schedule, family ethnicity, parents' prior educational experiences, family structure, and social networks (pp. 156-157). The comfort level of families in the school setting must also be an issue that is addressed by the school (Jones, 2001). Because K Elementary School (a pseudonym for the site of this study) is a Title 1 school, an assessment of the needs of families and teachers should be conducted in order to create more partnership activities as required by law.

Problem Statement

There is a problem at K Elementary School. That problem, specifically, is that there has been a decrease in family involvement partnerships between teachers and families in children's education. With the overwhelming research indicating that family involvement increases student achievement, K Elementary School needs to have the families as partners in the education process. There also needs to be a commitment by teachers to maintain a level of involvement by the families. Teachers may not fully realize the significance of the role that families play in the education of children and thus may not actively seek out families as partners. Families also may not know how important it is to become involved in and to help with their child's academic issues. Despite having a parent community network coordinator (PCNC) who is a part-time employee who focuses on sending home parent communication and organizing school events, there is a lack of partnerships between the school and families. There seems to be

a gap between what teachers expect of families, what teachers are willing to do to help families become involved, and the types of support that families need and are willing to participate in to be more involved.

Families and Classroom Teachers (FACT) was once a successful family involvement program at K Elementary School. Under this grant-funded program, teachers volunteered their time to hold monthly workshops on strategies that would help families continue the learning process at home, conducted home visits, and provided supplies for at-home learning to all families. All teachers but one participated in the program for several years. At the start of the program, teachers and families were very enthusiastic about the idea. Teachers were even asked to share their experiences at other schools and at conferences. Many teachers noted during the program that more consistent quality homework was being turned in and families were more willing to ask questions about schoolwork when they did not understand something. Families also noted that they felt more comfortable in the school setting, that barriers between teachers and families were no longer there, and that there was more open communication between families and teachers (Essoyan, 2005). After a few years, teachers were not as enthusiastic about offering the program, the number of families was dwindling, and there was no more grant money to purchase supplies. Now, only a few teachers provide quarterly workshops, none do home visits, and no materials for learning at home are provided for the families. While there has been a decrease in the number of families and teachers involved in the program, members of the administration have stated that they still believe that it is important to

have family involvement and have indicated that they would like to include family involvement in planning for the school's future.

The following goal is stated in K Elementary School's 2009 Academic Financial Plan: to "provide students with expanded learning opportunities that support standards-based education through partnerships with families and the community." The main strategy for the achievement of this goal is to offer workshops for parents to teach strategies that can be used at home. K Elementary School's rationale for this goal, according to the 2009 Academic Financial Plan, is that "parents are very important partners in supporting student learning in the home. Enriching opportunities will be developed to support parent involvement and participation in educational activities to increase student achievement." Although this plan was in place, there was little discussion with teachers or families on encouraging and implementing family involvement practices in the classroom. In K Elementary School's Academic and Financial Plan for the 2011-2012 school year, the only mention of family involvement pertains to providing families with information on online assessments and how these assessments will benefit students. For the 2012-2013 school year, family involvement practices were absent from the Academic and Financial Plan. The 2012-2013 Academic and Financial Plan still included funding for a parent community network coordinator (PCNC). In the 2015-2016 Academic and Financial Plan, there was no mention at all of family involvement. With the goal of providing partnerships no longer in place, will the teachers and administration at K Elementary School continue to try to form partnerships with families and involve them in workshops? K Elementary School must find a way to

promote family involvement to both teachers and families in order to create an atmosphere where family involvement is embraced. Satisfaction at K Elementary School with family involvement has also decreased.

Each year, families, teachers, and students are asked to fill out the School Quality Survey from the Department of Education Systems Accountability Office. In 2005, when teachers were participating in FACT workshops, 60% of teachers strongly agreed that parents were involved in important decisions about the school, compared to 31.6% in 2010. When teachers were asked if the school provided a variety of ways for parents to become involved, 56.3% strongly agreed in 2005, compared to 26.3% in 2010. Parents also saw a decrease in the school providing a variety of ways to become involved. In 2005, 50% of families strongly agreed that they were provided with a variety of ways to become involved, but in 2010, only 25% strongly agreed K Elementary School may benefit from finding ways to increase parent and teacher satisfaction in the area of family involvement and create an atmosphere where family involvement is embraced.

Nature of the Study

This case study used open-ended questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews as a means of exploring attitudes of families and teachers toward family involvement. The open-ended questionnaire on the beliefs of families and teachers at K Elementary School was used to determine thoughts and beliefs regarding involvement. The questionnaire also helped in formulating questions for the interview process. The interviews and focus groups were used to conduct a more in-depth dialog on the beliefs and feelings of families and teachers in the area of family involvement.

Specific Research Questions

These research questions were integrated into the open-ended questionnaire, family focus groups, and teacher interviews.

1. What types of family involvement does K Elementary School currently provide?
2. How could K Elementary School improve its family involvement practices?
3. What types of involvement would parents like to see the school provide?

Research Objectives

For a partnership to form, there must be an understanding of beliefs between those involved. Teachers need to understand families' perceptions of involvement and how they are willing to become involved in the education of their children. Teachers must also look at their own family involvement beliefs and practices to see how they can meet the needs of families. When families and schools are able come to an understanding of what each is willing to do and participate in, more partnership possibilities will become available. The objective of this research is to determine the gap in beliefs regarding family involvement at K Elementary School between teachers and families. The data collection effort conducted to determine the gap and willingness to participate is presented in Section 3.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to determine whether the type of involvement currently offered to families at K Elementary School matches the types of involvement in which families would be willing to participate. The study determined what types of

involvement teachers are currently providing and which types they would be willing to provide. By comparing the current level of involvement with the types of involvement in which families would be willing to participate as well as what teachers would be willing to provide, I was able to determine differences in beliefs concerning family involvement between teachers and families at K Elementary School and how K Elementary School could improve its family involvement practices. Because families and teachers differ in their beliefs and understanding regarding the importance of family involvement, level of current participation in family involvement activities, and what they are comfortable doing in regard to family involvement, finding and closing the gaps in beliefs must happen. Once comparisons of the beliefs families and teachers have in regard to family involvement were completed, I shared the findings with teachers, administrators, and families at a School Community Council (SCC) meeting. It is my hope that K Elementary School will use the findings to inform changes in order to improve partnerships between families and the school.

Conceptual Framework

For effective family involvement to take place, there must be a universal understanding of what is involved and expected when implementing any type of family involvement. Epstein (2009), as part of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), outlined a framework of six types of involvement that includes sample practices, challenges, redefinitions, and expected results. Epstein's framework for six types of involvement was the conceptual framework on which this study was based. It includes the following:

- Type 1: Parenting—To “help all families establish home environments to support children as students” (p. 16).
- Type 2: Communicating—To “design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress” (p. 16).
- Type 3: Volunteering—To “recruit and organize parent help and support” (p. 16).
- Type 4: Learning at home—To “provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning” (p. 16).
- Type 5: Decision making—To “include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives” (p. 16).
- Type 6: Collaborating with the community—To “identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (p. 16).

The six types of involvement help to create partnerships between schools, families, and the community to improve students’ academic achievement.

Epstein’s (n.d.) framework for six types of involvement forms the basis for the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) and is used to “help educators develop more comprehensive programs of school-family-community partnerships” (p. 1). The framework’s six types of involvement help to ensure that research-based components are included in a family involvement program in schools that use the framework as a model.

Even when schools use the framework to help guide their parent involvement program, “each school must chart its own course in choosing practices to meet the needs of its families and students” (Epstein, 2009, p. 14). The framework should be used as a starting point in the process of evaluating or developing an involvement program at a school.

Many school districts use Epstein’s framework for six types of involvement as a resource to promote family involvement. The Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center has suggested using Epstein’s theory as a foundation for creating a parent involvement plan (Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center, 2005). The New Hampshire (NH) Parents Make the Difference website also lists the framework as a way to involve parents in effective partnerships (NH Parents Make the Difference, 2010). The framework for six types of involvement is also used as the basis for the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) National Standards (PTA, 2008).

Definition of Terms

Parent involvement: “The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004). Activities include helping children with learning, being involved in some capacity at school, and being part of the school’s decision-making processes.

Family involvement: Participation in any type of school-sponsored event, either in the community, at the school, or at home by a family member. While the majority of research uses the term *parental involvement*, I use the term *family involvement* in the same manner that others use *parental involvement*. Many children are living with

grandparents or extended family members, and these family members also play an important role in the education of children. In the 2007 census, 7.2% of children in Maui County, where K Elementary School is located, were living with their grandparents, either alone or with their parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.). While the percentages only show the numbers of children living with grandparents, my use of the word *family* includes aunts, uncles, cousins, and others whom children and their parents feel are “family.”

Assumptions

An assumption I made for this study was that both families and teachers want to see children succeed academically. Unfortunately, some families may not have the necessary skills or understanding of concepts to help their children. There may also be other factors that do not allow families to be involved in their children’s education consistently. Teachers may want to have families help but may not know exactly what families are willing to do to help and how best to involve families. Another assumption was that families and teachers both want to be able to offer suggestions on how they are willing to become involved. Last, I assumed that teachers have the knowledge, ability, and willingness to provide family involvement opportunities that will have a positive impact on families and student achievement.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included K Elementary School’s nature as a small rural school; it might not be possible to generalize the findings to other schools. Another

limitation of the study was poor response to an open-ended questionnaire by families and a low number of participants willing to be interviewed.

Delimitations

The study was limited to families of students attending K Elementary School as well as teachers teaching at K Elementary School.

Significance of the Study

There have been numerous studies on the significance of active family involvement in the academic achievement of students. While there is some research on perceptions of family involvement by both families and teachers, much of the research has been done in urban settings, and other studies have been done at the high school level. This study could fill a gap in the literature by comparing views and beliefs regarding family involvement of both teachers and families in a small rural elementary school setting.

Teachers may want to involve families in the education of their children but may not know the most appropriate way to do so. Training may be lacking for those teachers in ways to incorporate families easily into schoolwork or homework (Zigmunt-Fillwalk, 2006). Wanat (2010) interviewed parents and found that some were discouraged because of the way in which teachers interacted with them, as well as teachers' attitudes. With proper training, teachers could practice and understand the best ways to interact with parents and families. Teachers may also not know what types of involvement families are comfortable with and ways in which families are willing to participate. This study could provide teachers with a better understanding of the beliefs that families have concerning

their role as partners in the education of their children. It could also give teachers an outline for the expectations families have of teachers. Further, the study provides information on the ways in which teachers and families feel that they are already involved and may increase understanding of how *involvement* is understood by teachers and families. This could make both the teacher's role and family's role clearer in regard to family involvement at K Elementary School.

For teachers who are already implementing ways to involve families, this study is significant, as it presents teachers' reflections on their involvement practices. By looking at what families have to say about involvement, teachers could ensure that their current practices incorporate suggestions from families. This could lead to improved family partnerships with teachers and might persuade more families to become involved.

This study may lead to significant positive social change, in that it may empower both teachers and families to play a more active role in increasing student achievement by becoming partners in the education of children. The atmosphere created by such partnerships may continue to generate positive social change by creating rapport between families and teachers that encourages more families to be involved. When families know more about what is happening with their children at school, they are more able to have meaningful dialogue with their children and create a more positive atmosphere at home.

Summary and Transition

Finding gaps in beliefs concerning family involvement and ways to increase family involvement to create partnerships between teachers and families at K Elementary School was the focus of this study. Research has shown that when family involvement

occurs, students' achievement increases. Although there is some family involvement happening at K Elementary School, there needs to be more consistent and focused involvement. An open-ended questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews were used to determine teachers' and families' beliefs on involvement and the types of involvement that may help to increase family involvement. In Section 2, I summarize research that has already been conducted on family involvement. Section 3 contains a discussion of the research design for the study. Section 4 contains a review of the results of the study, and Section 5 summarizes the study.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this study, I looked at the types of family involvement that could be most conducive to increasing partnerships between families, teachers, and students at K Elementary School. The review of literature begins with examination of the laws that have been enacted in regard to family involvement. The literature review then explored Epstein's six types of involvement, which was the conceptual framework for this study because K Elementary School could offer these types of involvement. I presented research related to the effects of family involvement within a review organized by Epstein's six types of involvement. I also presented articles on the lack of teacher training in how to involve families, given that lack of teacher training may be a contributing factor to the problem at K Elementary School. Finally, I covered the various reasons that families decide to become involved or not.

The terms I primarily used in searching for literature were *parent involvement*, *family involvement*, and *family partnerships*. After I found articles using the primary search terms, I looked at references from articles to aid in my search for more articles. Many articles included Epstein as a reference, so I used her name to help search for further articles. Because I wanted to include different types of family involvement in my review of literature, I used Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) as a framework for the types of involvement to review and searched for literature using each type of involvement. I also used the terms *training and professional development* along with *parent involvement*, *family involvement*, and *family partnerships* to find articles on how

teachers were trained to implement family involvement. I used EBSCO as the primary online database used to search for articles, and I used GoogleScholar to find articles and books related to the topic.

The Law

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 defines *family involvement* as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning”(National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004, p. 2) and requires schools receiving Title I funding to create a family involvement program to provide “training and education.” Under the NCLB definition of parent/family involvement, activities that include family members “assisting in their child’s learning, being actively involved in their child’s education at school, and serving as full partners in their child’s education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004, p. 2) are seen as vital to family involvement programs. The latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replaced NCLB and showed that there had been little change in the law and the definition of family involvement (The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2016).

Under ESSA, all schools that receive funding under Title 1, a program that is intended to help disadvantaged students, must spend at least 1% of their funding on parent training and programs to educate parents, and “parents and family members of low-income students must be included in decisions regarding how these engagement

funds are spent” (The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2016, p. 1). Schools must also create a school-parent compact and develop a parent involvement policy under ESSA and Title 1 requirements. The compact and involvement policy should clarify each person’s roles and expectations and the importance of two-way communication. Title 1 schools are also expected to provide materials and training to families to help children at home, help families understand standards and assessments, educate school staff on the importance of family involvement, educate staff on how to involve families, and conduct activities that help families support learning at home (The Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2016, pp. 3-4). With the laws in place, schools must find involvement types that best fit their settings and staff in order to help increase achievement. While the name of the applicable law has changed since 2001, it is important to note that little besides that has changed, which shows the importance of each aspect of the law.

The Public Education Network (PEN) is an organization whose members seek to build support for public education, especially in low-income communities. PEN conducted 25 public hearings to let parents, communities, and students voice their opinions on the NCLB law (Stanik & Public Education Network, 2007). A summary by Stanik and PEN noted, “NCLB pays considerable lip service to parent involvement; in reality, parents and communities are almost shut out of the reform process” (p. 7). The report addressed the lack of follow up to parent involvement efforts that schools may have tried to implement or may have written into school plans to be in compliance with the law. Participants in the hearings noted that even when schools had plans for parent involvement, if the schools did not embrace partnerships with parents, nothing changed in

terms of parent participation. The summary suggested audits on family involvement as well as federal encouragement for teaching parental involvement best practices in teacher education programs. PEN (Stanik et al., 2007) also conducted a survey on NCLB and found that 87% of 8,000 participants thought that the parental involvement aspect of NCLB would help to close the achievement gap. The NCLB law has increased the understanding that parents and communities need to become involved for increased student achievement, but there has been little follow up on the actual implementation of the law. Within schools and communities, stakeholders need to understand the importance of parental involvement and implement the law in ways that best suit each school and community. Now, under ESSA, school districts must find ways to include families and increase involvement.

Conceptual Foundation: Epstein's Six Types of Involvement

Epstein's six types of involvement (Epstein, 2009) have different components that could be adapted for schools to help increase family involvement. Epstein (2009) equated her six types of involvement to "six types of caring" (p. 14). In an article on school, family, and community partnerships, Epstein outlined the six types of involvement, described sample practices, noted challenges, and offered redefinitions of each type of involvement. All six types of involvement could be beneficial for the formation and maintenance of partnerships at schools.

The first type of involvement is *parenting*, which refers to schools helping families create a home environment that encourages learning. Sample practices for this type of involvement include programs or workshops to help families understand what is

happening at their child's grade level and programs to support the overall wellbeing of the family. The challenges for this type include making sure that all families get needed information in a way that is understandable to all, even if they are unable to attend programs, and making sure that families are able to share information about their children with the school. Potential results of this type of involvement include students realizing the importance of school, parents gaining more confidence in their abilities and feeling supported, and teachers understanding families better (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

Communication is the second type of involvement. The goal is for communication is for families to be aware of and understand their children's progress and what is happening at school. Conferences, student progress folders, report cards, notices, memos, newsletters, telephone calls, and e-mails are types of communication that may foster partnerships between home and school. Potential challenges to communication include families' literacy levels and language skills, the quality of the communication being sent home, and families' ability to access the Internet (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

Volunteering, the third type of involvement, may include volunteering in the classroom, being a room parent, being involved in activities at school, and helping the school or teacher in some form. Challenges to families volunteering include time, being able to organize volunteers, and finding volunteers. Volunteering does not necessarily mean being present at the school during school hours and in a classroom; it simply involves finding time to support the various activities that are sponsored by the school. By volunteering, families may become more comfortable in the school setting and become more confident in their ability to help their own children. Teachers may also be

able to have more one-on-one time with students due to volunteers and may find innovative ways to involve families because they get to know families better (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

Learning at home is the fourth type of involvement, which includes giving families ideas on how to help learning continue at home with homework and other activities related to the curriculum. Sample practices for this type of involvement are providing families with information on how to help, interacting with families and students to complete homework, and making sure that families understand what gets sent home. A challenge to the provision of activities for learning at home is creating regular homework that is interactive between the child and someone at home. Increases in skills, more discussion of what is being learned in school, understanding by families of what is being learned at school, and better designed homework are a few of the expected results of learning-at-home activities (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

The fifth of Epstein's six types of involvement is *decision making*, which entails including families in school-level decisions. Involving families in committees, councils, and parent organizations can help families become involved in the decision-making process at the school level. It is important and a challenge to make that sure all families are included and to offer training to those who want to be involved. A better understanding of the school's decisions, a parent's perspective, and more ownership in the school are expected outcomes (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

The sixth type of involvement is *collaborating with the community* and having community programs work with schools and families to improve the learning

environment at home and at school. Having families and students understand what community organizations have to offer helps families take advantage of community programs. Knowing where to go and how to get help and support is essential to community collaboration (Epstein, 2009, pp. 14-18).

Along with her six types of involvement, Epstein (2009) included *overlapping spheres of influence* (p. 10) as a part of her theory. School, family, and community are the three forces that are included in this concept. When these three forces work together as partners, they can “engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own successes” (p. 10). All forces need to work together to help students reach their maximum potential. Epstein used phrases to serve as examples of overlapping spheres of influence, such as a teacher saying, “I cannot do my job without the help of students’ families or the support of this community” (p. 11), or a parent saying, “I really need to know what is happening in school in order to help my child” (p. 11).

Epstein’s six types of involvement are important to all schools because they can serve as an outline for creating a family involvement program. Leaders within schools need to recognize the various types of involvement that can be implemented, understand the importance of each type of involvement, and understand the challenges and implications of the six types of involvement. When all six types of involvement occur at a school, they create important partnerships that help to increase involvement, which in turn may help to increase student achievement. Families, schools, and communities need to work together to create “overlapping spheres of influence” (p. 10) to help each child

succeed both academically and socially in order to become a productive member of society.

Types of Family Involvement

Carlisle, Stanley, and Kemple (2005) included “volunteering, helping with homework, attending school functions, visiting classrooms, being a guest speaker, serving in a leadership role in the school, and sharing information about the child with the teacher” (p. 155) as types of involvement. Henderson, Mapp, Jonson, and Davies (2007) suggested various strategies to engage parents and create family-school partnerships, such as visits to the classroom, meetings, opportunities to work in the classroom, communication between families and the school, use of student work for conferences, and displays of student work. The various ways for families to become involved can be organized by using Epstein’s six types of involvement, which also provide the structure for this section of the literature review.

Epstein’s First Type of Involvement: Parenting

Parenting can include many forms of involvement, including workshops, home visits, and parent education classes (Epstein, 2009, p. 16). The following studies show that when schools help families become more engaged in their children’s education, both the families and the children benefit.

Workshops provide families with opportunities to learn to implement various learning strategies at home that may be unfamiliar to them. Bailey (2006) and Bailey et al. (2004) supported the importance of training for families to be successful in implementing learning strategies at home. In their studies, Bailey and Bailey et al. found

that when families attended workshops on interactive homework, student achievement increased. Saint-Laurent and Giasson (2005) conducted a study on a family literacy program in which mothers of children attended nine workshops on how to help their children with reading and writing. While the workshops were not on interactive homework, as suggested by Bailey (2006), they were on ways to help with reading and writing in the home setting. Workshops were conducted for the experimental group while the control group continued with only regular contact from the teacher. Results showed that students whose families attended the workshops had an increase in reading scores. Students also had better writing skills when their families attended workshops. At the end of the year, parents who participated in the workshops “reported more literacy activities than other parents” (p. 270). When families learn how to help their children, it not only helps the children learn, but also helps the families to meet the needs of the children. Workshops are a way for families to learn new strategies and ways to continue the learning process at home.

Researchers in Australia (Marshall & Swan, 2010) looked at ways to help parents assist their children with math by conducting six 45-minute workshops. Surveys and interviews were given pre and post workshop to parents who participated. At the first workshop, parents were involved in selecting the topics for the remaining five workshops. In the preworkshop interviews, parents noted that they had difficulty in math because of changes in language and methods relative to what had been used when they were in school. Only 25% of parents were confident in their mathematical ability, and only 22% were confident in their ability to help their children in math. After the six

workshop sessions, which included learning to play games to help in math, place value, multiplication, fractions, and base 10 blocks, 70.5% of parents felt confident in their mathematical ability, and 81% were confident in their ability to assist when their children asked for help in math. The workshops helped the parents increase their knowledge in math and their confidence in helping their child with math at home. Marshall and Swan (2010) felt that although the parents who attended the workshops were self-selected, parents did want to help their children at home but often did not have the confidence to do so. LaCour, McDonald, Tissington, and Thomason (2013) had similar findings with reading. After conducting three workshops to teach families how to interact with their children about books, families had more confidence reading with their children, and their children had greater interest in reading. When schools are able to provide opportunities for parents to learn to work with their children at home, the school, the children, and the families are able to form partnerships that help to increase student achievement. Saint-Laurent and Giasson (2005), Marshall and Swan (2010), and LaCour et al. (2013) showed that providing parents with the opportunity to learn how to help at home helped students while parents became more confident.

Another type of opportunity that schools can provide takes the form of family science nights, which have been linked to helping families feel more confident in helping their children learn science at home (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010). Kaya and Lundeen (2010) conducted a study on whether family science nights helped families become more involved in science and feel more confident in helping with science activities. Researchers observed families, administered exit surveys to parents, and interviewed

parents during family science night to look for the types of questions that parents ask during activities and determine how families felt about science and the activities after participating. Parent surveys showed that most parents wanted to have more events like family science night (p. 836). It was also found that many parents did not like science when they were in school but liked the hands-on ways in which science was currently being taught (p. 847). While teachers at the schools were not directly involved with any planning of family science night, researchers noted that findings should be shared with teachers to “set the stage for increased parental demand and support for science teaching and home-school activities” (Kaya & Lundeen, 2010, p. 838). Activities such as family science night are good ways to show families how learning can be fun, engage families, and provide families with opportunities to share simple ways that students can continue learning at home. A study by Bartel (2010) also showed that when parents are provided classes by the school, their belief in the importance of the role they play in their children’s education increases. When schools provide education to families to support learning at home, this helps to support the family so that children will continue the learning process outside of school.

The current research reviewed above could help provide K Elementary School with ways to provide different types of family involvement. Workshops and nights focused on one subject help provide families with ideas and strategies to help at home. K Elementary School could benefit from providing events such as these to help encourage families to become more involved at home with their children’s academic work or to provide more learning opportunities at home.

Epstein's Second Type of Involvement: Communicating

Since communication is imperative for families to know what is happening with their children at school, teachers need to find ways to keep communication lines open. Communication has the power to help families stay involved just by knowing what is going on with their children. Sirvani (2007) looked at monitoring sheets as a way to communicate with the families. Homework and tests grades were on the monitoring sheet given to students. Students were divided into two groups: families from one group received a monitoring sheet twice a week which included homework, grades, and test scores and the second family group did not receive a monitoring sheet. Student's test scores and homework completion rate were compared. Sirvani (2007) found the mean test scores for students whose families received the monitoring sheet was higher than those who did not. The study suggested that because families were monitoring homework assignments better, it increased student achievement in both homework assignments as well as test scores. Parent contact by teachers kept families informed and may have encouraged more open and consistent communication between the home and school.

Similar to Sirvane (2007), Setsinger, Felner, Brand, and Burns (2008) examined parent contact by teachers and its effects on parent involvement and student achievement in three studies. The first study of 1089 teachers used the Teacher-Parent Contact Scale (TPCS) to measure teacher contact with parents. Study 1 found parent contact on "student performance and problems, suggestions on increasing parental involvement in academics, and connecting with health and community services" (p. 483) as three dimensions of parent contact. Study 2 found that each of the three dimensions is positively related to the

attitude of the teachers. When the teacher tried to involve parents more and had a positive attitude toward involvement, more parents became involved. Study 3 used the TPCS findings to determine if teacher contact with parents had a relation to parent satisfaction with school contact; if students felt their parents were involved in the school setting; and if there was a relationship to academic adjustment. A positive relationship between parent satisfaction and the amount of school/parent communication was found. TPCS and academic adjustment varied by grade levels, but all showed a statistically significant correlation. These studies indicated communication is a vital and necessary way for parents to become involved in their children's education and that it is a two-way process. The two-way process of communication comes in various forms and is ever-changing in today's digital world.

Parent and teacher communication is more than just in person, on the phone, or with paper. Thompson, Mazer, and Grady (2015) found that parents prefer to be in communication with the school via e-mail. Parents felt this was the most efficient way to communicate because e-mail can be read and responded to on parents' own time (p. 196). Some parents preferred face-to-face communication because of being able to read body language and hear the tone in the voice (p. 198). Teachers and schools today must use various modes of communication to best meet the needs of the families they serve whether face-to-face, on paper, e-mailing, texting, and even the use of social media. K Elementary School could benefit from implementing various types of communication reviewed in research studies to support communication between home and school.

Epstein's Third Type of Involvement: Volunteering

Volunteering in a classroom may be intimidating to parents and may be a reason that parents do not often come into the classroom. Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and De Pedro (2011) conducted a qualitative study in urban charter schools using Epstein's six types of involvement and found many charter schools had parent contracts where parents had to perform a certain number of hours volunteering. Even with the required number of hours, charter schools still found it difficult to actively engage parents. Principals of the schools were interviewed and noted some parents felt uncomfortable at first and encouraged parents to come multiple times before becoming more active in the school. A parent coordinator was used to help increase volunteering and a reward system was started to get parents to actively participate. These strategies may be useful to schools that are looking at ways to promote and sustain parent involvement at their schools, such as K Elementary School.

Christianakis (2011) used the term "help labor" in a study on parent involvement where the main focus was on ways parents help the teacher in and out of the classroom. Christianakis interviewed 15 teachers from an inner city school to determine how teachers felt parents were involved. In the school setting, parental involvement for teachers consisted of running off papers, helping small groups, and helping individuals. Helping with homework, reading to their child, and having a space for their child to work were ways teachers felt parents were involved at home. Teachers at this particular school viewed parents as helpers, similar to type 3 of Epstein's (2009) six types of involvement, which is volunteering. The researcher noted that, with this type of involvement, teachers

need to be aware that parents who are not able to come into the classroom can help in other ways and teachers should look at involving parents in various ways not just as “help labor”.

Gonzales and Jackson (2013) used Epstein’s framework to determine if a school’s effort for parent engagement would increase student achievement. In the area of volunteering they found that, when an effort was made to encourage families to volunteer, students had a higher level of reading achievement especially in schools with high-social economic status (SES) families. While this study determined volunteering does increase achievement, results revealed that low-SES schools did not show a notable increase in achievement with volunteering. Wang and Fahey (2011) also found that higher income level families tend to volunteer more in an educational setting. Although Wang and Fahey did not look at academic achievement in their study, they found that since the NCLB mandate of parent involvement, involvement in schools by parents has actually decreased. Schools need to determine what activities families at their specific setting are comfortable participating in and offer those types of volunteer opportunities both at home and at school to help increase involvement.

Epstein’s Fourth Type of Involvement: Learning at Home

Homework is an activity that most teachers assign on a regular basis. Many teachers assign homework with the expectation that families help the child if needed, but few actually design homework that includes the family in order to complete. Homework that includes families in order to complete is called interactive homework. Interactive homework “may be designed to guide and promote positive communications between

parent and child. Parent-child conversations may help reinforce the importance of schoolwork, homework, and learning, and may promote students' understanding of how schoolwork is used in real-life situations" (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001, p. 182). One type of interactive homework that has been designed by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University is a program called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). TIPS homework is usually assigned once or twice a month, students have a period of several days to complete that homework, the homework includes a portion where there needs to be conversations about the work with a family member, and feedback by the family member is provided to the teacher (VanVoorhis, 2003, p. 326).

There have been numerous research studies on TIPS homework that indicated improved academic achievement when interactive homework has been implemented. A study by Van Voorhis (2003) on TIPS in science homework where students were assigned TIPS on a weekly basis showed there was a higher level of family involvement when TIPS homework was assigned. Students in the study who received TIPS homework had higher report card grades and students returned more homework with TIPS than those who did not receive TIPS assignments. Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (1997) studied the effects of TIPS homework in language arts. In their study, students whose families help with TIPS homework had higher writing skills and higher writing grades. Sheldon and Epstein (2005) examined longitudinal data in math in schools that involved families in mathematics education. Sheldon et al. found "teacher-designed interactive homework and mathematics materials for families and students to use at home (Type 4) were related

more positively for boosting students' skills" (p. 201). Sheldon et al. in their research explain Epstein's six types of involvement as types of parent involvement, their reference to type 4 here refers to learning at home as the fourth type of involvement. While schools did use various types of involvement, interactive homework is the one that really helped students improve their skills. These studies show that TIPS homework can be beneficial in various academic areas.

Van Voorhis (2011a) researched the possible benefits of TIPS homework and found "the cost associated with the TIPS interventions are outweighed by the benefits to student, family, and teachers" (p. 240), students had better experiences with homework and increased their standardized test scores; but TIPS homework did not increase the amount of time spent on homework. Bennett-Conroy (2012) used TIPS as a way to implement parent-teacher communication and had similar findings: communication increased, students turned in more homework, and better grades were achieved. Bennett-Conroy also found two-way communication with parents on TIPS homework increased the attendance of families at school functions. Schools that implement TIPS homework may have students who are more engaged with their families on what they are learning at school, which both increases family involvement and test scores, and therefore, benefits the school, the families, and the students.

Interactive homework assignments (IHA) are similar to TIPS homework because parents are involved "during the completion of home learning activities and student outcomes" (Bailey, 2006, p. 155). Bailey trained parents how to complete interactive homework and found parents who received training on how to complete IHA had

children who were better able to make inferences from the assigned reading. This study is important because it shows that just assigning interactive homework is not enough; families need to be trained order for it to be successful. Similar findings on interactive homework and the importance on instructing families on how to complete such assignments were found by Bailey, Silvern, Brabham, and Ross (2004). Training in IHA should not be the only type of training families receive since ways to help a child with various standards are ever changing. These two studies illustrate the importance of training families in techniques to become involved in their children's education.

One technique that parents can use to help their children at home is reading a story and asking questions about the story. Senechal (2006) conducted a longitudinal study on ninety French-speaking children in kindergarten through grade 4. The home literacy model (Senechal, 2006) served as the framework for this study. The home literacy model stated "storybook exposure and parent teaching about literacy" (p. 61) are two types of activities that are done in homes. Storybook exposure and parent teaching about literacy were assessed for each child by asking parents questions about the amount of time spent on each activity. Participants were then tested in kindergarten for letter naming, letter-sound understanding, phoneme awareness, and vocabulary. In first grade they were tested for word recognition, decoding, spelling, and phoneme awareness. Fourth grade, which was the last grade tested, participants were tested for reading comprehension, fluency, spelling, and reading for pleasure. Storybook exposure was found to be significantly related to vocabulary scores in kindergarten and reading comprehension and reading for pleasure in grade 4 (p. 71). Parents teaching about

literacy were also directly linked to reading fluency in grade 4. When, at home, families read and discuss what has been read, children in early grades tend to increase their reading readiness, reading fluency, and enjoyment of reading.

While homework is a way to get families involved at home with the learning process, there has been a lot of debate on the effectiveness and importance of homework. Maltese, Tai, and Fan (2012) looked at time spent on homework and if there was an effect on class grades and standardized test scores. They found time spent on homework did not increase class grades, but did increase standardized test scores. Kohn (2007) a strong opponent of homework suggested homework can frustrate students, take time away from the family and other activities, and even cause students to become uninterested in learning. While Kohn does not suggest completely doing away with homework, he does advocate for homework that will benefit all students and should be differentiated for students. Pressman, Sugarman, Nemon, Desjarlais, Owens, and Schettini-Evans (2015) also found that homework could be an added stress when family members are unable to help with homework. While learning at home is an important type of involvement, there needs to be an understanding by parents, teachers, and students of the types of homework being sent home, the extended learning that the homework will provide, and the best way for families to be involved in the homework process.

Homework that is interactive is a good way not only to involve parents in the homework process, but also to communicate with families on what is being learned at school. While many teachers use homework to continue the learning at home, families need to understand how to help with homework. Teachers can provide concrete

examples, rubrics, and ample time to complete homework to alleviate some stress that homework can sometimes create. Parents who help with homework more naturally become part of the conversation about what is being learned in school.

Epstein's Fifth Type of Involvement: Decision Making

Gonzalez and Jackson (2013) studied involving families in making school-level decisions by including them in committees or councils. Data from 586 schools and administrators were collected on levels and types of engagement at the school and comparing it to decision making, researchers determined that less parental participation in decision-making actually had an increase in student achievement. Researchers noted this increase may be due to teachers feeling the influence of the families changes the tone of the school atmosphere and teacher autonomy. Landeros, (2011) also found that mothers who are affluent and educated could cause problems when volunteering in the classrooms of their children by creating a competitive atmosphere. Such situations may be reasons schools could be hesitant to ask families to become involved as it may create an atmosphere where teachers feel that families are more of a hindrance than help.

Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, Chuan, and Pedro (2011) looked at involvement in urban charter schools through Epstein's six types of involvement by interviewing administrators. In the area of decision-making, researchers found that schools held focus groups feedback from the parents; they then used feedback from families to implement new strategies. Surveys were also used which gave parents a voice in what they wanted to see happen at the school and to indicate if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the school. Researchers noted that along with the surveys to help with planning, parents were

included on the governing board of many charter schools studied. Researchers found many parents were not comfortable with involvement and serving on the governing board, but if schools provided training it helped parents feel more comfortable in participating in decision making at the school level. This research shows that parents have the desire to participate and offer suggestions, but need some training to feel comfortable expressing their opinions and participating.

Epstein's Sixth Type of Involvement: Collaborating With the Community

In a study of schools within the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), Sheldon and Van Voorhis (2004) explored whether partnership programs improve student achievement. Researchers hypothesized that the quality of partnerships would increase if the community and school district supported partnerships. A total of 332 NNPS schools filled out a survey to evaluate the programs, the support, family and community involvement, and program quality. Schools reported they did not have a lot of support from their school districts on family involvement, so they relied on support from colleagues for involvement. The study indicated when high quality programs are offered there is more involvement (p. 142). Support among colleagues was found to increase the quality of family involvement programs offered. It is a spiral effect, when programs improve, more families become involved, and when more families participate, the more the programs evolve to serve the families better. Sheldon et al. (2004), noted "evaluation may be the catalyst for the improvement of partnership programs over time" (p. 141). Within a school setting, the process of evaluating the family involvement process is

important as it will help schools see what types of programs families are interested in and how to improve the quality of programs offered.

When schools use evaluation to help improve program implementation, it benefits the school, families, and the students. Reece, Staudt, and Ogle (2013) studied the Neighboring Project. The Neighboring Project is a program where community resources help residents of a housing project become more involved in their child's education, help participants volunteer in the community, and encourage residents to become more connected with the resources that are offered in their neighborhood (Neighboring Project, n.d.). The project used focus groups as a form of evaluation to help in future sessions of the program. It found that those who participated in the program became more confident in their ability to communicate with the school and felt they had something to offer to the school and community. Communication between community partners, families, and the school was found by Gross, Haines, Hill, Francis, Blue-Banning, and Turnbull (2015) to be important in maintaining partnerships. When parents felt supported in their efforts to participate in the school and community, they became confident in their abilities, and participated in more activities. The study on the Neighboring Project by Reese et al. suggested when schools and communities understood and provided guidance to support and implement parental involvement tailored to each school and community, parents felt more comfortable becoming involved.

Research has shown that Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) helped to increase the partnership between the home and the school. When schools offered opportunities for families to learn about what was happening in the school and how to

help extend the learning at home, students' levels of achievement and communication between home and school both increased. As parents' comfort levels in the school setting increase, they may become more likely to volunteer. When schools help families by providing enabling opportunities to become involved in both the school setting and with the education process at home; the school, families, and the community benefit.

The Effects of Teacher Training on Family Involvement

Wright, Daniel, and Himelreich's (2000) (as cited in Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006) found 89% of teachers did not feel their teacher preparation courses prepared them to effectively work with and communicate with families. Teachers who lack preparation to involve families may not feel comfortable in implementing any type of family involvement in their classrooms. Zygmunt-Fillwalk stated, "while the importance of family involvement to student success has been established, the literature suggests that many teachers do not embrace the notion of these partnerships" (p. 329). There may be several reasons teachers are not embracing these partnerships such as the lack of teacher preparation courses in the area (Epstein, 2013, Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2006) and the fear of being judged by parents (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005, p. 158). Zygmunt-Fillwalk found that, after taking a family involvement course, pre-service teachers were more confident in their ability to communicate and work with families. Zygmunt-Fillwalk used a control group and a treatment group, with the treatment group taking a course on family and community relationships and the control group taking no course. After the treatment group finished the course, a survey was given to both groups on how well they thought they could implement family involvement and their attitude towards family involvement.

The results showed that those who had taken the course in family involvement felt better prepared to involve the families and had a better attitude toward family involvement.

Bingham and Abernathy (2007) found that, after a course in family involvement, pre-service teachers had "a more respectful and reciprocal interaction with families" (p. 52) and "students expanded their conceptions of the role of teachers to include positive interactions with families" (p. 52). Bingham and Abernathy used concept mapping to "examine preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding families prior to and following a sixteen-week course promoting family-centered teaching" (p. 40). The researchers explained a concept map to be a type of graphic organizer that helps "visually represent ideas about a central topic and highlight the relationships between concepts and important details" (p. 40). Students' self-made concept maps after the course compared to the beginning of the course included more two-way communication between the families and teachers as important interaction. Students realized that having open communication that is not just teacher driven and is imperative when working with families. When preservice teachers realize the importance of including families in the education of their children, they may be more likely to implement family involvement opportunities when they become classroom teachers.

Warren, Nofle, Ganley, and Quintanar (2011) studied graduate level courses in family involvement to determine if taking the course would have an influence on urban teachers' perceptions of including families and change attitudes of teachers towards the families and communities they served in a positive way. The 157 participants from two universities took the same course on family and community involvement. Data was

collected by interviews, course evaluations, and asset maps which were maps students created to show the resources in a school community (p. 101). Researchers found students became more aware of what the community and the families had to offer and the important resource they could be. Students also changed their view of themselves from just a teacher to helping families and communities build better relationships. Researchers suggested that “integrating family and community involvement courses into all teacher education programs as well as into school district professional development programs (p. 110)” is important. It is necessary to include professional development programs in their suggestions because there are many teachers in the field that may not have had any classes in how to form partnerships with families and community. Universities and school districts need to ensure training of teachers, which may help create partnerships to increase involvement by the families and communities.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) surveyed 500 deans of “schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) (p. 86)” about the courses offered in family involvement and how well they felt graduating students were prepared to implement family involvement activities when they began teaching. Of the 161 SCDE schools which responded, more than half offered courses specifically in family involvement, while 91.8% stated that at least one course did include the topic of family involvement (p. 93). Most deans felt their students were fairly well prepared to work with families; those schools that offered a specific course in family involvement felt their students were more prepared. These results suggest that SCDEs need to provide students with opportunities to learn and practice the implementation of family involvement methods. Courses should

be offered and made mandatory since family involvement plays an important role in the education of children and should be offered to all school personnel who have contact with the families.

Since many pre-service teachers did not have family involvement classes in their preparation courses, it makes sense for teachers already in the classroom to have opportunities to learn and implement involvement by taking professional development courses. A study by Bartels and Eskow (2010) on professional development showed when teachers complete courses in family involvement, they have a more positive attitude towards participation by families and are more confident in their abilities to get families involved. Bartels and Eskow followed 11 participants from high needs schools who took three graduate level courses on “family-professional collaboration” (p. 48) over the course of a year. The courses were based on the belief that “professionals must listen to and understand families as a prerequisite to engaging them in their children’s education” (p. 49). Interviews were conducted after the coursework was completed and six months later. After the courses, participants shared a desire to increase their levels of collaborating with and engaging parents in the educational process and understood the importance of learning about the family in order to engage the family in a meaningful way. Six months after the courses were completed, participants did find ways to engage parents in the educational process and were able to recall what was learned in each course. This study showed professional development in the area of family involvement is beneficial for teachers to understand the importance of collaboration, to learn how to engage parents in the educational process, and to implement practices that will encourage

families to become involved. Marschall and Shah (2016) also found when more professional development was offered to teachers; they engaged parents more. When schools help teachers to learn about involvement and partnerships, there may be more interaction between the home and the school.

Farrell and Collier (2010) conducted interviews on school personnel's perception of communication between the families and schools. They found six themes, one of those being teacher preparation. The communication style between families and teachers for teachers interviewed was based solely on personal experiences because "All participants lacked formal education, training, and support for FSC (family – school communication)" (p. 12). Teachers interviewed noted that "personal and professional experiences shaped their communication style" (p. 12), but still felt overwhelmed when it came to communicating with families. The need for training in family communication was deemed as important by the participants in the study. Farrell and Collier outlined recommended practices for family-school communication (p. 16) for preparation and development as well as policies and practices. Pre-service courses, continuing education for personnel, and staff development were recommended for preparation and development of effective family communication. Removing barriers of communication, making sure families were available, and gathering resources for families were some of the policies and practices suggested for improving communication.

School counselors also can involve families in the education of their children and in the school setting as shown in a study by Griffin and Steen (2010). Epstein's six types of involvement were used to determine ways counselors implemented partnerships in the

school settings. Open-ended questionnaires from 205 counselors were coded using Epstein's six types of involvement with a 7th code for answers including "leadership and advocacy practices for school counselors" (p. 224) that did not fit into the six types. The study found that 73% of counselors thought partnerships were important, while only 54% felt they could implement partnerships, and 42% reported having partnerships (p. 221). Most counselors were involved in activities that fit into Epstein's collaborating with the community category, and most did not report having activities within the other Epstein categories. Griffin and Steen also noted counselors may be involved in other categories of Epstein's types of involvement, but may not realize it because definitions and examples of the six types of involvement were not given to participants. In many schools, counselors have a lot of contact with families and thus need to have training to implement various types of successful partnerships. Families may feel more welcome in a school setting when all school personnel, rather than just teachers, try to make families partners.

Radzi, Razak, and Sukor (2010) conducted a study on primary teachers' views of parent involvement and types of involvement teachers would prefer. The study suggested teachers would prefer involvement that would be done at home (type 4 of Epstein's model) and more positive communication rather than only to inform families of difficulties that students may be having at school (type 2). While this study was done in Malaysia, it is similar to studies done in the United States (Bailey, 2006; Kaya & Lundeen, 2010; Marshall & Swan, 2010) that imply that schools need to continue to find ways for parents to become actively involved in their children's education and parents need to be partners with the teachers and schools. The study conducted by Bailey (2006),

found when parents help their children with homework in a meaningful way, tests scores are higher than when parents are not involved with homework. Kaya and Lundeen (2010) found that parents would like more interactive ways to help teach their children at home activities such as a science night helped parents feel more capable of providing help in science at home. Marshall and Swann (2010) provided families with workshops in math that helped families feel more confident in their ability to help at home. The study by Raszi et al. showed that teachers need to help provide opportunities for families to become comfortable being involved at home. Once the partnerships form and families are comfortable with the expectations of involvement by teachers, the more likely they will become involved. Ongoing training of new and veteran teachers could help to increase the willingness to offer partnership opportunities with families.

Why Families Become Involved or Not

DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007) conducted a study on the perceptions of family involvement that included teachers, students, and parents. While interviewing teachers, researchers found teachers believed many parents were not involved because they were intimidated by the content of what their children were learning or some other aspect of school (p. 364). When families are intimidated by any aspect of the educational process of their children, they are less likely to become involved. It should be the teachers' and school's responsibility to help families overcome their feelings of intimidation by offering programs that would help families become more comfortable with the school setting as well as the academic learning that is happening at school. The study results also showed a lack of communication between home and

school. The researchers suggested that there be workshops on the importance of family involvement, literature sent home on family involvement, and discussion during conferences on the importance of family involvement (p. 367) to decrease the feeling of intimidation.

Ferrara (2009) surveyed parents, teachers, administration, pre-service teachers, and staff at schools about their perceptions of family involvement and found that there are discrepancies in beliefs. The survey for parents indicated that they felt welcome at the school and believed that they were important to the success of the school, but many did not feel their ideas for school improvement were received well by the school. It also found that parents were hesitant to volunteer at their school although more parents were willing to volunteer than were actually volunteering. Most families found out about what was happening at school through their children's folders that go home and only 10% found out from a phone call home. (pp. 130-131). The administration's results showed the inability to find ways to "include parents as partners in academic programs" (p. 133). Administrators know the importance of involving families, and thus should find ways to involve families, offer workshops, and make families feel comfortable coming to school as partners in education. The staff and teachers who were surveyed felt that they would overall like to see more parents volunteering in various ways at school, but parents helping with learning was not mentioned as much as doing tasks that were not "academic" (p. 135). Overall Ferrara (2009) found that "staff (teachers and clerical) and principals did not value parent involvement highly" (p. 138). Staff members felt that it was neither their responsibility to teach parents how to be involved nor to instruct parents

in parenting skills. Teachers, staff, and administrators need to embrace the importance of family involvement and not think of it as an addition to the already numerous tasks they have. Family involvement needs to be considered a way to help children be more successful and educating parents how to help will alleviate some of the tasks teachers already have.

Quiocho and Daoud (2006) interviewed staff at two underperforming elementary schools in large school districts in southern California where Spanish was the first language of most students. Researchers found staff felt Latino parents did not want to become involved, did not help children complete their homework, and did not value education. Families at the same school were interviewed and indicated they wanted help to understand what their children were learning and wanted the same opportunities for their children that other non-Latino students were getting. Families also wanted communication to be improved. School staff members have to understand the families they serve in order to become partners rather than assuming families do not want to participate. Teachers need to assume that all families want their child to succeed and want to help, but may just not know how to help. Schools need to understand how families want to become involved by asking families what opportunities they would like to become involved, and then provide those chances to all families based on their needs and wants.

Family involvement is influenced by many factors; Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) conducted a study of African American family involvement to find the factors that influence their involvement. Focus groups consisting of African American

parents of middle school students were asked open-ended questions on their beliefs about family involvement. Lack of time, work, and financial reasons were cited as the primary reasons participants may not be involved. Parents felt that if they were involved, teachers showed “more interest in their children’s academic well-being” (p. 149). Flexible meeting locations, setting higher expectations of students, providing workshops on how to help at home, and inviting parents to be more involved were suggestions from parents on how to create more involvement in the school. Parent suggestions need to be acknowledged and considered because parents will be more likely to become involved if they feel schools are listening to their suggestions and trying to create a collegial atmosphere where families input is listened to and implemented.

Families not only need to feel their involvement makes a difference, but need to feel empowered in the fact that the feedback they give to schools and teachers is considered when it comes to creating involvement opportunities. Canning and Fantuzzo (2000) conducted a study with 126 families participating in the Head Start Program. Each family was placed into an *empowered parent education* (EPE) group or a *conventional parent education group* (CPE) and attended two workshops that were either conventional workshops or empowerment workshops. The EPE group viewed a video tape of a parenting workshop given by the Head Start Program and was able to critique the workshop as well as think of ways to improve the workshop, for session two, parents were the main focus of the session and were asked to contribute to the session. The CPE group was also shown the video tape and was asked to share stories of difficulties they have may have with their children, but did not have the opportunity to critique the

workshop and the second workshop was based on difficulties articulated at the first workshop with little participation from families. The findings of the *Empowered Parent Education Scale* (EPES) showed the more empowered parents felt, the more they participated. Schools need to make sure families feel their voices are heard and have a sense that what they contribute matters. When families feel a sense of empowerment, then they will be more willing to be involved and stay involved.

Patel and Stevens (2010) looked at “how parents’, teachers’, and students’ perceptions of the students’ abilities affect parents’ reports of their involvement and of the school programs to facilitate their involvement” (p. 120). Parents felt that there were fewer programs offered to increase involvement when there was a discrepancy between the parents and teachers regarding a student’s ability. One implication of this study noted by researchers is that, “productive involvement must begin with a conversation about parents’ and teachers’ views of students, the purpose of schooling, and the role of all stakeholders involved” (p.133). When parents and teachers share an understanding of the students and their abilities, it will help create types of involvement that the parents and teachers feel is beneficial and create a collegial atmosphere for involvement to continue.

To find out how parent involvement influences student achievement, Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010) looked at a student’s perception of his/her own abilities and a teacher’s perception of the relationship between the student and the teacher. Researchers hypothesized that parent involvement would not effect student achievement when student’s perceptions and student and teacher relationships were used in the analysis. After analyzing scores, it was found that there is a positive relationship

between parent involvement as measured by the teacher and academic performance as measured by test scores and teachers. Students own perception of their abilities was also affected by parent involvement as well as the parent-teacher relationship. This study indicated a need for schools to continue to provide opportunities for parents to become involved. When parents are involved, students perform better academically, students have a higher confidence in their abilities, and there is a better relationship between the student and the teacher.

Families need to feel a connection to the school and other families attending the school to feel comfortable becoming involved. Giovacco-Johnson (2009) described a family involvement project where families learn about each other by sharing information about their childhoods, parenting, and how families are involved in their children's education. Partnerships are created when there is a "powerful method for learning about the uniqueness of each family. Teachers learned that when families share stories, they gain insights that can support the development of practices that better match family strengths and needs (p. 133)". When families, teachers, administrators, and school staff are comfortable with each other, it creates an environment in which families feel welcome at the school and involvement activities.

The studies mentioned above look at why parents and families may or may not be involved, and show that, ultimately, parents need some sort of motivation to become involved. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) examined the motivation for parent involvement by surveying 853 parents of elementary school aged children in a metropolitan public school system. Researchers used questionnaires to measure how

active parents thought they should be, what parents believed they should do with their children's education, parents beliefs about how successful they would be at helping their children, perceptions of the schools invitations for involvement, perceptions of teacher invitations for involvement, perceptions of invitations from their children for involvement, the belief by parents that they know enough about the material their child is learning to help, and the amount of time parents thought they would have to help (p. 536). It was found that involvement at home and in the school setting was influenced by invitations for involvement, parents belief that they would be able to help their children, and the amount of time they felt they had available to help their children. This study showed that when parents are actively sought out to help by the school or children, they are more likely to become involved and motivated to help both in and out of school. Schools need to not just expect parents to help, but also actively invite parents to become involved.

Involvement that creates a partnership between the home and school may not be fully implemented and understood by schools and families. Families need to understand the importance of their involvement and be provided with various opportunities to become involved. The school can help families to understand their importance in the educational process by making it an important part of the school atmosphere and by making families feel welcome in the school setting. The model of Epstein's six types of involvement can help schools look at what they are currently offering with family involvement and in what areas their current level of involvement could improve.

Methodologies

Epstein (2009) noted that it is imperative for schools to take time to evaluate their family involvement and the partnerships between the schools and the families that are formed. One way of evaluation that Epstein suggests is school-created surveys which would be tailored to the specific school setting. The questionnaire that will be used in this study is partially adapted from the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L., 2007), which is Epstein's sample survey. Epstein recommends keeping surveys open-ended, anonymous, and focused. These suggestions were used in creating the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix B) used for this study.

In Fink's (2006) step-by-step guide on conducting surveys, a survey is explained as an "information collection methods used to describe, compare, or explain individual and societal knowledge, feelings, values, preferences, and behavior", (p. 1). By using a survey or questionnaire, I was able to anonymously try to understand an individual's feeling on a specific topic. When surveying families and teachers, I was able to gain the perspective of both groups by using the same survey.

The method of the current research is a qualitative study using various data collection methods including questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), is conducted best in the natural setting, uses participants' voices in the findings, and finds the patterns and themes related to the research problem. There are five types of qualitative research according to Creswell from which a researcher could choose. For the current research, the two types that would be

the most logical would either be a case study or a grounded theory study. In a case study, the researcher would look at a specific issue in a “bounded system (i.e, a setting, a context)” (p. 73) over time and by using several sources of information. In a grounded theory, the research looks to develop a theory that helps to explain a topic by collecting data from participants. Once the data is collected, data is coded into categories to help form a theory about the specific research topic. For this study, I conducted a case study. The case study was the best option because it studied the issue of family involvement at K Elementary School. A case study could help K Elementary School look at data from teachers and families to create a family involvement plan that will work for the school and the families.

Buddy (2012) also used the qualitative method to study parent involvement in his dissertation on parent involvement, specifically communication. He found that using a variety of communication methods could help involvement. While Buddy used a case study as his qualitative method type, he also used the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L., 2007) as a model for his survey, which I used to help formulate my questionnaire (Appendix A). When looking at previous studies on parent and family involvement, many (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007; Ferrara, 2009; Quiocho and Daoud, 2006) have used interviews, questionnaires, or focus groups to help better understand the feelings of parents, families, and school staff on involvement. When gathering data directly from individuals who are bounded by a school and what is offered in regards to family involvement, it helps to get the views of those directly involved.

Summary

The review of literature shows a need for family involvement and partnerships between the home, school, and community to help children succeed academically. With the ESSA laws on family involvement, schools should be conducting various types of family involvement. Without a system to ensure family involvement is taking place, schools must take the initiative to create and implement forms of involvement and partnerships that best meet the needs of the schools. The research included in this review of literature relates to the current study by helping K Elementary School consider different types of family involvement within Epstein's six types of involvement that could increase partnerships within the school. It also supports the fact that many teachers may not have been trained or feel comfortable in providing a variety of family involvement. With involvement types outlined and examples of types of involvement, it may also help teachers feel comfortable in providing involvement or partnership opportunities for families.

Epstein's six types of involvement is a framework for schools to use to help create and implement parent partnerships at their schools. With so many varying types of involvement within Epstein's framework, schools should be able to find activities that could help increase family involvement and in which teachers and families are willing to participate in. Each of the six types of involvement has its own unique qualities to promote partnerships, and the studies reviewed in this chapter show how partnerships in all but one type of involvement increase student achievement.

Section 3 focuses on the methodology that was used to determine the type of family involvement that families and teachers at K Elementary School are currently implementing and also at what they would be willing to participate.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

Parental involvement is now required by the ESSA law to be implemented in schools, and schools that receive Title 1 funding must use at least 1% of their funding for parent involvement (Title 1 State Parent Advisory Council, 2011). The opportunity for schools to involve parents and families to increase student achievement needs to be aligned to the needs and wants of schools. This study may help to increase family involvement by focusing on the needs and wants of families and teachers at K Elementary School.

The population for the study consisted of 228 families with children who attended K Elementary School at the time of the study, which was a convenience sample. Data collection instruments were an open-ended questionnaire on family involvement, family focus group questions, and teacher interview questions. Questionnaires were sent to all families and classroom teachers at K Elementary School at the time of the study. Of the 25 families returning a questionnaire, 11 indicated their willingness to be interviewed or participate in focus groups, and nine were randomly selected for a focus group by grade-level band (K-2, 3-4, and 5-6), with three participants per grade-level band. Of the 14 teachers returning the questionnaire, 10 teachers indicated their willingness to participate in interviews, and six were randomly selected. Questionnaire answers, focus group discussion, and interview answers were coded to identify trends in data, relationships in data collected, and themes.

Design

This case study used the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix B), an open-ended questionnaire; teacher interviews; and family focus groups to explore attitudes of families and teachers toward family involvement. Interview questions are included in Appendix C. Focus group questions are included in Appendix D. The open-ended questionnaire on the beliefs of families and teachers at K Elementary School was used to determine thoughts and beliefs toward involvement. Creswell (2007) noted in a case study that a researcher needs to use multiple sources of information. By using an open-ended questionnaire, I was able to collect data from 25 families and 14 teachers on their perspectives about family involvement at K Elementary School. The interviews and focus groups were used to conduct a more in-depth dialog on the beliefs of families and teachers in the area of family involvement.

Creswell (2007) described various qualitative approaches, such as narrative research, phenomenological research, ethnographic research, case study research, and grounded theory research. I selected a case study for this research because I sought to explore family involvement in a specific school setting. The school was considered a bounded system, and the issue focused on a specific experience at the school, which was family involvement. Case studies also involve using multiple sources, which for this study were interviews, focus groups, a questionnaire, and any family involvement reports the school already had. An open-ended questionnaire was used to help gather data, as it would have been too overwhelming to try to interview all families at K Elementary School. By using an open-ended questionnaire, I gathered input from families and they

could indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group. I used the questionnaire responses in formulating further questions for the interviews and focus groups, which helped me to collect more in-depth and specific data on family involvement.

Research Questions

The overall research questions were the following:

1. What types of family involvement does K Elementary School currently provide?
2. How could K Elementary School improve its family involvement practices?
3. What types of involvement would parents like to see the school provide?

More specific questions were included in the Family Involvement Questionnaire.

Based on the responses I received from the questionnaire, I asked additional questions during the interview and focus group process.

The Researcher's Role

My role at K Elementary School is that of a teacher. I am not currently in any leadership role at the school. I did not have any influence on questionnaire participation because of the anonymous nature of the questionnaires. Because each questionnaire was returned in a self-addressed envelope, I did not know who had completed the individual questionnaires. Only families that were willing to be interviewed returned a consent form along with the questionnaire. Although the school is small, I anticipated that families would feel only slight or minimal pressure to return the questionnaire forms or sign up to be interviewed, given that all questionnaire answers were anonymous. Being involved in the setting of the research is mentioned by Hatch (2002) as an important aspect of

qualitative research because it helps the participants develop trust and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Because most of the participants were familiar with me as a teacher, it was relatively easy to establish comfort and trust.

Hatch (2002) discussed the importance of a researcher being able to give back to the setting in which the research was conducted. In that I provided recommendations reflecting ways in which families and teachers are willing to be involved, the research could help K Elementary School in increasing academic achievement and forming relationships between educators and families. Given that there are some validity concerns when one is researching one's own place of work, Creswell (2007) recommended using multiple strategies of validation for accuracy when studying one's own work setting. Because I am a teacher at K Elementary School who encourages family involvement, the study may reflect some bias toward family involvement. Peer review and triangulation were used to eliminate as much bias as possible.

Setting, Population, and Participants

K Elementary School is a Title I school in the state of Hawaii. The population of students is 93% Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, 7% White, and 1% Hispanic; of these students, 76% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The school consists of 335 students, who represent 228 families. K Elementary School is one of four elementary schools located on the island. Participants were self-selected, which meant that those families that chose to return the questionnaire were participants and those who indicated willingness to be interviewed or participate in a focus group were randomly selected by creating a random sample in Excel, as per instructions I found on Survey Monkey

(Survey Monkey, 2012) by grade-level bands. Because not many families showed an interest in being interviewed, I grouped focus groups by grade-level bands, where families with children in kindergarten through second grade formed one focus group, families of children in third and fourth grade formed a second focus group, and families with children in fifth and sixth grade formed a third focus group. All questionnaire participants returned a consent form (Appendix A), which explained each participant's rights, in a self-addressed, stamped envelope to maintain each participant's confidentiality. Participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout the process because questionnaires (Appendix B) had no identifying information on them. The return address on the envelopes for questionnaires and consent forms included my name, the school name, and the school's return address. On the consent form, participants expressed their willingness to be interviewed. Because all families who self-selected to participate in the questionnaire had children who attended K Elementary School, they were able to contribute greatly in answering the research questions about the school and family involvement. I expected at least 40 families to return their questionnaires, but only 25 did so, and 11 of these families were willing to be interviewed.

The school employs 21 teachers who work directly with students. All teachers were sent a questionnaire to complete (Appendix G) as well as a consent form (Appendix F) to fill out if they were willing to be interviewed. Consent forms and questionnaires were returned via self-addressed, stamped envelope to maintain confidentiality during the study. From the 21 questionnaires sent out, 14 teachers returned their form, and 10 were

willing to be interviewed. Teachers to be interviewed were chosen randomly using Excel (Survey Monkey, 2012).

Instrumentation

Three types of data collection procedures were used in this study. Qualitative data were collected using parts of the Family Involvement Questionnaire used in a dissertation by Buddy (2012), the Partnerships Family Survey from the National PTA (2007), and the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007).

The questionnaire helped in determining the level of family involvement activities currently provided by K Elementary School. The second type of data collection involved interviews with teachers. Focus groups with families by grade-level bands constituted the third type of data collection. Five initial questions were used to form the foundation for the interviews and focus groups. However, additional questions were added, as determined by responses to the questionnaire.

Questionnaire

Buddy (2012) created the Family Involvement Questionnaire to investigate perceptions of communication at an urban elementary school and what may factor into efforts to promote parent involvement. To create the questionnaire, Buddy looked at several previously published surveys by the National Education Association (2003), National Parent Teacher Association (2007), and Epstein (2001). The surveys were Likert-scale surveys that Buddy adapted to be open ended. When looking at The Power of Partnerships Family Survey (2007) and the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007), which are updated versions of what

Buddy used to help create his questionnaire, I found that these surveys aligned with the current study's aim of determining the attitudes of families and teachers toward family involvement and the ways in which the school is already providing involvement opportunities. I adapted Buddy's survey using The Power of Partnerships Family Survey (2007), the purpose of which is to determine how to build better partnerships between a school and families. I used the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007) as part of the Family Involvement Survey to determine whether schools are involving families in a meaningful way. With permission from the authors and organizations affiliated with the surveys (Appendices D, E, and F), I was able to adapt the questions for the needs of the current study. Using an open-ended questionnaire instead of a Likert-scale survey allowed families to answer questions specific to K Elementary School and allowed for more comments from the families and teachers on their involvement.

Focus Groups

I randomly selected three families per grade-level band (kindergarten to second grade, third and fourth grade, and fifth and sixth grade) to participate in a focus group from the 11 families who were willing to participate in focus groups. Each focus group consisted of three families; in all groups, one parent from each family attended. Each focus group met once at the public library, which was considered a neutral place to conduct interviews. Focus groups took place during the workweek at a time convenient for the families when the library was open. Focus groups were used to collect more in-

depth data from families on the types of involvement that are provided by K Elementary School and ideas on how to improve family involvement.

Each focus group participant received a consent form that indicated that the session would be taped, noted the duration of the interview, and stated that I would be taking notes during the session. The focus group protocol (Appendix C) was followed for each group.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with teachers who were randomly selected from those willing to participate in the interview process. Interviews were conducted at the public library during after-school hours. I randomly selected six participants from the 10 willing teacher participants. Interviews were used to look at teacher beliefs on family involvement in greater depth. The interview protocol (Appendix G) was followed for each group.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2007) noted eight types of validation strategies and recommended that a researcher in a qualitative study use at least two validation strategies (p. 209). For this study, I used triangulation and peer review. Triangulation consisted of determining whether the interview answers, focus group answers, and questionnaire answers showed similar evidence of involvement. For peer review, I asked experts in the field of education, including a district-level specialist, the school's current principal, and the school's reading specialist (who did not participate in the questionnaire) to determine whether the questions and findings were reliable and valid.

Data Collection Procedures

Through U.S. mail, I sent to each family and teacher a questionnaire to complete. On each questionnaire, I described the purpose of the study and explained that completing the questionnaire was anonymous and voluntary. I included a self-addressed stamped envelope with the questionnaire to be returned via U.S. mail. I also included a consent form and a place for families or teachers to indicate their willingness to be interviewed or participate in a focus group.

I conducted interviews at the public library because it was a neutral space. Interviewees and focus group participants were randomly selected based on their willingness to take part, as indicated on the consent forms. I determined interview and focus group questions, which were added to the five original questions once the questionnaire data had been coded. Interviews and focus groups lasted between 15-20 minutes each and were recorded to ensure accurate transcription and coding. Once the interview and focus group data had been transcribed, I gave interviewees the opportunity to look over a summary of the interview.

In a case study, data needed to be gathered from participants who have experienced the research problem or case (Creswell, 2007). Because the questionnaire and interviews were directly related to the participant's family involvement experiences, they were helpful in gathering specific information on family involvement at K Elementary School. Once the information was collected, I started the data analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedure consisted of looking at answers to the questionnaires as well as answers from interview and focus group questions. I organized the data using data spiral, as described by Creswell (2007), in which a researcher looks at data by organizing findings into categories. I chose to use Epstein's six types of involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community for organizing data) as the categories, and I based the interviews upon this theory. I organized the data from questionnaires in separate documents for teacher and family responses following Epstein's six types of involvement. Once I transcribed the family focus group and teacher interview recordings, I inputted these data into the same document I had used for the questionnaires. I then analyzed data by describing, interpreting, classifying, and finally representing data to create a description to present the findings (Creswell, 2007, p. 151). When describing the data, I looked at the responses to questionnaires, focus group questions, and interview questions. I then coded each response according to Epstein's six types of family involvement and described, interpreted, and classified what I saw and trends I noticed. I inputted data into an Excel document with columns for codes and responses. The columns with codes helped me to group similar responses once all questionnaires, focus group, and interview responses had also been coded into the same document. As Creswell (2007) noted, in the data interpretation process, there may be data that are surprising; Creswell encouraged qualitative researchers to include the unexpected in their data when coded. Once I had coded all data, I included any outliers in my data analysis as well as

the results section because it would be important to note different views when sharing suggestions with K Elementary School. When all data had been coded and put into categories, patterns, and themes, I gave suggestions based on the data gathered to K Elementary School's administrators and teachers to help improve family and school partnerships.

Summary

This case study examined the current levels of family involvement at K Elementary School and how the school can improve family involvement. Participants completed an open-ended questionnaire, and willing participants were interviewed or participated in focus groups. Participants responded to questions about their beliefs on the current types of family involvement that K Elementary School provided and how the school could improve the level of family involvement. Findings of the study are reviewed in Section 4.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

I conducted this case study to help determine how K Elementary School might improve its school-family partnerships. All families and classroom teachers at the school were invited to participate in a questionnaire on current levels of family involvement. I included questions on how the school could improve involvement opportunities to form partnerships. An invitation to participate in an interview for teachers or a focus group for families was included in the consent form with the questionnaire. I analyzed data from 25 family and 14 teacher questionnaires, six teacher interviews, and three family focus groups by grade-level bands (kindergarten to second grade, third and fourth grade, and fifth and sixth grade) to identify trends, themes, and suggestions regarding family involvement at the school, which I include in the results section. Excel was used to keep track of trends, themes, and suggestions from families and teachers. I used Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) to keep track of each type of involvement and grouped similar responses within each of those six categories.

Data Gathering Overview

I sent questionnaires to all 228 families and 21 classroom teachers at the school. With each questionnaire, I included a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it, as well as a consent form for participants to indicate willingness to participate in interviews or focus groups. I numbered the questionnaires when I received them in order to keep track of each questionnaire and where the information came from, in case I wanted to go back and review the questionnaires again. Twenty-five families and 14 teachers

responded to the questionnaire. I interviewed six teachers and conducted three focus groups, one for family members of children in kindergarten to second grade, a second for family members of children in third and fourth grade, and a third for family members of children in fifth and sixth grade. I held all focus groups at the public library. Participants for interviews and focus groups were randomly selected using Excel. Interviews and focus groups lasted about 15-20 minutes.

After receiving the questionnaires, I inputted the responses into an Excel document and coded data into categories linked to Epstein's six types of involvement (2009). Once I had coded the responses to the questionnaire into Epstein's six types of involvement, I added questions to the interview and focus group protocols. I recorded and transcribed each interview or focus group to enable me to code data more effectively. Once the data had been transcribed, I looked for themes that went along with responses from the questionnaire. I then added responses into an Excel document with codes from the questionnaire, making sure to note the interview or focus group from which the information came.

All data from teacher interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires are discussed below in relation to Epstein's six types of involvement.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure quality, I used three data sources: a questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from three surveys that had been used in previous studies or by organizations seeking to help schools look at their levels of family involvement (Buddy, 2012; National PTA, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2007). The

interview and focus group questions were modified based on the coding and results of the questionnaire. Once the interviews and focus groups had been completed, participants were given a summary of the transcript to check for accuracy. The school's current principal, the school's reading specialist, and a district educational specialist read the findings to check for accuracy and understandability. By using several data sources, I was able to triangulate data to check for accuracy and maintain quality in the research study.

Findings for Epstein's Six Types of Involvement

Type 1: Parenting

Epstein's (2009) first type of involvement is parenting, which entails "help[ing] all families establish home environments to support children as students" (p. 16).

Questions on the questionnaire (Appendix B) pertained to ways in which educators at the school learn specific information about each individual child and ways in which the school helps families to continue the learning process at home.

Data from questionnaire from families. The top three parenting issues families included were that homework was difficult to explain, consistency at home was a challenge, and communication was lacking. Families received support to continue learning at home from notes, e-mails, workshops, and conferences. Families felt that if there were more afterschool programs and communication with the teacher, they would feel more supported in this area.

Many parents did not feel that the school tried to find out specific information about a child or felt that the only time specific information was sought was during parent conferences twice a year.

Data from questionnaire from teachers. Meeting with parents was the main way in which teachers felt that they supported families. Teachers also felt that notes, calls, and communication logs were other ways in which they helped families to support the learning process at home.

When asked about how they learned information about specific children in their classrooms, teachers identified family and student surveys as their main source of information. They also asked previous teachers for information about individual children to find out more about each student.

Table 1

How Does the School Send Information to Help Your Child's Learning at Home?

Family response to questionnaire*	Teacher response to questionnaire*
Notes/flyers (10)	Notes/flyers (9)
E-mail (10)	E-mail (2)
Workshops (4)	Workshops (1)
Conferences (5)	Calls (4)
Weekly notes (2)	Communication logs (3)

*Numbers exceed number of participants because participants were able to provide more than one response.

Data from family focus groups. Families who participated in focus groups felt that workshops and informational meetings on expectations and navigating online programs would be a good addition to K Elementary School's family involvement activities. A parent stated, "I think if we have more of those workshops, on not just expectations, but what we can do at home to support our child at home growing." Families also wanted to see family-oriented activities that were not limited to watching a

movie on movie night. Some felt that the movie nights that the school provided were good but that watching a movie was something that they could do at home. They indicated that they would rather see interactive learning activities done more often, such as a program done once a year called “Reading Under the Stars.”

Data from teacher interviews. All teachers interviewed mentioned workshops as a way to help families learn about standards and how to help their children at home. Some mentioned that they had offered workshops in the past but were not currently providing workshops to families due to their own time constraints and poor family turnout. Two teachers noted that they provided families with materials at the beginning of the year that would help with math.

Type 2: Communication

Communication, the second type of involvement in Epstein’s (2009) framework, entails “design[ing] effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress” (p. 16). I asked questions (Appendix B) about preferred types of communication as well as participants’ comfort level with home and school communication.

Data from questionnaire from families. Families felt that the best way to communicate general information was e-mail, followed by phone calls, and notes home. Some families stated that the reason they preferred e-mail was that flyers sent home in a backpack don't always make it to the family. When information being communicated was about standards, school reform, assessment tools, or discipline, parent meetings were preferred because communication occurred "face to face."

When asked about their comfort level in communicating with the teacher or principal, the majority of families either felt very comfortable or comfortable. Those who were not that comfortable with communication were unsure about what could make them more comfortable. Others stated that it was difficult to reach the principal for communication.

Table 2

*Communication Responses From Families on Questionnaires**

Communication on general topics	Communication on school reform, school goals, assessments, or other topics regarding the school	Comfort level in communicating with the school	Best way to communicate with you
E-mail (16)	Parent meetings	Very comfortable	Phone call (13)
Phone call (9)	(10)	(11)	Notes (8)
Flyers (6)	E-mail (10)	Comfortable (8)	E-mail (17)
Weekly note from teacher (5)	Workshops (5)		

*Numbers exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data from questionnaire from teachers. Teachers felt that the best means to communicate general information about what was happening in the classroom or nonacademic information to families were letters and e-mails from the classroom teacher. On the other hand, teachers felt that letters from the principal to the families to communicate information about school reforms, standards, and other topics regarding the school should be sent home more often and that all information should be on the school website. Teachers also indicated that letters from the principal to the families should be sent in paper form with children informing families of what was going on. Teachers felt that the best ways for families to communicate with them were in person, with phone calls, in notes, or by e-mail.

Teachers also felt very comfortable communicating with parents. One teacher, however, noted discomfort in communicating some things to parents, knowing that children might be punished at home.

Table 3

*Communication Responses From Teachers on Questionnaires**

Communication on general topics	Communication on school reform, school goals, assessments, or other topics regarding the school	Comfort level in communicating with the families	Best way for parents to communicate with you
E-mail (4) Letters (4) Communication log (2) Weekly note from teacher (2)	Letters (8) E-mail (1) Website (2)	Very comfortable (12) Depends on the parent (1)	Phone call (8) Notes (6) E-mail (8) In person (5)

*Numbers exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data from family focus groups. In all three focus groups, there was consensus between families that e-mail was a good way to communicate information to families because it was convenient. There was mention of the fact that families who did not have e-mail access could get copies of what was sent via e-mail. Families who do not have e-mail currently get a hard copy of any information sent home with their children. Some families did not like the automated calls, whereas other families felt that those calls worked well. In-person contact between families and teachers was also something that families indicated worked best, as this communication was personal and allowed for more conversation. One focus group member noted a preference for a phone call rather than e-mail because a phone call makes it possible to hear the tone in a person's voice and ask follow-up questions quickly.

Families also felt that advance notice of events would be beneficial to allow families time to take off work or to just know about what was going on and when. A suggestion by one focus group was to have an electronic bulletin that would be updated weekly, which would contain the school lunch and breakfast menu, any special events, and meetings. A parent noted that this type of electronic bulletin “could have everything, the daily bulletin, what will happen in the next couple of weeks. Whatever is happening, there would be a calendar so parents could be aware of what is going on.”

Data from teacher interviews. Teachers had varying ways in which they liked to send information home. All teachers mentioned notes sent home with students as a way they liked to give families information. Several liked e-mail because it is convenient; however, teachers did note that not all families have an e-mail address, which was why they also sent home paper notes. Three teachers mentioned weekly family folders with notes about how the child did in class for the week. One noted that she liked the weekly folder because it was signed and returned and could be kept as written documentation if needed.

Type 3: Volunteering

The third type of Epstein’s six types of involvement is volunteering, which entails “recruit[ing] and organiz[ing] parent help and support” (Epstein, 2009, p. 16). Questions (Appendix B) were asked to determine what types of volunteer involvement were provided at the school and what types families would be willing to participate in.

Data from questionnaire from families. The majority of families indicated that their main type of volunteer work at the school was setting up or cleaning up special

events and fundraising for their child's particular class or the school in general. Many families indicated that they were unable to volunteer at school during school hours due to work but would be willing to do things that could be done at home.

To encourage more volunteering, families indicated that the school should try the use of incentives or make volunteering mandatory. Families also indicated that they would like to be notified about volunteer opportunities with an e-mail or with a flyer sent home.

Table 4

Volunteering Responses From Families on Questionnaire

What should be done to get more parents involved in both academic and nonacademic activities?	What are other ways you are willing to volunteer if unable to come to school?	What type of activities have you volunteered for before?	If you have not volunteered at school, indicate why.	How would you like to be notified about volunteering opportunities?
Incentives (6)	Monetary donations (6)	Set up/clean up for events (3)	Work schedule (8)	E-mail (14)
Make it mandatory (5)	Prep materials or cut things at home (7)	Room parent (4)		Note/flyer (9)
Just ask (4)	Fundraising (3)	May Day (5)		

*Numbers may exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data questionnaire from teachers. Teachers felt they could get more families involved with better advertising, communication of the activities, and clarification of the purpose of the volunteer activity. Teachers also suggested asking parents to be resources and providing families with specific opportunities to come into the classroom as ways to encourage more volunteering.

Teachers noted that fundraising and chaperoning field trips were the ways families currently are volunteering in the classrooms. Two reasons for not wanting families to volunteer in the classroom: Being unable to depend on families and a child being unable to concentrate because a family member was present. If there are opportunities for volunteering in the classroom, teachers notify families primarily with a note.

Table 5

Volunteering Responses From Teachers on Questionnaire

What should be done to get more parents involved in academic and nonacademic activities?	What are some ways the school can provide more opportunities for parents to volunteer?	What types of ways have parents volunteered in your classroom?	If you do not want parent volunteers in your classroom, please indicate why.	How do you notify parents of volunteering opportunities in your class?
Better advertise the activity and purpose (4)	Ask parents to be resources (2) Opportunities to help in the classroom (2)	Field trips (4) Science activities (2)	Child may act up or not concentrate while parent is there (2) Cannot depend of them (2)	Note (6) E-mail (2) Phone call (2)

*Numbers may exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data from family focus groups. All focus groups mentioned fundraising for class field trips as the main way their families volunteer. Helping with setting up for special events and attending those events was also mentioned in all focus groups. A concern from focus groups was that the timing of notices for volunteer opportunities did not give working families enough advance notice to be able to help or take off from work.

Families suggested having ample advance notice of opportunities would make them more likely to volunteer at school or to help in some way out of school. Focus groups also noted they do not always know about volunteer activities or how the school and teachers may need help. “Just ask me then I can,” is what one parent said, meaning if

the school and teacher notify families with a personal invite, they are more than willing to help. Two of the three focus groups mentioned they would like to see a day of campus beautification repeated as a volunteer opportunity because this was an activity families both participated in and enjoyed.

Data from teacher interviews. Many of the teachers referenced fundraising as a way for families to volunteer. Of all teachers interviewed, only one mentioned a beginning of the year survey that families could fill out indicating how they would be willing to volunteer in the class. This particular teacher would then follow up with a call or note when volunteer help was needed. Several teachers indicated they did not have any volunteer opportunities for families.

Type 4: Learning at Home

Learning at home in Epstein's six types of involvement is to "provid[ing] information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning" (2009, p. 16). The questionnaire asked how families support the learning process at home and how the school can better support families in this area.

Data from questionnaire from families. The majority of the families said that helping with homework was the main way they helped their child's learning at home and that another way was reading and having a discussion about what was read. Families also felt the school does support them by providing information or materials to help at home. Families felt the school should provide more assistance by having workshops at every grade level and having more family-oriented homework projects.

Table 6

*Learning at Home From Family Questionnaire**

How do you support your child's learning at home?	Does the school provide information and materials to help learning at home?
Help with homework (20)	Yes (15)
Read and discuss story (10)	No (2)
Encouragement (3)	

*Numbers exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data questionnaire from teachers. Teachers felt that providing strategies and examples would help families with student learning at home. Teachers also suggested that an additional way to support families would be to provide manipulatives and a computer for families to work with at home.

Data from family focus groups. Focus groups knew about the Families and Classroom Teachers (FACT) program where teachers hold workshops to help the families learn what is happening at school and provide strategies to help their children at home. Families felt workshops were good and wondered why all grade levels did not have workshops. Participants also suggested having workshops on internet programs that children are asked to do at home as this would be beneficial for families to know what the program is about and how they can help at home. One group discussed homework and how it is “a big part of where we support our child at home.”

Data from teacher interviews. The main way teachers thought the learning process could continue at home was with homework. Teachers also explained that they

helped the families by providing information about what is going on in the classroom. Sending home family friendly standards, materials for math, and differentiating homework were how teachers believed they help the families.

Type 5: Decision Making

Including “parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives” (2009, p. 16) is the fifth type of involvement in Epstein’s six types of involvement. The way families are involved and how they would like to be involved were questionnaire (Appendix B) questions asked.

Data from questionnaire from families. Many families were unsure of the ways the school involved them in the decision-making process. Some families felt they could be involved at meetings or with the Parent Teacher Organization. The families would like to be involved in the decision making process by being informed and being able to offer input. Families suggested that more meetings with the principal would help form better relationships to voice concerns and become more involved in the decisions at the school.

Data from questionnaire from teachers. Teachers stated The School Community Council (SCC) was a way families could be involved in the decision making process at the school. While all teachers knew of the SCC, some were unsure of how the SCC works. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) was mentioned as a way for families to have their voices heard in the decision making process as well. Teachers thought families should be surveyed to be able to give their input, and once decisions are made, they should be informed of the decisions made via newsletters or notes home.

Table 7

How Should Families Be Involved in School Decisions?

Family response to questionnaire	Teacher response to questionnaire
Opportunity to give input (8)	Parent Teacher Organization (3)
Being informed (3)	Notify parents of decisions (2)
Surveys (3)	School Community Council (2)
	Surveys (2)

*Numbers may exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data from family focus groups. Families would like to be involved in some way in the decision-making processes at the school, especially since it will affect their children. The varying level of involvement in the decision-making process was evident in the focus group discussions. Some would like to fill out surveys to remain anonymous because they felt intimidated by giving their input. Others were comfortable giving their input. One stated, “If they ask me my opinion I am quite willing to give it and they have asked.” One parent sits on the School Community Council (SCC) board, which is an advisory board to the school. In the focus group with the SCC member, others did not know families were invited to the meetings to voice their concerns. The focus group felt that the SCC meetings and their purpose should be better advertised to the families and families should be invited to the meetings.

Data from teacher interviews. Teachers felt that families may not know the options for them to become involved in the decision-making process and the school needs to communicate the options families have to be involved in the decision-making process. Being able to contribute their feelings about issues was a way teachers believed families should be involved in the decision-making process.

Type 6: Collaborating With the Community

The last type of Epstein’s six types of involvement is collaborating with the community, which is to “identify[ing] and integrat[ing] resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (2009, p. 16). What partnerships the school has with the community and

how these relationships could be strengthened were questions asked on the questionnaire (Appendix B).

Data from questionnaire from families. Many families were unsure of or had no idea how the school provides information to families about community resources families could tap into if needed. One family noted receiving this information because of having a child in special education. Families were also unaware of the partnerships that the school has with the community and only a few families knew of any community organizations that come into the school to work with children. To create additional awareness, families suggested placing articles in the local paper and having the community groups share information with the families to improve the knowledge of community involvement in the school.

Data from questionnaire from teachers. Since many community organizations come into the classrooms, teachers felt the community helps with student learning by being resources and teaching lessons in class. Informing families of the different community organizations and ways those organizations can help families is done primarily if the child is in special education. Teachers did not know of ways families would receive this information for children not in special education. Additional ideas teachers listed to strengthen family and community relationships included: having community groups teach afterschool classes, conduct workshops for families, and conduct events at school.

Data from family focus groups. Families were unaware of the community partnerships the school has. One family did not know of any community groups that may

come in and help children at school. Others mentioned DARE and field trips in the community, but did not know what community organization helped with the field trips. Most mentioned community activities where the school participated in parades or in community events. Within the community partnership discussion, one parent stated, “Honestly, we probably don’t even know. If we don’t work here, we don’t know it is actually happening.”

Table 8

How Does the School Provide a Directory of Community Resources?

Family response to questionnaire	Teacher response to questionnaire
No idea/unsure (8) Flyers (2)	Special education handouts at a meeting (3) Unsure (2) PCNC (2)

*Numbers may exceed number of participants because participants could provide more than one response.

Data from teacher interviews. Teachers indicated there were many partnerships with the community. These partnerships provide field trips, come in to the classroom to do lessons, and help fund the physical education program at the school. The main partnership mentioned by several teachers was the police department coming in and doing the DARE program and teaching the lower grades about being safe. Ka Honua Momona, Na Pu’uwai, Queen Liliokalani Trust, and other partnerships teachers mentioned primarily did cultural programs and lessons in the classroom or were science related.

Comparison of Teacher and Family Findings

By looking at the data from the questionnaires, family focus groups, and teacher interviews, I analyzed the gaps in what families would like, what teachers are providing, and what families and teachers would like and be willing to participate in. I was also able to come up with suggestions based data on how K Elementary School could improve the partnership between the home and the school environments.

When looking at the data results, I noticed the theme of communication in all of Epstein's six types of involvement. Families felt that the communication in all six areas could be improved upon. In the area of parenting, families felt teachers needed to communicate more, while teachers felt they were sending information home. Also in the area of parenting, families would also like to see more workshops and family oriented activities at the school to help support learning. Within the area of communication, families preferred to receive information by e-mail. The timing of notes and information was also a concern for families. From the teachers' and families' perspective, volunteering seemed to be focused on fundraising. Families noted that they were not informed of volunteer opportunities aside from fundraising or were not informed in a timely manner. Families suggested they would like workshops at all grade levels to help continue the learning process at home and teachers noted that some of them were providing these workshops. The two teachers who indicated they were providing workshops indicated attendance varied from workshop to workshop. Many families did not know they could be involved in the decision-making process at the school. Families were unaware of the opportunity to attend School Community Council (SCC) meetings to

voice their concerns and thought that informing families of this opportunity could increase participation. Currently the SCC is the only way, according to the principal, that families can be involved in the decision-making process. Families need to run and be elected to sit on the SCC board, but all families can attend meetings. Teachers also felt families needed to have communication about the ways to be involved in the decision-making process. While teachers noted many community groups come into the school to teach lessons, the families were unaware of these partnerships.

Both family and teacher responses to questions indicate that K Elementary School needs to be more proactive with their communication in all areas. The recommendation to K Elementary School would be to provide families with more detailed information of what is happening at the school via both e-mail and hard copies. Families feel that if they had more information and more advance notice, they would be more likely to be involved.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconforming Data

While families would like to receive more information, a few families indicated their disinterest in becoming involved. When the questionnaire (Appendix B) asked about how families would like to be involved, one stated, "I don't want to be involved, over the years I have been discouraged because I have not seen any change." On a different questionnaire there was a similar response to decision making, "does our voice even really count, I think administration gets the final say anyway." These families seem to be discrepant cases because they don't seem to want to be involved, while for the majority

of responses families would embrace the opportunity to be more involved if they knew about the involvement opportunities.

Summary

I conducted this case study to find gaps in family involvement and beliefs. I used the data to find ways to help K Elementary School create better partnerships between the families and the school. I triangulated and collected data with questionnaires, family focus groups, and interviews of teachers who were part of the school community. By using a variety of data sources, I maintained reliability for the study.

By ensuring confidentiality in all areas of data collection, I complied with all ethical standards. The conclusion follows in Section 5.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Overview

Section 5 includes a summary of the study, interpretations of the findings, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and suggestions for further study.

This case study's purpose was to determine if there was a gap between what families were willing to participate in and what teachers would be willing to provide. I looked at current levels of family involvement at K Elementary School and how involvement could be improved to facilitate more partnerships between home and school. Evidence from previous research supported the fact that family involvement increases academic achievement (Bailey, 2006; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Senechal, 2006; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Sirivani, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011a, 2011b). In the study, I used Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) as the conceptual framework. I examined each of the six types with the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix B and Appendix H).

I chose K Elementary School and the convenience sample format because I am a teacher at K Elementary School and have access to families and teachers at the school. K Elementary School is a K-6 school with 228 families and 21 classroom teachers. I examined questionnaire data, family focus group transcripts, and teacher interview transcripts to determine the current level of involvement, types of involvement families would like, and involvement that teachers would like to see and participate in.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

I used Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) as the methodology, using each type in the questionnaires, focus group questions, and interview questions. I coded the data according to these types in order to look for themes in the study. I include the findings of the case study below for each research question using the six types of involvement.

Question 1

Question 1 was as follows: What types of family involvement does the school currently provide?

In the area of parenting, results showed that flyers, e-mail, and workshops were used for teacher/family communication regarding topics such as homework. Families noted that they liked the workshops that were provided, but only a few teachers provided the workshops. Along with intermittent workshops provided by some teachers, the school had monthly movie nights and a yearly "Reading Under the Stars" event, which is more interactive than a movie night. Some families thought that movie nights could occur at home, and some indicated that they would like to see workshops or more interactive activities based on what their children were learning at school.

The school uses e-mail, Facebook, the school website, phone calls, and notes as primary avenues of communication with families. Families would like to see more in-person communication in relation to specific topics such as school reform, school goals, and assessments. K Elementary School seems to offer a variety of means for communication to be brought home and has started to embrace online communication,

which is the preferred method of many families (Thompson, Mazer, & Grady, 2015). In the focus group discussions, participants indicated that some families would rather have a phone call than an e-mail because they could hear the tone in the person's voice as well as ask questions quickly rather than waiting for a response; this preference was also found in research by Thompson et al. (2015). Overall, both families and teachers were very comfortable communicating with each other. Mutual comfort helps to create more two-way communication, which has been found to be a significant factor in parental satisfaction and involvement (Setsinger, Felner, Brand, & Burns, 2008).

In the area of volunteering, the main areas in which families are invited by teachers to contribute are fundraising and chaperoning field trips. These two ways of volunteering were mentioned in questionnaire responses as well as in interviews and focus groups. The use of family volunteers primarily for fundraising and chaperoning is similar to "help labor" as described by Christianakis (2011) in a discussion of how families are used to help inside and outside the classroom.

Many families were unsure of how to be involved in the decision-making process at the school. Teachers knew of the School Community Council (SCC) as a way for families to be involved in the decision-making process but were unsure how the SCC worked. In the area of collaborating with the community, teachers noted many organizations with which they collaborated. In relation to this topic, the families could only name the police department; they were unsure of the other organizations, though they knew that there were others. The results of the study show that, overall, families feel that K Elementary School is providing involvement opportunities and would like to see

more information about the involvement that is taking place at the school, as well as more information on how to be involved with the school.

Question 2

Question 2 was as follows: How could K Elementary School improve its family involvement practices?

After I coded the questionnaires, focus group responses, and interview responses according to Epstein's six types of involvement, I looked at suggestions in each area to identify ways to improve family involvement at K Elementary School.

In the area of parenting, families wanted to see more workshops on how to help their children at home at all grade levels. Families also wanted the school hold more in-school or after-school interactive activities that include both children and families. Teachers felt that they could offer more workshops, but time to plan and present was a concern. One teacher suggested having district personnel help set up and present workshops on curriculum or standards to alleviate the concern of teachers having "too much on their plates." Providing workshops could help to increase parent understanding in various subject areas and help families to better understand what their children are learning. Marshall and Swan (2010) found that when families were offered math workshops, their confidence in their ability to help their children in math at home significantly increased, which was similar to findings by LaCour, McDonald, Tissington, and Thompason (2013) in reading. In the area of learning at home, families also felt that the school could help by providing workshops to increase their understanding of

homework, assign more family-oriented homework projects, and offer trainings on how to use some of the Internet programs the school expects children to use.

Both families and teachers suggested that when the school was disseminating information on standards, school reforms, assessments, or discipline, face-to-face communication in the form of parent meetings could be better than just sending e-mails or flyers home. Within both the focus groups and the questionnaires, families indicated that they were concerned about the timing of communications going home to families and suggested that notices of events or invitations to volunteer should be sent out in a timelier manner so that families have adequate advance notice. Communication is an important part of creating partnerships, as found by Seitsinger, Felner, Brand, and Burns (2008); by giving families more advance notice of events, K Elementary could allow for more families to attend events, which would increase parental satisfaction with the school.

Teachers and families both noted that the few volunteer opportunities provided were of a peripheral nature, such as being a chaperone, setting up or cleaning up for an activity, and fundraising. While many families expressed willingness to volunteer, K Elementary School needs to communicate its volunteer needs to families. One parent stated that if the school “just asked,” then parents would probably be willing to help. Focus groups suggested that the school should find ways of asking families what they are willing to do to volunteer and then match families to those activities. One teacher suggested polling families at the beginning of the year, creating a master list of who is willing to volunteer and how, and then matching families to such opportunities. Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and DePedro (2011) found that a coordinator helped to increase

volunteering and used incentives in the form of rewards to get more families to volunteer. Given that there is a parent community network coordinator (PCNC) at the school, the teachers suggested that the PCNC facilitate this type of volunteer survey and matching process. When asked how to get more families involved, both families and teachers suggested making involvement mandatory and providing incentives. Although I do not believe that K Elementary School could make volunteering mandatory, I do feel that incentives of some sort could be used to reward families that volunteer in the school or at home. The families also felt that they helped at home by assisting with homework and having discussions about readings that students completed at home.

Families indicated that their participation in decision-making was an area that seemed lacking and that they would like the school to inform them of decisions as well as allow them to offer input by way of surveys or meetings with the principal. One family suggested that input opportunities be offered in a more informal way, such as during a coffee hour, so that concerns and suggestions could be voiced. Both teachers and families indicated that the administration of surveys for feedback on decisions being made in the school setting would allow their input to be used in decision-making—a suggestion supported by the work of Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuniz, Chuan, and Pedro (2011), who found that surveys were helpful to schools in implementing new ideas. Surveys enable families to give their input and suggestions anonymously if they are not comfortable expressing their opinions directly to the school administration. It was also noted by teachers that the school should notify families of decisions made that might affect their children.

In relation to the last area, collaborating with the community, many families did not know of any partnerships between the school and community. Teachers and families suggested that the school put articles in the community paper and have community organizations share information about what they do and how they help in the school. Families could also benefit from knowing about partnerships to help their children when they are not at school, such as the Neighboring Project (n.d.), where families were connected to community resources that could help the family. Casto (2016) also found rural schools, such as K Elementary School, benefit from partnerships within the local community.

Question 3

Question 3 was the following: What types of involvement would parents like to see the school provide?

As I analyzed the suggestions about how K Elementary School could improve its involvement practices, the main theme I saw was a desire for increased in-person communication. The families at K Elementary School wanted the school to provide more communication to families about what is happening at the school and offer activities that allow for interaction between the family and the child as well as between the family and the school. Families do not just want to see notes sent home or via e-mail; they would like to see workshops and meetings on how to help, to disseminate information, and to meet face to face with the principal, teachers, and community organizations that are in the school.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change may not only apply to students, families, and teachers at K Elementary School, but also include the community. A school can start social change in motion by implementing Epstein's (2009) theory of overlapping spheres of influence (p. 10), in which the school, families, and communities work together with the student at the center to create activities to motivate students to succeed in school, at home, and in the community. By creating these activities, partnerships involving families, the school, and the community can encourage students to succeed both academically and socially inside and outside of school.

More families and teachers once embraced family involvement at K Elementary School; in recent years, it has shown a steady decline. Numerous studies have shown that with an increase in family involvement, student achievement and motivation increase (Bailey, 2006; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Senechal, 2006; Sheldon, Epstein, & Galindo, 2010; Sirivani, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011a, 2011b). Families, teachers, administrators at the school, and community organizations need to work together to educate the whole child in order to achieve success. In this study, I looked at ways in which the school could form more partnerships and offer more opportunities by suggesting ways to improve family involvement.

The purpose of this study was to determine the types of family involvement currently offered at K Elementary School and the types of activities in which families and teachers would participate. As the conceptual framework, I used Epstein's six types of involvement (2009), which describes six types of involvement that are common between

schools and the community. I used this framework to determine the types of involvement provided by K Elementary School and the type of involvement that families and teachers would like in the future. Epstein also included in her six types of involvement the idea of overlapping spheres of influence (p. 10), wherein the school, family, and community work together help students reach their maximum potential.

The study has the possibility of significant implications for social change for the students, families, school, and community at K Elementary School. The findings of the study may help the school in creating a family involvement plan that includes teacher and family input to increase partnerships between the home and school. The study also provided the school with a summary of what families like about the current involvement programs and how communication is sent home. The suggestions by families and teachers for future involvement efforts, if implemented, could help in creating what Epstein (2009) described as “overlapping spheres of influence” (p. 10), which may help K Elementary School form better partnerships and help students to increase their academic achievement.

Recommendations for Action

After I completed the study, I met with the School Community Council (SCC) and presented my findings. I created a brochure (Appendix K) with which the committee could follow along as I presented my findings and recommendations. The members of the SCC were very interested in implementing some of the suggestions and assigned some members to look into the suggestions. The principal also asked if I could share the findings with the teachers at the beginning of the next school year to help in

implementing some of the suggestions from families and teachers. The teachers, SCC, PCNC, and families should meet to work as a team to create a more cohesive plan for implementing some of the recommendations presented in this study. I recommend that the PCNC help to facilitate, along with administration, many of the suggestions I offer from the research findings.

Data showed that families would like additional workshops explaining how families can help at home, addressing topics such as how they can help with the tasks children are expected to complete online. Families would like to see all grade levels offer workshops that provide more learning strategies at home. Teachers felt that providing workshops was difficult due to time constraints and other obligations. If the school and school district were able to provide workshops held by district personnel, tap into community resources, or have providers of online programs conduct workshops, this might help to alleviate the burden on teachers while still offering programs that families are requesting. This could serve the dual purpose of introducing families to the partnerships that the school has established with the community and communicating how community organizations are helping in the school.

One of the major themes I found throughout this study was that families would like more communication from the school. While both families and teachers are comfortable communicating with each other, there is a need for more face-to-face communication and more advance notice of events. If families are unaware of events happening at the school or in the classroom, they cannot participate. Communication is essential to creating a partnership. Participants suggested the use of social media, which

Thomspson, Mazer, and Grady (2015) also found is starting to be more common and popular among parents. An improved K Elementary School website was also suggested, which would include a better calendar of events that families could use to see what types of meetings and activities were happening at the school. Family and teacher participants suggested using the community newspaper to disseminate information and publish notices of school functions on the paper's community events calendar. At the SCC meeting, members suggested that one person work on the school website so that it would include a calendar of events, a list of volunteer opportunities at the school, accolades for accomplishments by students, and acknowledgment of teacher and family participation at events provided by teachers.

The data showed in volunteering that families would be willing to volunteer; they just want to be asked. Both teachers and families felt there were very few volunteer opportunities at K Elementary School. Families and teachers both suggested a campus beautification project as a way to volunteer, as many noted this had happened in the past and they enjoyed it. Another suggestion from the data that would make a good recommendation was to create a database of who is willing to volunteer for certain things by surveying families at the beginning of the year and creating a data base of volunteer types and those willing to volunteer. Participants also suggested that there be incentives for families that volunteer which is similar to findings by Marschall and Shah (2016) in a study on the involvement gap.

Previous research shows that parents have the desire to participate and offer suggestions in the area of decision-making (Smith et al., 2011), but need training to feel

comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas. Many families and teachers at K Elementary School were unfamiliar with the School Community Council (SCC) and how the SCC influences the decision-making process at the school. Families would also like to know about decisions made at the school. A recommendation in the area of decision-making is to better communicate the role of the SCC to the families, how they can become involved in the SCC, and train willing families. If families are included in the decision-making process, they will feel more comfortable offering ideas to help improve partnerships at the school.

Suggestions for Further Study

The focus of this study was to determine the current level of family involvement and how K Elementary School could improve family involvement. Once K Elementary School implements some of the recommendations for action, it could benefit the school to do a follow-up survey to see if the school community has embraced the implementation of suggested practices. A follow-up survey could include questions addressing whether having more partnerships in place results in more communication between the home and school, and if there is a better understanding of how and why family involvement is crucial. Because this study is site specific, it would help the school continue to evolve their family involvement to better create partnerships to help student achievement and family relations.

Summary

Although sometimes overlooked, family involvement is an important aspect of the education process. The purpose of this study was to see the types of involvement

currently offered at K Elementary School and what the families and teachers would like to see to improve family involvement. Epstein's six types of involvement (2009) was used as the basis for this study. I looked at all six types by sending a questionnaire to all families and teachers at the school. I wanted to provide K Elementary School with suggestions to improve their family involvement and to better create partnerships between the home and school.

I truly believe family involvement helps the student, family, and school create a partnership that better educates each child. I chose family involvement to study at my school because I saw the decline in involvement over the past five years and wanted to know how the school could increase involvement. When I sent out the questionnaire, I thought I would get a higher response from families. I was disappointed with the response and think that maybe if I e-mailed families the questionnaire, I would have had a better response. As a researcher I was humbled by the lack of response and because of my concern about declining involvement I thought families would want more of a voice since the research would be presented to the administration at K Elementary School. I thought that possibly because I was also a teacher at the school, families would be more willing to complete the questionnaire and participate in the focus group process. I wonder if family involvement increases in the future, perhaps responses to a questionnaire such as mine would have a higher response. While not many families responded, those who did shared their feelings on involvement. Families want to be involved, they just need to be asked, provided the tools, and made aware of the opportunities.

Teachers also want to involve the families in more meaningful ways, but don't always have the time or resources to do so. I did not include in my questionnaire or my interview with teachers, but I wish I would have asked teachers in if they have ever had any type of training on family involvement since research showed teacher training on family involvement is lacking in college programs. A question I could have asked to help K Elementary school help teachers become aware of family involvement types is what types of professional development in regards to family involvement would teachers like to be provided by the school or district. As a teacher at this school, I would like to see the school tap into the school district personnel and the community to help create more opportunities for active and meaningful engagement between the students, families, school, and community.

As a result of this study, I still believe that families want to be involved, teachers want to involve families, and partnerships within the community are very important. After this study, I want to be better in my practice with communicating with families using more technology and be more aware of the timing of my own communications with families. I would also like to work on creating a classroom data base of what types of volunteer opportunities families would be willing to participate in as well as what types of help families need with regards to learning.

The data showed families thought K Elementary School was providing family involvement, but they would like to see more interactive involvement. It also showed that families want to be involved, they just need to be asked and given adequate notification of events. Families would like to be taught how to better help their child at home and be

given information in a more interactive way. Teachers also want to see more involvement and are willing to provide opportunities, but need support. The school needs to work with all stakeholders to create an involvement plan that will implement some of the suggestions of this study.

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Appendix A: Family Consent Form

Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs is the title of the research study you are being asked to participate in. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have a child at K Elementary School. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference in beliefs of family involvement in education by the teachers and families at K Elementary School. This study will explore the types of family involvement that both teachers and families at K Elementary School are willing to offer and participate in. The results of the study will be shared with the faculty and administration of K Elementary School to help form more partnerships between the home and the school. This study is being completed by Malia Sakamoto, a second grade teacher at K Elementary School and a doctoral candidate at Walden University. If you have any questions about the questionnaire you can contact me at malia.decourcy@waldenu.edu. You may also contact ellen.mcpeek-glisan@waldenu.edu.

You are being asked to participate in an open-ended questionnaire on your beliefs about family involvement, what types of involvement are offered, and what you would like to see offered at K Elementary School. The survey should take you 30 minutes to complete. You are also being asked to indicate on this consent for if you are willing to be interviewed as a part of this research study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. All information will be confidential, you may also choose not to answer any question, and may withdraw your participation at any time. No compensation will be given for your participation in this study. You may also request a copy of this consent form from the researcher.

Please initial the following statements as they apply:

___ I have read the above information and consent to participate in this study by returning the survey in envelope attached to the questionnaire form.

___ I am ___ willing/ ___ not willing to participate in an interview. I understand that names of those interested will be chosen at random to participate and I may not need to be interviewed. I understand that the interviews will be taped and that notes will be taken during the interview process. Interviews will last between 30 minutes to an hour.

Participant name _____

Participant signature: _____

Phone number if willing to be interviewed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this consent form in the attached envelope. Consent forms and surveys should be returned in separate envelopes attached to each to ensure anonymity of your questionnaire responses.

Appendix B: Family Involvement Questionnaire

This questionnaire is being used as part of a research study on the current types of family involvement that K Elementary School currently provides and your belief in how K Elementary School could improve their family involvement program. You are being asked to complete this survey because you have a child(ren) at K Elementary School.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. All responses will be confidential. Return the survey in the enclosed envelope. If you are interested in participating in an interview on this topic, please indicate your interest and return in the separate enclosed envelope.

Parenting

Please briefly explain some of your parenting problems as it relates to school/family relations.

How does the school try to find out specific information relating to your child?

In what ways do you receive information from the school to support your child in their learning?

How would you like to receive support from the school?

Communication

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

How do you feel the school should communicate with families on topics such as school reforms, standards, assessment tools, discipline procedures, school goals, and any other topic regarding the school?

What is the best way for the school to communicate with you?

How comfortable do you feel communicating with your child's teacher or the principal when you have a concern? What would make you more comfortable?

Volunteering

What should be done to get more parents involved in both academic and nonacademic activities?

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

If you have volunteered at school, please indicate for what type of activity and the frequency with which you volunteer (e.g., once per week, once per month, etc.)?

If you have not volunteered at school, please indicate why.

How would you like to be notified about volunteering opportunities?

Student Learning at Home

How do you support your child's learning at home?

Does the school provide you with information or materials to help support working with your child on learning activities at home?

What can the school do to support you with student learning at home?

School Decision Making and Advocacy

How does the school involve parents in school-related decisions?

How would you like to be involved in major school decisions?

In what ways does the school provide you with opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders? If not, how could the school help form better relationships between the school leaders and families?

Collaborating With The Community

How does the school provide a directory of community resources when needed?

In what ways does the school work with the community to help student learning?

Parent and community involvement at school could be strengthened in the following ways:

Adapted from:

- Buddy, L. C., Jr. (2012). *A study of parent involvement in an urban elementary school*. (Order No. 3502351, Walden University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 154. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/963536755?accountid=14872>. (963536755).
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Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Protocol Project: Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs

Time of focus group:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Focus Group Participants:

Position of the focus group:

This focus group is being conducted as part of a research study on the current types of family involvement that K [REDACTED] Elementary currently provides and your belief in how K [REDACTED] Elementary School could improve their family involvement program. You were chosen randomly for this study and are part of this group today since you indicated during the survey process that you were willing to participate in a focus group.

All your responses to questions asked will be confidential. No statement will be attributed to any particular person and no identifying details will be used for participants. Everyone is asked to respect the privacy of the other group members. All participants are asked not to disclose anything said within the context of the discussion, but it is important to understand that other people in the group with you may not keep all information private and confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Questions:

What do you think family involvement means?

What types of family involvement opportunities does K Elementary School currently provide?

What types of involvement have you participated in? Why did you participate or why did you not participate?

What types of family involvement would you like to see K Elementary School provide?

How do you prefer to receive information from the school? Why?

What types of volunteer opportunities have you participated in? If you have not participated in any, what types of opportunities would you like to see the school offer or what types would you be willing to participate in?

How would you like to be involved in the decision making process at the school?

What are some partnerships between the school and the community that you know about or have participated in?

How do you think the school could improve the school and family relationship/partnership?

Appendix D: Permission to Use Family Involvement Questionnaire

Lee Buddy Jr.

Jun 9 (6 days
ago)

to me

Good evening,

Thank you for reaching out to me. Yes, please feel free to use it for your study.

I look forward to seeing your final product.

Sent from my iPhone

Appendix E: Permission to Use the Power of Partnerships Family Survey

To Whom It May Concern:

I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University and would like to use parts of your The Power of Partnerships Family Survey for my own questionnaire. I am wondering who I would need to speak to or e-mail to get written consent to use parts of your survey.

I am studying how parents and teachers can form more partnerships in our school.

thank you for your help.

Malia DeCourcy Sakamoto



Mary Pat King <mking@pta.org>

Jun 8 (7 days ago)

to me

Malia,

You can reference our survey as long as you cite its use in your survey and report.

Good luck with your project!
Mary Pat King

Appendix F: Permission to Use the Measure of School, Family, and Community

Partnerships Survey

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Johns Hopkins University • 2701 North Charles Street, Suite 300 • Baltimore MD
21218

To: Malia DeCourcy

From: Joyce L. Epstein & Steven B. Sheldon

Re: Permission to use:

- Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). Parent and Student Surveys of Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993). Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L., Connors-Tadros, L., & Salinas, K. C. (1993). High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, translate, or reprint the survey(s) noted above in your dissertation study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey(s) and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your project.

Appendix G: Teacher Consent Form

Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs is the title of the research study you are being asked to participate in. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher at K [REDACTED] Elementary School. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference in beliefs of family involvement in education by the teachers and families at K [REDACTED] Elementary School. This study will explore the types of family involvement that both teachers and families at K [REDACTED] Elementary School are willing to offer and participate in. The results of the study will be shared with the faculty, administration, and parents of K [REDACTED] Elementary School in a presentation once the research is completed to help form more partnerships between the home and the school. Malia Sakamoto, a second grade teacher at K [REDACTED] Elementary School and a doctoral candidate at Walden University, is completing this study. The study is being completed as part of the doctoral program at Walden University and results will be shared with K [REDACTED] School. If you have any questions about the questionnaire you can contact Ms. Sakamoto at [REDACTED] or malia.decourcy@waldenu.edu. You may also contact ellen.mcpeek-glisan@waldenu.edu with questions about the study or you may contact irb@waldenu.edu with any questions about your rights as a participant in this study. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-10-15-0128038 and it expires November 9, 2016.

You are being asked to participate by completing an open-ended questionnaire on your beliefs about family involvement, what types of involvement are offered, and what you are willing to offer at K [REDACTED] Elementary School. The survey should take you 30 minutes to complete. Interviews or a focus group will be conducted along with the survey. If there are not enough willing participants for individual interviews, focus groups of between 3 to 5 participants will be conducted by grade level bands (K-2, 3-4, and 5-6). Interviews or focus groups will last between 30 minutes and an hour. Interviews or focus groups will be audio recorded and notes will be taken during the process. If you are willing to participate in the interview or focus group process, please return this consent form along with the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope. From those teachers interested in being interviewed, participants will be chosen at random. After interview or focus groups have been summarized, participants will be asked to check the accuracy of the interview or focus group summary.

If you do not wish to participate in the interview or focus group process, you do not need to return this consent form. By only returning the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope, your participation is anonymous. If you are willing to be interviewed, please return this consent form with your questionnaire. At the time of the interview, you will be provided with an additional copy of the consent form. If you decline or decide to discontinue your participation at any time, it will not negatively impact your relationship with the researcher or the school. If a focus group is conducted, you understand it is your responsibility to keep all information presented in the focus group confidential. I will also

keep anything you say in the focus group confidential. The only exception to that is if child abuse is disclosed, I am bound by law to report it.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. All information will be confidential, you may also choose not to answer any question, and may withdraw your participation at any time. Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. No compensation will be given for your participation in this study.

Participant name _____

Participant signature: _____

Phone number if willing to be interviewed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H: Teacher Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Project: Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of the interviewee:

This interview is being conducted as part of a research study on the current types of family involvement that K Elementary currently provides and your belief in how K Elementary School could improve their family involvement program. You were chosen randomly for this study by indicating that you were willing to be interviewed. All your responses to questions asked will be confidential. Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Questions:

What do you think family involvement means?

What types of family involvement opportunities does K Elementary School currently provide? What types of involvement do you provide for the families in your class other than the ones provided by the school?

What types of family involvement would you like to see K Elementary School provide?

How do you prefer to send information to the families in your class? Why?

What types of volunteer opportunities have you provided to the families in your class?

How do you feel families should be involved in the decision making process at the school?

What are some partnerships between the school and the community that you know about or have participated in?

How do you think the school could improve the school and family relationship/partnership?

Appendix I: Sample Focus Group Transcript

This focus group is being conducted as part of a research study on the current types of family involvement that [REDACTED] Elementary currently provides and your belief in how [REDACTED] Elementary School could improve their family involvement program. You were chosen randomly for this study and are part of this group today since you indicated during the survey process that you were willing to participate in a focus group.

All your responses to questions asked will be confidential. No statement will be attributed to any particular person and no identifying details will be used for participants. Everyone is asked to respect the privacy of the other group members. All participants are asked not to disclose anything said within the context of the discussion, but it is important to understand that other people in the group with you may not keep all information private and confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Participant 1: Will we be able to read your paper after you write it?

Interviewer: Yes, I will also give you the opportunity to read a transcript of this focus group.

Participant 2: What are you going for your Phd?

Interviewer: Doctorate in education.

Questions:

Interviewer: **What do you think family involvement means?**

Participant 2: Like being involved with your child and their education and coming to activities and being involved.

Participant 1: Knowing what is going on, asking questions.

Interviewer: **What types of family involvement opportunities does K Elementary School currently provide?**

Participant 1: Well, they have like the movie nights and stuff that parents can get involved that way, but

Participant 2: Volunteer with PCNC

Participant 1: Yeah, with the PNCN

Participant 2: It is mostly like the teachers asking us with our children in our class. It is not not like the school saying

Participant 1: come and volunteer.

Participant 2: Yeah. Sometimes we hear about stuff and we didn't know until last minute and I would have come.

Interviewer: What types of involvement have you participated in? Why did you participate or why did you not participate?

Participant 1: Does like parent meetings count?

Interviewer: Yes

Participant 1: So, I go to the parent meetings and I do that because I want to know what is going on. How I can help? I helped the 4th graders do their disco, we had to sell tickets for fundraising and we had to like put in service time for their field trip that is coming up next week or the week after. That was it. I take work off to come and watch the programs.

Participant 2: Yes. I mostly come to things if the teacher asks me because otherwise, if they don't ask me I don't come. May Day I will come and volunteer for that or some teachers ask me when they (my child) was in the their class, I would come read or sing with them. That kind of stuff.

Participant 3. I will help when I am asked. I know what is or most of what is going on in the school because I work here, but I ask them if they need help.

Interviewer: What types of family involvement would you like to see K Elementary School provide?

Participant 2: The reading under the star stuff is good.

Participant 1: Yeah

Participant 2: Stuff more family oriented.

Participant 1: I think if we had reading under the stars once a month would be perfect.

Participant 2: Even the movie nights are good, but

Participant 1: But they are just watching TV, they can do that at home.

Participant 2: Yeah

Participant 1: That is how I look at it.

Participant 2: But

Participant 1: It does get the whole family out

Participant 3: and here to support the school

Participant 1: right

Participant 2: Now they are starting to make concessions, so they are asking the grade to so they can fundraise. That is good.

Participant 3: we did it last year, the concessions

Interviewer: **How do you prefer to receive information from the school? Why?**

Participant 2: I like how Hamau (PCNC) is e-mailing. She is pretty on it.

Participant 1: I like that too. Or even that mass messaging calls

Participant 2: Yeah, I get it.

Participant 3: Yes, I like both ways because sometimes I get my e-mail, but not my phone call or I have my phone and cannot get e-mail.

Participant 2: It is more convenient because even with Makahiki when she asked for snacks for the kids. Even if I can't come I can donate a snack or something. Then at least we can send stuff if our kids are not in it.

Participant 3: Would be good to have an electronic bulletin. Like something that they can go to and look at. Not necessarily something that the school always has, like a webpage that will have the weekly updates.

Participant 1: Does K [REDACTED] School have a Facebook page?

Interviewer: Yes

Participant 1: Is it posted in there?

Participant 3: a lot of times

Participant 2: She doesn't keep up with the facebook as much as she does with e-mail

Participant 3: but Hamau doesn't do the facebook, someone else does. Malia Lee gave me access to past to it because we sit on the SCC together.

Participant 1: okay

Participant 3: But a bulletin like that because then parents can look at it too.

Participant 1: Yah, but will they? You know what I mean, then send home notes home with the kids and then they don't even look at it.

Participant 3: I brought it to the schools attention when Koa was still here, no when he went to Kamehameha school because the had an electronic service like that. It just doesn't have engrade on it like the middle school has it.

Participant 1: yah.

Participant 3: It has everything, the daily bulletin, what will happen in the next couple of weeks. Whatever is happening, there is a calendar that shows you on this day 5th grade, 7th grade, 9th grade has meetings that are going on, student body class meetings, so that parents are aware of what is going on.

Participant 1: So if we were go get something like that, where would it be posted? Where would be put it?

Participant 3: On the school website.

Participant 1: what about those people who no more internet access? That is the only problem

Interviewer: Hamau, what she does for the people who don't have an e-mail address on file, she sends home a hard copy.

Participant 1: To only those who don't have?

Interviewer: Yes, for example I only send it home to 5 kids in my class. All the information you get electronically.

Participant 2: Her e-mails work

Participant 1: I like the e-mails.

Interviewer: What types of volunteer opportunities have you participated in? If you have not participated in any, what types of opportunities would you like to see the school offer or what types would you be willing to participate in?

Participant 3: In the past. Like in the past I have helped in the classrooms, I have helped the teacher with things fundraising, planning for things.

Participant 1: Coming to things May Day, Christmas program.

Participant 2: I help a lot with May Day. If you just ask me then I can.

Interviewer: How would you like to be involved in the decision making process at the school?

Participant 2: What kind decision process?

Participant 1: yah

Interviewer: Any type, what types would you like to be involved in and how would you like to be involved?

Participant 3; So, I sit on the SCC and then it would be good if the person in charge (principal) would actually show up to the SCC meetings. But when we have actual discussions and concerns with coming from parents and community, there is someone there who can actually take in the input.

Participant 1: That is true, but do parents really know that they are invited to those things:

Participant 2: No

Participant 3: No, they don't

Participant 1: See

Participant 3: And that should be something more widely advertised

Participant 1: Because if they really want their voice to be heard then they should do it at that meeting.

Participant 3: Well the person in charge should show up. The principal should be there at the meetings.

Participant 1: Oh, my god are you serious. Really?

Participant 3: Because that is the whole point. The SCC when you have concerns.

Participant 1: Going back to what I said earlier, you are going to ask for my opinion,

Participant 3: But not going do nothing.

Participant 1: Right, so maybe that is why parents don't come to meetings. It is not that they don't know about it but that they, have been giving advice and an opportunity to speak but their voice is not heard.

Participant 3: They seem like they have gone through that.

Participant 1: But the power of the SCC board is to make

Participant 3: To give advice to the leader.

Participant 1: It is to um, is for the leader to actually listen. We had that problem up at the middle school that is why.

Participant 3: I sit on the SCC at the middle school too.

Participant 1: They don't listen to me. Who is on the board here.

Participant 3: Malia Lee, Dorie, Renee, Scott, Grant, Auntie Saucie, and myself.

Participant 2: All strong voices.

Participant 1: and Janice is not there?

Participant 3: Well the last two meetings we haven't had a principal present. And I sat with her one day and asked her what is the purpose of the SCC, why are we there. And she says it is more of an advisory.

Participant 1: Yes, and advisory board. I don't like that the principal has the final say honestly.

Participant 3; No, it should not be a dictator micromanaging us.

Participant 2: It is like our class, the parents wanted to be in charge of the money of fundraisers for field trips.

Participant1: Is that Maka them?

Participant 2: yes, she did not like that.

Participant 1: Because you are a strong parent network and she doesn't like anything stronger than her.

Participant 2: We don't want to be stronger than her, we just want to control the money we raise.

Participant 1: That is not what she sees. She is seeing that you guys are trying to over ride her. That is why she says that phrase, "I'm the principal, I get the final say".

Participant 2: Well, we are raising money for our kids to do stuff, so we want it to follow our kids all the way up.

Participant 1:That is how it should be. It should follow them.

Participant 3: And the money is more accountable that way.

Interviewer: **What are some partnerships between the school and the community that you know about or have participated in?**

Participant 2: Like what? The parade, The Makahiki?

Interviewer: Yes

Participant 1: That is like the only two things.

Participant 2: Do you mean community service, the kids doing it as a school?

Interviewer: Like the community comes in and the community does stuff with the kids.

3: Like the Growing Healthy.

Participant 2: DARE

Participant 1: Okay

Participant 3: Honestly, we probably don't even know. If we don't work here, we don't know like it is actually happening.

Participant 1: right

Participant 3: Because there is nothing to say stuff like that is happening. Unless you have a note

How do you think the school could improve the school and family relationship/partnership?

Participant 1: Well, I like to know things, like way in advance.

Participant 2: Yes that would help.

Participant 1: Not like the day before, and oh, by the way we have this. I hate not being able to volunteer or come in

Participant 2: Help in some way, even if we cannot be here physically.

Participant 1: Yah, I think that just the communication needs to be a little bit more better. But, I mean we have that thing from Hamau.

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Participant 1: What about newsletters? I remember we use to get that all the time. We don't even get that anymore. And I miss those and seeing who gets awards.

Participant 3; It should be coming electronically, they have been e-mailed.

Participant 1: The only think I get it the up to the minute.

Participant 3: She may not have done one in January.

Participant 1: I like looking at those things. It keeps me in check. I can see so and so got the citizen of the month. And because I cannot be here, I like to see that.

Participant 3: right

Participant 1: I like to see who is doing good in their classes or what the teachers have to say.

Interviewer: Do you have any additional comments?

Silence.

Interviewer: Thank you

Appendix J: Sample Teacher Interview Transcript

Interviewer: This interview is being conducted as part of a research study on the current types of family involvement that K Elementary currently provides and your belief in how K Elementary School could improve their family involvement program. You were chosen randomly for this study by indicating that you were willing to be interviewed. All your responses to questions asked will be confidential. Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Interviewer: What do you think family involvement means?

Interviewee: I think there are different levels of family involvement most importantly is that the student feels supported by the family at home to do their work and that the student is able to get help from the family in the shape of signatures for permission slips, help with homework, and help from them in any of the extended expectations that we have at school. Then go to the second tier of family involvement is when the family comes to the school and either helps in the classroom, helps in extra activities that might happen at school, and that is the next level. They might be on committees or boards, maybe on the parent teacher organization. Maybe on the SSC and I've worked at schools where it happens more than it happens at this school.

Interviewer: What types of family involvement opportunities does K Elementary School currently provide? What types of involvement do you provide for the families in your class other than the ones provided by the school?

Interviewee: As a school we provide involvement in the SSC – School Community Council and the PTO Parent Teacher Organization, and opportunities for people families to come to performances and assemblies and most classrooms invite them to some kind of presentation a few times a year. There is something called FACT workshops, although 6th grade does not seem to do FACT workshops. That is all I know. That is all I know about the school level. Should we go for the next question?

Interviewer: Sure. What types of involvement do you provide for the families in your class other than the ones provided by the school?

Interviewee: So for my class, my class volunteer opportunities have a lot to do with fundraising. And the 6th grade reaching out for partnerships with parents for students to

raise money to go on the big field trip at the end of the year. This is not my favorite kind of family involvement. Although we need support fundraising, the model that I like to use is more like the FACT workshop model and since I am new in 6th grade this year and I am trying not to be the lead and see what the other 6th grade teacher does. I am realizing that next year I would like to do it a little differently. Because I think it could be more positive.

Interviewer: What types of family involvement would you like to see K Elementary School provide?

Interviewee: Sometimes I am a little focused about what the school policies and expectations are around classroom parents. I don't know if our school requires each classroom to have a room parent, I don't think that is really clear. I think that because the school was operating for a time without a parent teacher organization I think the school was unclear and so I think what I have seen in the past and which was really nice, was an explanation and an invitation to parents that explained what opportunities we have what we want them, how we would like them to participate and then a sign up. I have seen it laminated before at other schools there are different events that we know we have and the parents sign up for those events. Then when it is time to contact the parent, you know that they might give a little at that time. Give a little time for it. Now just looking at 6th grade, 6th grade has a lot of responsibility at the end of the year, May Day and with promotion. There are probably things I don't even know about that they are responsible for. And it is really the parents. One of the things that has been happening, I'll give you an example: is that we have had to elect people for the May Day court and a big question often is do they have parent support. Because we don't want to put it into the situation where we have selected student and they don't have parent support because we really rely on that. This is the time that decorating, putting up tents, extra time, costume, all those things. I feel like I don't have the full scope of what it entails, but is going to be a lot of extra work. And that would be so neat if we communicated that in a really positive way each year. I'm sort of the, I'm really into morale. I think that parent morale can be boosted in the same way that student morale can be boosted.

Interviewer: How do you prefer to send information to the families in your class? Why?

Interviewee: I have two things I do. I do a note followed by an all call. An all call is the school connects calling system. Those are the ways I do it

Interviewer: Like a note and the school connects is the same information?

Interviewee: Yes, exactly the same information, “your student will be bringing home a note today. I have the office do it. I do it every time exactly like that and I would do it with any age group. Sometimes I do the bracelet

Interviewer: Even for 6th grade?

Interviewee: Absolutely for 6th grade. And in fact, sometimes if I don't the will ask me to do it and sometimes I do. I've done this at another school I was at. I did this volunteer service website, have you seen those?

Interviewer: No

Interviewee: What is it called? It is called something like volunteer spot. It is a volunteer service website. It is excellent. Because what you do at the beginning of the year, you get every parents e-mail and all those kinds of preferences go in there. And you just e-mail to those people. It is really helpful. It was cool. I did it just one year.

Interviewer: What types of volunteer opportunities have you provided to the families in your class?

Interviewee: In second grade, I did FACT workshops with potluck dinners. I find that to be a lot of effort for parents. Then in 6th grade we have mainly had fundraising and informational meetings regarding the 6th grade trip. Coming up we are soon to start our May Day and promotion planning meetings next month.

Interviewer: How do you feel families should be involved in the decision making process at the school?

Interviewee: Because we are a DOE school there are many levels and categories of decisions. I think that if we want input from parents we need to communicate what is going on better to them. And it is really difficult to communicate well to them when we are very not sure of what is going on with us. So, for example the state test is very important. I don't think parents understand the state test and I don't think parents understand what their children are being asked to do. The level of difficulty. And so to me what I would like to do is to invite them in, just to understand the task. But unfortunately, parents don't come. It is the same parents and other educators roll their eyes that you are trying to communicate that.

It is like it is not cool.

It is like they need to understand. People always say that parents won't come. I see what they are saying.

I don't like the rolling eyes from my colleagues. So what I like to do, this is at this school. At my last employer, I had the lucky job of teaching a reading class of special students. I would have them do a research project and make a PowerPoint presentation. I taught them presentation skills. And once a quarter I would have a presentation night. I would invite in an authentic audience. Their parents, school administrators, the librarian, you know people. The house was packed. And I would serve my snacks. I wouldn't ask them to bring snacks, because that chaos is on whole other level. It was such an incredible success. I held four of them, I actually prefer it for the older kids to a FACT because they are presenting and more involved. It was really great. So, I think that I would like to start that again. I don't think this year because I need to know the lay of the land before I start. I'm trying to alter the lay of the land

Interviewer: What are some partnerships between the school and the community that you know about or have participated in?

Interviewee: Every year I participate in digital bus, a NOAA grant. Now it is sponsored by Ala kaina, the people who pay for it. It funds teachers to take students on science related field trips. Another project I am involved in is thru Bishop Museum and NASA and it is a curriculum that is being released in the next few months. That is exciting. I am also involved with the Molokai Land trust and do field trips with them. Community partnerships Aunty Penny, but I can't remember the name of her group. It is Papa something. For me personally it is a lot of culture. When I connect with people, a lot of times it is science or culture. The other one a few years in a row I have gone to the fish pond – Ka Honua Momona. What other partnerships do I have? I am starting a partnership with the middle school bringing in students from the middle school level who have finished and completed their science fair boards just to come and present.

Interviewer: That is nice to practice

Interviewee: Just a presentation so they know what they will need to do when they get to middle school.

Interviewer: How do you think the school could improve the school and family relationship/partnership?

Interviewee: Well, that is a good question. Really it is. I think it's a great question. I think that providing food is an excellent enticement to getting families here and that by having something like an under school BBQ, like lower school BBQ at the beginning of the year where every family is involved who has a child in 3rd grade or below and a BBQ, the families socialize. Then have something like a kickball game or some tag games and then bringing everyone together and then giving them 10 tips for the year and a flyer. A brochure and then they leave. Not this mountain of paper work that they get you know. Just keep it super simple, BBQ, play time and then it is fun for the men. I think a lot of men have a really negative experience. I have had that conversation with a lot of dads. Have a fun activity where then men can have fun.

Interviewer: Right. Make it fun for dads who may not otherwise come to school.

Interviewee: There is food, so there is no pressure for the families. Then play some big group games. Give the information in a snapshot that they can understand. Then a trifold brochure. Just to let you know, I find that the easiest way to communicate. Then you do it for the upperschool. So 4, 5, 6 would have a different thing, maybe involve 3rd, You have to make that call. Maybe pre-K to 2, then 3 – 6. Unfortunately, developmentally I don't think it goes that way. I think the 3rd go with the little guys. But the testing wise, it goes the other side.

Interviewer: Any other thoughts on Family involvement:

Interviewee: My only additional thing, would be this idea that students success is directly correlated to family involvement and in that we know that I don't think the school provides enough homework help opportunity. I don't think it should be limited by teacher. I think that we should be able to identify students who are unable to get their homework done and they should be invited and that we should have a lower and upper school homework help. Only have to pay two teachers and it should happen every quarter of every year and that it should not be a question. I don't think it is fair for kids who don't have a home life that can't do their homework. How many times have I brought a kid to my desk and showed them the grade book and said I have to call your parents now. The kid starts balling I'm gonna get lickens so bad. Then I feel terrible and give them some time. But if I called the parent and said I have a homework help program your child needs to spend 2 days a week and stay to do work. I am offering something else and it would be really helpful.

Great questions.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Appendix K: School Community Council Brochure

<p>Epstein's Six Types of Family Involvement (2009)</p> <p>Type 1: Parenting: to “help all families establish home environments to support children as students” (p.16).</p> <p>Type 2: Communicating: to “design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress” (p. 16).</p> <p>Type 3: Volunteering: to “recruit and organize parent help and support” (p. 16).</p> <p>Type 4: Learning at Home: to “provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning” (p. 16).</p> <p>Type 5: Decision Making: to “include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives” (p. 16).</p> <p>Type 6: Collaborating With the Community: to “identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development” (p.16).</p>	<p>References</p> <p>Epstein, J.L., & Associates (2009). <i>School, Family, and Community Partnerships Your Handbook for Action</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.</p> <p>National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. (2004) <i>NCLB action briefs</i>. Retrieved www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/parent%5Finvolvement.html</p>	<p>Gaps in Family and Teacher Involvement Beliefs</p> <p>by</p> <p>Malia DeCourcy Sakamoto</p> <p>Draft Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Teacher Leadership</p> <p>Walden University</p> <p>What is family involvement?</p> <p>“The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2004).</p> <p>What was the purpose of the study?</p> <p>Finding the gaps in beliefs on family involvement and ways to increase family involvement to create partnerships between the teachers, school, and families.</p>
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Research Findings:

Type 1 – Parenting

Family Concerns:

- Homework was difficult to explain
 - Consistency at home
 - Communication
- Families felt support from school with:

- Notes
- Emails
- Conferences

Teachers felt they supported families by:

- Meeting with parents
- Calls
- Notes

Families felt more communication was needed in this area and would like to see more workshops and family oriented activities to support learning.

Type 2 – Communication

Families felt best way to communicate:

- Email
- Phone call
- Notes

Teachers communicate by:

- Notes
- E-mail
- Phone calls
- In person

Both teachers and families feel comfortable communicating with each other.

Noted by families they would like to see more face to face communication about academic information from the school (reforms, assessments, standards) and more advance notice of events.

Type 3 – Volunteering

Families felt they volunteer by:

- Attending school events
 - Fundraising
- Teacher ask for volunteers to:
- Fundraise
 - Chaperone

Families and teachers felt if there were incentives, maybe more people would volunteer.

Families would like more advance

notice as well of any volunteer opportunities and would just liked to be asked. Many suggested doing a campus beautification project.

Type 4 – Learning at Home

Families help at home with:

- Homework
- Reading and discussing a story
- Encouragement

Teachers encourage learning at home:

- Provide strategies and examples

Families felt that workshops at all grade levels would help provide more strategies to help at home.

Type 5 – Decision Making

Families were unsure of any ways to help in decision making, but would like to be informed and offer input and the process.

Teachers also knew about the SCC, but were not sure how it worked.

More communication about decisions and ways to be involved in the decision making process was suggested by both families and teachers.

Type 6 – Collaborating with the Community

Most families were unaware of any partnerships with the community.

Teachers were able to tell about various community programs (DARE, Na Puuwai, QLCC, Aunty Penny, Ka Honua Momona) that came into the classrooms or helped with field trips.

Both families and teachers suggested better communication about these programs and how they are helping in the schools.