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Self-Efficacy Influencing Parental Homework Involvement for Middle School Youth With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Diana Yvonne Gintner

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Walden University 2017

Abstract

Self-Efficacy Influencing Parental Homework Involvement for Middle School Youth With Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

by

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Ed.S., University of Massachusetts 2003

MA, Salem State University, 1990

MA, Boston University, 1976

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Psychology

Walden University

May 2017

Abstract

Despite evidence demonstrating the positive impact of parental involvement in children's education, youth transitioning from elementary school to middle school are often extended a greater level of autonomy. Parental involvement may decrease, which may pose particular challenges to students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The theoretical framework for this study was Bandura's self-efficacy theory which involves positive self-esteem, coping strength, and persistence toward goals. Bandura's ideas help to clarify why self-efficacy plays a role in parental involvement decisions. Through a multiple case study method, seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD, were interviewed through four open ended questions about self-efficacy as it relates to their decision to assist their youth with homework completion. Data were organized by question and the interview responses were manually analyzed. The coding process included identifying commonalities and differences, analyzing content, and synthesizing and validating themes regarding parental self-efficacy and decision-making experiences. Findings revealed that for parents, frustration with the lack of school communication and homework overload were significant concerns, and although efficacy played a role in the decision to assist with homework, the primary impetus was the desire to save their youth from emotional turmoil and academic failure. Implications for positive social change include the need for proactive communication and collaboration by schools with parents and more middle school programs to support youth with ADHD. Including parents as partners in youth education may ease the difficulty of transition to middle school and help reduce school failure and dropout rates among youth with ADHD.

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Table of Contents

Li	st of Tables	vi
Cł	apter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
	Introduction	1
	Statement of the Problem	7
	Nature of the Study	8
	Research Questions	9
	Purpose of the Study	11
	Theoretical Framework	12
	Operational Definitions	13
	Assumptions, Limitations and Scope	14
	Assumptions	14
	Limitations	14
	Scope	15
	Significance of the Study	16
	Summary	17
Cł	apter 2: Literature Review	20
	Introduction	20
	Research Strategy	21
	Review of Literature	22
	ADHD and Academic Achievement.	23
	Parental Involvement and School Outcomes	25
	Barriers to Parents' Involvement	30

Parental Psychological Factors	31
Parental Involvement Types Defined	32
Parental Involvment With Homework Assistance in Middle School	36
Is Parental Involvement Indicated?	39
Parental Involvement in Middle School	42
Parent Involvement for Youth With ADHD	434
Parent Involvement Models	45 <u>5</u>
Self-Efficacy as Related to Parental Involvement	54
Parental Self-Efficacy of Parents With Children With ADHD	56
Summary	58
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	61
Introduction	61
Research Questions	633
Research Methodology	65
Research Design	66
Study Participants and Selection Process	67
Participant Selection Process	69
Instrument for Measuring Parent Participation	71
Procedures	722
Steps for Participant Selection	73
Ethical Protection of Participants	75 <u>5</u>
Data Collection	75
Data Analysis	78

Trustworthiness	82 <u>2</u>
Chapter 4: Results	85 <u>5</u>
Restatement of Research Questions	88
Research Setting.	88
Research Recruitment	89
Sample Size	90
Data Collection	90
Participant Recruitment	90
Sample Size	92
Location, Frequency, and Duration	92
Demographics	93
Participant Biographical Sketches	95
Data Analysis	97
Validation	102
Emerging Themes	104
Explaining the Themes and Subthemes	105
Theme 1: Transition Barriers	105
Theme 2: Communication Breakdown	126
Theme 3: Instinctual Parent Involvement and Confidence	134
Theme 4: Parents Recommend Schools Provide More Collaboration and	
Student Support	141
Composite Description of the Experience	159
Researcher Observations	159

Ethical Accountability	166	
Trustworthiness	167	
Credibility	168	
Transferability	170	
Dependability	171	
Confirmability	172	
Summary	172	
Chapter 5: Interpretation	180	
Introduction	180	
Interpretations of the Findings	1889	
Key Concept Findings.	201	
Limitations of the Study	205	
Recommendations	208	
Implications for Social Change	212	
Conclusion	212	
References	216	
Appendix A: Letter of Invitation to Parents		
Appendix B: Guiding Parent Interview Questions		
Appendix C: Letter of Informed Parental Consent	246	
Appendix D: Letter of Confidentiality From Editor	249	
Appendix E: Theme Endorsements	250	
Appendix F: Emailed Letter of Invitation to School Psychologists	257	
Appendix G: Letter of Informed Consent for Focus Group	258	

A	ppendix H:	Guiding F	Focus Group	Questions20	60

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information	
Table 2. Themes and Subthemes	103
Table E1. Theme Endorsements—Themes 1 and 2	250
Table E2. Theme Endorsements—Themes 3 and 4	251
Table E3.Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 1 (Transition Barriers - Middle	
School Nightmare)	252
Table E4. Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 1 (Transition Barriers -	
Transition Maladjustment)	253
Table E5. Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 2 (Communication Breakdown)	254
Table E6. Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 3 (Instinctual Parent Involvement	
& Confidence)	255
Table E7. Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 4 (Parents Recommend Schools	
Provide More Collaboration & Student Support)	256

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The importance of parental involvement in a child's education is illustrated through an examination of the literature on the topic. In fact, a significant body of research has shown that youth whose parents are involved with their learning at home show increased learning outcomes at school (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). While the importance of parental involvement in education is easily acknowledged, identifying which factors may promote parental involvement and are likely to have a positive effect on student achievement is more difficult, especially relative to parents of youth with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Given the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education, the influence of the self-efficacy of parents of children with ADHD does play a part in the parents' decisions to get involved, but academic risk factors and the youth's emotional health played more significant roles for the parents in this study. This study provided an examination of the manner in which the self-efficacy of parents of middle school youth with ADHD affected decision making with regard to parental involvement in studying and homework completion through a series of parental interviews and a focus group with school psychologists who worked with this population.

A variety of factors influence a parent's choice to become involved in his or her child's educational activities. For example, research conducted about parents' past school experiences, including the parents' school attitude, perception of school atmosphere, self-efficacy, and the encouragement of participation and communication between home and school has illustrated that such parental decisions are multidimensional (Hoover-

Dempsey, Battiato, et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, et al., et al., 2001; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001; Wilkins & Closson, 2005). Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2003) study revealed parents' powerlessness relative to their involvement in schools when they had past negative experiences and indicated that their retreating behavior may look like apathy. Previous research has identified factors such as student motivation, home-school relationships, culture, education level, and parental self-efficacy as influencing parental participation (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995a). However, my study revealed that parents also choose to get involved when they feel desperate after their youth show troubling emotional signs such as depression and then begin to fail classes. My study also demonstrated that parents' frustration level may reach a point of desperation after their attempts to facilitate collaborative efforts with the school are unsuccessful. Self-efficacy certainly played a part in parents' decision to step in, but the instinct to help their struggling youth drove them.

Students with ADHD, who demonstrate academic vulnerability in the school setting, may particularly benefit from parental involvement in their education. There is a significant body of research that links ADHD to an increased risk for difficulties related to emotional well-being, school performance, and quality of life (Brown, 2006). Research has indicated that children with ADHD are notably at risk of school failure, and many have learning problems in addition to their attention problems (Barkley, 2006). In fact, several researchers have recognized significantly lower school achievement by youth with ADHD as compared to youth without ADHD (Barkley, 2006; DeShazo, Lyman, & Klinger, 2002; Frazier, Youngstrom, Glutting, & Watkins, 2007). Furthermore, a

considerable portion of youth with ADHD experience significant difficulties with homework (Brown, 2007), making parental help necessary.

As previously discussed, students with ADHD are especially vulnerable to academic failure. Additionally, Rogers, Wiener, Marton, and Tannock (2009) demonstrated that parents of children with ADHD, in particular, report negative selfefficacy relative to helping their youth with homework. As such, the specific focus of this study was examining how the factor of parental self-efficacy impacts parental involvement. Rogers et al. showed that lower self-efficacy on the part of the parents of children with ADHD negatively influenced their impact on their child's academic achievement. Rogers et al. further highlighted that these same parents felt a lack of engagement on the part of their child's school and teacher, which led the parents to be discouraged and subsequently excluded from future participation in helping their youth with schoolwork. Consequently, these parents became distrustful of the school's commitment to their child's success. In contrast, the parents of children without ADHD reported high self-efficacy related to their ability to make a difference in their child's academic achievement and felt supported by teachers and the school community. This research finding highlights the need to better understand parental self-efficacy for youth with ADHD and provides a rationale for the need to further examine self-efficacy among parents of youth with ADHD.

The focus for this study was selected due to the limited attention given to homework completion and study skills among youth with ADHD. This is especially true with regard to research on middle school parental involvement. Thus, the middle school ADHD population was examined.

Youth with ADHD often experience school failure because of difficulties with attention, sustained focus, organization, task initiation, and time management (Barkley, 1997a). As a result, these youth often require additional help to manage school responsibilities.

Barkley (1997a), a leading expert in the field of ADHD research, discussed the growing incidence of children with ADHD who experience school failure. He suggested that there is a relationship between school failure and poor executive skills, a connection initially identified in research among children with brain injury. The skill deficits associated with ADHD have been consistently defined as deficits of sustained focus and attention, organization, task initiation, and time management (Barkley, 1997a; Dawson & Guare, 2004; Frazier et al., 2007; Montiel, Peña, Montiel-Barbero, Polanczyk, & Guilherme, 2008; Rogers et al., 2009). Barkley (2007) and Cooper, Robinson, and Patall (2006) found a relationship between school failure and incomplete homework. Cooper et al. reviewed research from 1987 to 2003 to examine the effects of homework and found that there was generally consistent evidence that homework improved school achievement. According to Barkley, school failure increases the risk of school dropout, and the dropout rate, at 30%, is disproportionate for adolescents who have been diagnosed with ADHD. Dawson and Guare (2004) suggested that the challenges of poor attention and disorganization of youth with ADHD often push parents to develop support systems outside of school, such as home tutoring and parental involvement with school tasks such as homework. These researchers also pointed out that parents of youth with ADHD may need to increase their homework assistance to their children, develop strong home-school communication plans, and develop support systems by coaching their youth

on attention tactics and home study habits. Additionally, parents may need to coach their children with ADHD on executive skills, such as organization, memory strategies, homework focus, and self-monitoring (Dawson & Guare, 2004).

Although there is a substantial amount of research that suggests that parental involvement improves student academic achievement in elementary school (Habboushe et al., 2001; Rogers et al., 2009), there is a limited amount of research on parent participation and the academic difficulties of middle school youth. Anderson and Minke (2007) revealed that educators and parents define involvement in different ways. These researchers identified variations in parent perceptions and noted that the way in which parents think about involvement in their adolescents' middle school is different from parents' thoughts about involvement when their children are in elementary school. Further, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001) found that parents often place emphasis on involvement at home (e.g., homework help), whereas teachers might think about a parent's presence in school as involvement. Anderson and Minke pointed out that families with fewer resources might have limited opportunities to spend time helping their youth with school tasks versus families with greater resources. According to Mattingly, Prislin, and McKenzie (2002), parents of youth from lower income families are less likely to be involved in school. Middle-class parents are considered to have more flexible schedules than working-class parents and may thus be more able to participate at their child's school (Anderson & Minke, 2007). However, what is most interesting is that although previous studies have examined the various cultural and demographic factors that influence parental school involvement, parental self-efficacy has been shown to play a major role (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Specifically, Hoover-Dempsey and

Sandler (2005) found that parental participation is often limited if a parent had a past or recent negative school experience. Another study found that parent involvement among youth with ADHD is associated with poor parental self-efficacy. For example, parents of children with ADHD have been found to perceive their role as unimportant and believe that the school lacks interest in engaging them and helping their youth (Rogers et al., 2009). As such, youth with ADHD are especially susceptible to academic failure, due to the combination of parental involvement issues, ADHD, and parental self-efficacy.

Rogers and colleagues (2009) found that parents of children with ADHD have significantly more problems in feeling confident helping their youth with school tasks due to negative self-efficacy as opposed to parents of typical youth. Participants in this study included 101 parents; approximately half were parents of children with ADHD and half were parents of children without ADHD. Rogers et al. found that self-efficacy influenced parent attitudes relative to school involvement. Also, a parent's perceptions of teacher attitudes toward them and their children influenced their decisions on involvement. Results of the study also suggested that there is a strong relationship between low self-efficacy and parents of children with ADHD. Furthermore, study findings indicated that lower self-efficacy of parents of children with ADHD negatively influenced parents' perceived ability to impact their children's academic achievement. Rogers et al. pointed out that parents of children with ADHD felt a lack of engagement on the part of their child's school and teacher, which led parents to believe that they were not included and encouraged, and that the school was less likely to contribute to their child's success. In contrast, parents of children without ADHD reported high selfefficacy related to their ability to make a difference in their child's academic achievement and felt supported by the teacher and school.

A goal of this study was to better understand parental experiences related to participation in the education of youth with ADHD and to provide further insight into how parental self-efficacy can inform practice, especially relative to parental involvement in homework tasks to help youth with ADHD to be academically successful.

Statement of the Problem

As previously mentioned, the rate of academic failure among youth with ADHD is high. Parental involvement has been found to enhance school achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). While the positive impact of parental involvement is clear, research related to parental involvement in education has been limited to elementary school. Additionally, previous research has indicated that parental involvement declines as children progress through school (Adams & Christenson, 2000). McCullough (2002) specified that parental engagement declines over time because with increased age, children develop cognitive skills, the foundations of school success, and the maturity to be more independent and responsible. This is especially true with the transition from elementary school to middle school. These assumptions often lead to a greater level of autonomy being extended, with youth being expected to assume more responsibility for their homework completion, study skills, and academic achievement. However, increased expectations for autonomy and subsequent decreases in parental involvement may be particularly problematic given the particular challenges of youth who have ADHD.

Researchers (Evans et al., 2005; Langberg et al., 2008) have found that the transition to middle school is associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms for youth with ADHD. The observed increases are likely due to increased demands and a heavier workload. Even with a supportive family, youth with ADHD tend to have chronic problems completing homework and maintaining adequate study skills (Schultz, Evans, & Serpell, 2009; Smith Harvey & Chickie-Wolfe, 2008; Wood, Murdock, & Cronin, 2002). Of particular concern is the finding that without direct homework instruction and study skills, interventions may be ineffective (Dawson & Guare, 2008; Goldstein, 2004; Marlowe, 2001; Merriman & Codding, 2008). One can argue that understanding parental decision-making related to involvement is of particular importance for improving academic outcomes of middle school students with ADHD.

Nature of the Study

This research consisted of a qualitative case study. Yin (2003) suggested that case study design allows for the exploration of individuals' experiences and relationships. A multiple case study method was used to look at parental self-efficacy and parents' decision to assist their youth with schoolwork at home. Parental decision making as it relates to involvement in youths' studying and homework was analyzed. Each case was considered with regard to how the home-school relationship influenced parental self-efficacy. Study participants were selected based on criterion sampling and included parents of middle school students with ADHD and a history of homework and study-skills difficulties. There was one formal interview with each parent participant and the option to follow up by phone to clarify or expand responses from the interview. Five interview questions were posed to parents to identify salient experiences. Scenarios

around self-efficacy and addressing homework with their ADHD youth were elicited. A focus group was used to achieve triangulation. The practitioners in the focus group provided a unique perspective on the subject of parental involvement for youth with ADHD.

There was a manual analysis of the data with an open coding process in order to code the parental responses obtained through interviews and discussions by the participants of the focus group.

The application of a multiple-case study design to investigate the behavior of parents of middle school youth with ADHD was determined to be the most appropriate approach for the study. The qualitative methodology allowed for the exploration of common themes and differences within and between cases.

Research Questions

The major research query in this study involved determining whether parental self-efficacy has an impact on a parents' motivation and attempts to assist their youth with home-school tasks such as homework. In addition, I sought to understand to what extent parental self-efficacy related to parental decisions about participation in youths' school-related tasks. The following interview questions were asked of each parent in the study:

1. What are your past and current experiences assisting your child with homework and studying responsibilities? In what ways has this assistance influenced his/her academic outcome?

- 2. From a parent's perspective, what influenced your decision about involvement in your youth's schoolwork with specific regard to homework and studying?
 Describe your experiences.
- 3. How would you describe your confidence in your ability to help your youth as impacting your decisions (a) to get involved in helping your child with homework and (b) to participate at the level you choose?
- 4. Tell me about your experience with educational institution(s), in terms of home-school collaboration/communication around studying and homework.

The following discussion topics were given to the focus group of school psychologists:

- In your opinion, regarding homework and studying, what can parents do to positively influence their youth's academic achievement? What kinds of things does your school do to partner with parents in order for them to get involved effectively with home tasks? What, if any, are the differences in the school approach and offerings, among parents of typical youth versus parents of youth with attention problems/ADHD? How do you think these school behaviors affect the efficacy of parents to partner with the school in order to positively influence their youth's academic achievement?
- Discuss your specific experiences with parent involvement in your middle school.
- Explain how your middle school reaches out to parents. Please discuss any services, programs, or initiatives that encourage parent partnership and participation, especially relative to homework and studying tasks.

- Think about the behaviors, school climate, and other factors (e.g., cultural factors) in your school community that may influence parental school involvement. Please discuss.
- In your experience, how do you think these factors affect the efficacy and decision of a parent of a typical youth to become involved with helping their youth with homework and studying? Now, discuss these factors and parental efficacy and decision making relative to parents of youth with ADHD. What are the differences (if any)?
- Discuss how, as a middle school psychologist, you understand parental selfefficacy and how a parent's sense of efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in their youth's school-related tasks?
- Tell me about your thoughts relative to parental self-efficacy and in what ways parental efficacy might have an impact on a parent's motivation to assist their youth with home-school tasks such as homework. How do you think parents' efficacy may differ if they have a youth with attention problems/ADHD versus a typically developing student?

Purpose of the Study

Through this study, I sought to provide a broader understanding of parents of youth with ADHD and their involvement with homework and school tasks, specifically looking at the nature of the relationship between parental involvement and self-efficacy. In investigating the influence of parental self-efficacy, the study uncovered parental involvement decisions related to homework involvement and the extent to which self-efficacy influences parental decision making. The literature review provided an

understanding of parents' experiences as investigated through a case study approach. The methodology and specific interview questions are provided in Chapter 3 and Appendix B.

Theoretical Framework

The study examined parental self-efficacy relative to parental decision making about involvement in assisting their youth with homework and studying. The primary theoretical model that was used was the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model of parental involvement relative to Bandura's self-efficacy theory. This model served as the framework for the conceptualization of the study because it addresses parental role constructions, including those that structure parents' beliefs about their role in their youth's education and parental efficacy as it relates to feeling competent to assist youth with schoolwork. As theorized and empirically confirmed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, this construct directly relates to parental decisions to be involved in youths' education.

Bandura's (1977, 1997) self-efficacy theory also had a direct relationship with the study and provided a further framework. Bandura (1977) purported that self-efficacy involves positive self-esteem, coping strength, and persistence toward goals. This idea is important for better understanding a component of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theory (1995, 1997), which suggests that a parent's sense of self-efficacy influences parental decision making to help youth succeed in school. According to Bandura (1977), one's efficacy is derived from performance accomplishments (based on personal mastery), vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states that promote positive self-efficacy. If one's experiences are negative, this will negatively affect self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) also explained that if one's experiences are not positive,

avoidance behaviors can prevail. A parent's present and past experience could very well affect his or her confidence to assist his or her youth. Bandura's ideas help to clarify why self-efficacy plays such a key role in parental involvement decisions around homework help. This was affirmed in studies done by Hoover-Dempsey and his colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burrow, 1995b; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, et al., 2005). These models are foundational to the study and are detailed in Chapter 2.

Operational Definitions

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): A neurological condition that involves problems with inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that is developmentally inconsistent with the age of the child (Barkley, 1997a).

Coaching: "Coaching an ADHD student involves assisting the student with planning, monitoring, evaluating progress, and setting goals" (Dawson & Guare, 2008, p. 85).

Consultation (school-based): School-based consultation is a service delivery model that facilitates educational and supportive services to students by providing support and counseling to professional staff on better ways to work with students to deliver optimal educational services (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008).

Executive functions (EFs): EFs are higher order cognitive abilities that involve the frontal regions of the brain and include skills such as planning, cognitive flexibility, judgment, and monitoring of present and past performance (Souchay, Isingrini, Clarys, Taconnat & Eustache, 2004; Spree & Strauss, 1998).

Meta-analytic assessment: "A quantitative technique for synthesizing the results of multiple studies of a phenomenon into a single result by combining the effect size estimates from each study into a single estimate of the combined effect size or into a distribution of effect sizes" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007, p. 572).

Metacognition: The ability to look at one's actions, assess those actions, and use effective problem-solving and self-evaluation skills (Dawson & Guare, 2003).

Self-efficacy theory: Self-efficacy beliefs are "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required attaining designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1977, p. 391). Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 1997).

Assumptions, Limitations and Scope

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study included the following: The study population was representative of parents of middle school youth with ADHD, parents were willing to participate in the study and responded openly and honestly to the questions presented, parents had adequate memories to recall specific tasks associated with helping their youth, and parents wanted to help their youth achieve their full potential. Additional assumptions were that parental involvement is defined as involvement in helping youth with school-home tasks such as homework and studying and that self-efficacy can determine a person's behavior.

Limitations

Access to parents of middle school youth who had ADHD was seamless, as the South Florida clinic had the letters of invitation to parents that I prepared in its lobby

provided services to children and youth with ADHD as a main client group. This clinic provided access to participants for the study. As a result, the recruitment of parent volunteers who had middle school youth with ADHD was not a barrier to the identification of participants. The study was limited to members of the suburban South Florida student population, many of whom were from private schools and/or affluent families. The results of this study are generalizable to populations of parents and families with similar background characteristics. Finally, the findings are limited to qualitative interpretation rather than quantitative analysis.

Scope

The scope was dictated by the willingness of parents from the targeted population to participate in the study. In the end, I was able to involve seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD. Given that there were age limitations (parents of middle school youth) and that the targeted population were parents of youth with ADHD, the sample size needed to be at least five parents. In that I would have accepted five parents, it was satisfying to have seven parents participate in the study. The results may not be generalized to middle school counterparts in other parts of the country or rural communities and inner-city populations, due to the demographics of this study, in which the majority of the parents resided in relatively affluent communities in suburban South Florida and were not necessarily representative of the general population. Nevertheless, there were two parents who were not from affluence. In fact, one parent was an African American single mother with two special needs children who was renting in a complex that was considered low-income housing. Also, ethnically, the parents in the study were

relatively diverse and closely representative of the population. Finally, the findings from the study are limited to qualitative interpretation rather than quantitative analysis.

Significance of the Study

The study adds to the existing body of literature on motivating parents to assist their struggling middle school students with ADHD with homework and study skills. Through an examination of the process of parental decision making concerning involvement, and focused discussions with middle school psychologists on their experiences with parents of youth diagnosed with ADHD, I looked at how parents of youth with ADHD saw themselves as making a difference in their youth's academic success and whether a decision to become involved was based on a parent's efficacy, such as the belief that he or she would be effective in helping his or her youth with homework. Of some benefit to the study was that the school psychologists in the focus group offered information relative to their schools' programs on parent participation as well as their experiences on parents' ultimate decision to be involved. The study also explored the impact of parental self-efficacy on parental decision making with regard to involvement. Given that previous research focused on parental involvement in elementary grades, there was a gap in the literature on parental experiences and involvement at the middle school level, which this study focused on. In addition, the majority of the studies related to ADHD and homework have been quantitative. The implications for positive social change include raising awareness about the need for school systems to develop strategies for working with parents of children with ADHD. This study focused on qualitative findings and provides in-depth understanding about parental decisions and the impact of self-efficacy on these decisions. Additionally, the

study may add new knowledge to this neglected area of parent involvement in middle school and provide information to social scientists, health care providers, and mental health professionals, as well as inform policymakers on the experiences, concerns, and program needs of parents of children who have ADHD with regard to how parental involvement may support school achievement. This research may have significant social benefits by assisting school systems in gaining insight into the perceptions of parents of children with ADHD as they relate to school communication.

Summary

The first chapter has outlined the importance of parental involvement in a child's education and has described this study's examination of parental decisions as they relate to self-efficacy about involvement in middle school youths' schoolwork. Specifically, Chapter 1 has highlighted that parental participation in the completion of homework and studying may be indicated when a youth has ADHD. School failure and dropout rates among youth with ADHD have been discussed, and researchers have documented that school failure and school dropout rates are high among youth who have ADHD (Anderson, Anderson, Northam, Jacobs, & Catroppa, 2001; Barkley, 2000; Dawson & Guare, 2004; Landry, Miller-Loncar, Smith, & Swank, 2002; Mohlman & Gorman, 2005; Schultz et al., 2009; Watson & Westby, 2003).

Chapter 1 also illustrated the importance of parental involvement in a child's education. (Hill & Tyson 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002a; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002b; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Rogers et al., 2009). In Chapter 1, I have pointed out that despite evidence demonstrating the positive impact of parental involvement on education and the

unique needs of youth with ADHD, the increased independence in middle school that generally translates to decreased levels of parental involvement can be detrimental. The chapter has highlighted the societal expectation that, once in middle school, youth should assume more responsibility in school-related tasks regardless of the impacts of transitioning from elementary school to middle school. Chapter 1 has pointed to research on inherent stress that results from increased workload and responsibility for any youth, as well as specifically for middle school youth, and has identified that changes in parental involvement may pose particular challenges to students with ADHD due to the unique needs of this population. It is particularly important to clarify factors influencing parental involvement with regard to homework completion for youth with ADHD because of the increased risk of school failure.

Chapter 1 closes by identifying the importance of this study and the lack of research on this issue with regard to middle school youth (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

In Chapter 2, I review pertinent literature, including various studies on middle school challenges, youth with ADHD, and parental decision making regarding participation with school tasks such as homework completion for youth with ADHD as well as research on parental self-efficacy as it relates to parental decision making. In Chapter 2, I point out that researchers have illustrated parental involvement as a multidimensional construct (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). However, one factor stands out as intrinsic and particularly remarkable with regard to parents of youth with ADHD and their decisions on involvement in assisting with school tasks. This factor is self-efficacy. Although some studies have examined how various factors influence parental

decisions on school involvement in students with ADHD, few have examined the middle school years. Even fewer studies have examined parental self-efficacy relative to decisions around school involvement among parents of children with versus without ADHD. The literature review highlights that there may be an impact of self-efficacy and parents' attitudes on involvement as well as parental perception of school support (Rogers et al., 2009).

Chapter 3 follows with a description of the study methodology, including design, participants, procedures, assessments used, and how information was gathered and assessed. Chapter 3 covers the goals of the study as well as the importance of the participants being parents of youth with ADHD and the focus group of school psychologists. Reflecting the qualitative nature of this research, Chapter 3 emphasizes the effort to identify the unique perspectives, viewpoints, and decisions of the study parents and the focus group (middle school psychologists), especially relative to parental involvement in school tasks and how self-efficacy relates to that decision. This study has implications for positive social change, in that it assisted in clarifying elements of homework tasks and parental assistance that influenced school success. My hope is that this study contributes to the reduction of school failure and dropout rates among youth with ADHD. Additionally, study results may aid school personnel in identifying more effective strategies for eliciting parental engagement during the middle school years.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of parents' decision making regarding participation in school tasks such as homework completion for middle school youth with ADHD, as well as how decision making relates to parental self-efficacy. Limited literature focuses on parental involvement with homework completion and study skills among middle school youth with ADHD versus elementary school youth. Research identifying the relationship of helping youth with homework tasks to parental efficacy is even more limited. Lack of homework completion affects a student's grades and contributes to poor overall academic outcomes (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall 2006).

This literature review provides an understanding of the parents of ADHD youth, parents' experiences related to school involvement, and parents' feelings of self-efficacy relative to that involvement. This was investigated through a case study approach. The method for investigation and specific interview questions are provided in Chapter 3 and Appendix B.

A review of research strategies was completed to assist in locating information on the topics of parental involvement, youth with ADHD and study and homework skills in middle school, and parental efficacy relative to assisting middle school youth with ADHD, as well as articles on the same for future reference. The remaining content of this literature review highlights seminal research capturing the effects that parental efficacy has on engagement in homework help for middle school youth with ADHD. This provides a better understanding of self-efficacy as a factor in influencing parents of middle school youth with ADHD to become involved with their students' studying and

homework completion. In this study, I aimed to determine to what extent parental selfefficacy influenced this decision.

Parent self-efficacy is a complex and multifaceted issue, especially when youth get to middle school and have ADHD. Analyzing the issue with regard to involvement in schoolwork tasks, such as homework, is challenging. In this chapter, I examine five main areas of paramount importance to this research study. The first area is the literature on youth with ADHD and how ADHD affects their school performance, especially with regard to study skills and homework. A look at youth with ADHD and their developmental stage at middle school in relation to homework was presented. The second area is the body of literature focusing on parental involvement in education. The third area is discussion of parental involvement for youth with ADHD. The fourth area centers on parent involvement models because these models relate to parent decisions concerning involvement. The 5th area is a review of the parental self-efficacy paradigm, which I conducted in an attempt to investigate how much parental involvement depends on positive efficacy; I seek to provide insight into the way in which parents experience this in the school environment. Parental self-efficacy and involvement of parents of youth without ADHD were also researched.

Research Strategy

The literature research was conducted using several sources of information from the Walden Library in Academic Search Premier. PsycINFO was accessed using the general search terms *executive skills*, *attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*, *homework completion*, *study skills*, *parent involvement*, and *ADHD and school achievement*. With these terms, other search words such as *middle school students*, *parent involvement in*

school, parent involvement and homework, parent-school partnership, parental involvement in education, parenting involvement in school, and school coaching were used to parrow the search

In view of the scarcity of research on middle school youth and parent involvement, additional searches were conducted to identify research that included parental involvement in school and homework (an asterisk indicated that all forms of that stem were included; e.g., involve* included involves, involved, and involvement). The search was later expanded to include terms such as parent decision to be involved in school and parent self-efficacy in relation to decisions on school involvement, because the initial search demonstrated that many articles examining parent involvement focused on parental self-efficacy, which determined decisions to be involved or not. To identify studies of middle school samples, I I used the following search terms: middle school*, middle school students, middle school education, middle school and ADHD, middle school and homework, junior high, junior high school*, junior high students, adolescence*, and early adolescence. I combined each middle school term with a parental involvement term as well as a homework term and then examined each study to determine whether a homework or study skills outcome was included. From articles found through these search strategies, a review of research references was conducted to locate additional resources the general search did not discover. The Walden online library and the Academic Premier database provided the needed articles for this review.

Review of Literature

The influence of parent self-efficacy on the decision by parents to assist ADHD youth with homework in middle school has far-reaching consequences relative to the

actual homework help and effects on the ADHD youth's academic success. The following literature review provides insight into what parents of middle school youth with ADHD experience relative to self-efficacy and their decision to help their youth with homework. This review is especially important because homework completion affects youths' school performance, and youth with ADHD often lack the skills needed to successfully complete homework, which can result in school failure (Barkley, 2006; Brown, 2007; Dawson & Guare, 2004; DeShazo et al., 2002; Frazier et al., 2007).

ADHD and Academic Achievement

Early research documented the effects of ADHD on student outcomes and school achievement. Frazier et al. (2007); Montiel, Peña, Montiel-Barbero, Polanczyk, and Guilherme (2008); and Barkley (1997b) studied the significant effects of skill deficits among youth with ADHD. These include inattention, inability to focus, disorganization, lack of initiative, off-task behavior, and difficulty with time management (Rogers et al., 2009). Hill and Tyson (2007) documented the wide achievement gap for students who struggle (such as youth with ADHD). Barkley also discussed the growing incidence of children with ADHD who experience school failure. He detailed a relationship between school failure and poor executive skills, which was initially identified in research among children with brain injury. The skill deficits associated with ADHD have been consistently defined as skill deficits of sustained focus and attention, organization, task initiation, and time management, all of which affect a youth's ability to complete homework (Barkley, 1997b; Dawson & Guare, 2002; Frazier et al., 2007; Montiel et al., 2008; Rogers et al., 2009).

Barkley (2007) and Cooper et al. (2006) found that there is a direct relationship between school failure and incomplete homework. School failure increased the risk of school dropout. According to Barkley, the dropout rate for adolescents diagnosed with ADHD was approximately 30% in 2007. The most recent statistics reveal dropout rates for this population at 35% (Fried et al., 2013). Rogers et al. (2009), Frazier et al. (2007), Montiel et al. (2008), and Barkley (1997) emphasized notably lower school achievement and significantly higher dropout rates among children with ADHD versus those without ADHD. The effects of ADHD on the various skills that contribute to homework completion and study skills have far-reaching ramifications for the lives of students and their families. Barkley (2006), Dawson and Guare (2004), and Levine et al. (2000) adequately defined ADHD youth with deficit behavior that resulted in poor school performance. The authors found that impulsivity, disorganization, poor time management, poor prioritization, inattention, procrastination, and a lack of selfregulation, commonly referred to as deficits in executive functions, caused a lack of ability to complete school tasks, including homework. They studied various intervention strategies that impacted school performance and found that parental coaching, such as with homework and studying, was one of the most effective interventions that made a positive difference in a youth's performance. According to the diagnostic criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, text revision (DSM-IV-RT), these executive function deficits are among the many factors that cause difficulties in completing responsibilities for those diagnosed with ADHD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Bishop, Duncan, and Lawrence (2004) explored the link between emotional states and the ability to attend and made recommendations concerning building competency and a sense of responsibility by teaching attention skills, self-evaluation, and self-monitoring techniques—techniques they referred to as *mindfulness techniques*. They found that mindfulness promotes the regulating of attention. By using mindfulness, youth can prioritize and assign importance and awareness to relevant tasks, experiences, communication, and relatedness. The etiology of ADHD as it relates to parental influence is a controversial area and was not a focus of this study. However, in 2001, Johnston and Mash completed a literature review analyzing the relationship between ADHD and negative parent characteristics. In addition to identifying family turmoil and specifically parental dysfunction, the authors determined that there was a connection between parental stress with low parental self-efficacy and negative behaviors of ADHD children. Johnston and Mash stated in their conclusion that more research was needed to address parental influence and its role in academic achievement as well as the underlying development of ADHD, the influence of parental characteristics (low self-efficacy) on ADHD, and the genetic link in ADHD.

Parental Involvement and School Outcomes

According to research by Fan and Chen (2001), Barnard (2004) and Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein (2005), parental involvement in home learning has a positive relationship to improved academic outcomes for children and youth. However, most of the studies in this area have examined the elementary school years. Nevertheless, Fan and Chen, Barnard, and Gonzalez-DeHass et al. reported that parental involvement relates not only to positive academic outcomes, but also to increased student motivation

to learn. In fact, Barnard demonstrated that learned academic habits carried over to high school, but she studied early parental involvement as a predictor of high school academic success, rather than looking at secondary school involvement by parents.

According to Shinn (2002), parental involvement includes regular and effective communication from teachers. When such communication occurred, parents "became much more likely to be active participants in their children's education" (Shinn, 2002, p. 35). Shinn indicated that parental involvement in education decreases as youth grow older and go to middle and high school, noting that this is unfortunate, given the continued need for parent participation. Nevertheless, Shinn found that when parents received regular and effective communication from teachers, they were significantly more likely to be active participants in their children's education. Shinn also pointed out that U.S. Department of Education statistics supported continued parental involvement through secondary school. According to those statistics, by middle school, only 8% of parents were involved as volunteers, whereas in the first grade 33% of parents volunteered. Likewise, where positive home-school communication accounted for 52% of parent-school interactions in the first grade, it accounted for only 36% of these interactions in 8th grade (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). The 2007 statistics on parental involvement from the U.S. Department of Education compared parent participation in the lower grades to parent participation in the middle school grades, indicating that when children were in the lower grades, the parent participation rate was over 60%, whereas by middle school, it had declined to 38%. Parent involvement numbers are increasing but remain low for the parents of middle-school-aged youth.

There is a body of literature correlating parent and home support, attitude, and involvement with school success, especially for children who have learning problems and disorders such as ADHD. In addition, parental involvement promotes positive student and parent attitudes toward education (Mattingly, Prislin, & McKenzie, 2002). Much of this research in this area has pointed to the important effects of parental involvement for elementary school children as long as the involvement is positive, encouraging, and nurturing, rather than being pressure to achieve (Midgett, Ryan, Adams, & Corville-Smith, 2002). In fact, Pomerantz and Eaton (2001), Rogers et al. (2009), Areepattamannil (2010), and Brown and Iyengar (2008) found that parental pressure caused a decline in student achievement. ADHD research indicates that even in middle school, youth with ADHD need help to succeed academically, and it is important for a parent to be a coach, advocate, and partner with the educational system (Barkley, 2006; Dawson & Guare, 2004). Lower school achievement by youth with ADHD compared to youth without ADHD is revealed in the research (Barkley, 2006; DeShazo et al., 2002; Frazier et al., 2007) and that parental involvement increases student performance.

Although it is quite limited, there is research supporting parental involvement for secondary students. Nevertheless, theories and research have long promoted the understanding that families have a critical role in supporting their children and youth in gaining positive outcomes in school and have identified the relationship of parental involvement to educational success (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Hara, 1998; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hill and Tyson, 2007; Seginer, 2006). A number of studies have shown that parental involvement is connected to higher academic success and superior attendance. According

to Epstein (2008), studies have demonstrated that when parents are more involved, students' grades in English and math increase, in addition to improvements in reading and writing skills. In a survey of secondary school teachers, 97% indicated that the biggest challenge they grappled with was working with parents. To remedy this challenge, schools are developing decision-making activities to encourage parents to voice their views and help develop mission statements (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Parents are also able to help develop policies for schools (Epstein, 2008).

Parental involvement was a pivotal issue in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (Mattingly et al., 2002). The No Child Left Behind Act provides tools and information for parents to help their youth become successful in the classroom and life. The Department of Education (2009) stated that parents can acquire booklets that feature lessons and activities to help youth achieve standards in reading, science, and math. Youth can also learn about and comprehend the importance of homework and develop skills and values that help them to achieve their goals and become successful. Habboushe et al. (2001) suggested that parental involvement improves student academic achievement in elementary school, but it is difficult to find similar studies on middle school youth. Parental involvement in the success and maintenance of intervention programs has been well documented (Sheridan, 2009; Shure, 2001). Sheridan (2009) stressed the critical nature of the home-school connection in supporting school success, specifically concerning homework completion. Shure's (2001) longitudinal study of students who received an intervention program—I Can Problem Solve (ICPS)—in kindergarten noted that after 5 years, children whose parents learned and practiced the ICPS skills with their children at home retained and demonstrated very strong skills in all areas. In fact, all of

the students who received the training and whose parents were involved had the best skills.

Sheridan (2009) noted the importance of assessing home involvement as a key variable when implementing homework and study skills intervention programs for positive school achievement. Cooper, Lindsay, Greathouse, and Nye (1998) emphasized that there is a relationship between homework success, academic achievement, and parental attitude. Additionally, Hill and Tyson (2009), did a meta-analysis of 50 studies of school success of middle school students looking at parental involvement. These researchers identified that the actual type of involvement parents demonstrated was critical to student achievement. Although this research indicated that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, the caveat for middle- and high-school-age youth was that teaching self-monitoring and organization skills was important as a component of parental involvement. According to Hill and Tyson, this approach strengthens a student's ability to develop strong academic and work habits in relation to homework. The authors called this academic socialization. Hill and Tyson concluded that a parent's role, especially in middle school and beyond, is to foster independence and competence so that students can build on their skills and grow without being enabled. Dawson and Guare (2004) pointed out that parents of youth with ADHD may need to increase the amount of homework assistance that they provide to their children, develop strong home-school communication plans, and develop support systems by coaching their youth on attention tactics and exercises, in addition to coaching them on executive skills (i.e., organization, memory strategies, homework focus, and selfmonitoring).

The Massachusetts Parent Involvement Project (PIP; Mattingly et al., 2002) is an initiative in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Education, schools, parents, and the community. This project was developed based on numerous research studies, especially those by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), where the relationship between parental involvement and positive school outcomes for children and youth is effective. The Massachusetts project specifically focused on the achievement of mathematics, science, and technology, and the fact that in order for students to do their best work, parents needed to be involved and receive certain guidance and empowerment from the school to do so. Although the PIP originated as an elementary initiative in 2001-2002, the outcomes have been so positive that the program has expanded to the secondary grades and included an after-school homework club component.

Barriers to Parents' Involvement

According to Anderson and Minke (2007), the circumstances of the parents of families with fewer resources may have limited opportunities to engage, as opposed to families with greater resources. Therefore, parental involvement models are influenced and controlled by a parent's choice and can be a function of a parent's situation and condition. According to Mattingly et al. (2002), youth from lower income families have parents who are less likely to be involved. Middle-class parents are considered to have more flexible schedules when compared with working-class parents, allowing the middle-class parents to participate more at their child's school (Anderson & Minke, 2007). As such, lower resource families might react differently than families that have greater resources (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

According to the literature (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Hill and Tyson, 2009), the majority of parents that are involved in their children's education are mothers. Youth who come from lower income families have parents who are less likely to be involved than those from families who might be wealthier and more educated. The actual reasons for less involvement may have little to do with education of the parents, but rather access and opportunity. Other variables of less parent involvement also include single parenthood (Mattingly et al., 2002). Middle-class parents are considered to have more flexible schedules over working-class parents, allowing the middle-class parents to participate more at their child's school (Anderson & Minke, 2007). It must be noted that although previous studies examined the various cultural and demographic factors that influenced parental school involvement, a parent's self-worth and sense of efficacy has not been examined in much of the literature

Parental Psychological Factors

Parental, teacher, and school motivation as decision-making variables have been studied and are considered relevant in a parent's decision to become involved in their youth's learning. Walker et al. (2005) examined the belief system about a parent's role and what motivates a parent's involvement, including school invitations; and a school's responsiveness to family life variables. For parents to be involved in their youth's learning Walker et al. emphasized the importance of the school staff offering invitations that create a very positive message and encourage parent involvement.

Parental psychological influences have been studied to some extent. Cooper et al. (2006) examined attitudes about homework and found that parent attitudes are often transferred from a parent to their youth. Mo and Singh's 2008 quantitative study

examined parental behavior regarding homework help and related it to their style of involvement, labeling two types of involvement: being supportive or applying pressure to achieve academically. The authors examined whether a parent's style of involvement increased performance and ultimately, positive academic outcomes. They concluded that parental involvement was important, but that the parental style was the key to effectiveness on increasing academic outcomes. Specifically the parental approach that was most effective was the supportive approach.

Parental Involvement Types Defined

According to Anderson and Minke (2007), educators and parents defined involvement in different ways. Some parents think about their involvement in more of a community-centric view, while teachers think about involvement mainly as a parental presence at the school. Because the definition of parental involvement is not recognized, it can lead to miscommunication between parents and educators, where instructors blame parents for the child's difficulties, causing some parents to feel unappreciated. According to Hill and Tyson (2009), there are various types of involvement from home-based parent involvement to school-based parent involvement. However, according to their analysis, all types of involvement which led to academic socialization, was effective. Hill and Tyson defined home-based parent involvement as parental strategies including communication between parents and children about school as well as engagement with schoolwork (e.g., homework help), taking children to events and places that foster academic success (i.e., museums, libraries, etc.), and creating a learning environment at home, such as making educational materials accessible, including books, newspapers, and educational toys (p. 742). Hill and Tyson defined school-based involvement as including

"visits to school for school events (e.g., PTA meetings, open houses, etc.), participation in school governance, volunteering at school, and communication between parents and school personnel" (p. 742). Finally, they defined academic socialization as "communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility, linking school-work to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future" (p. 742).

If a parent can assist their youth with self-regulation skills, time management, setting goals, effort and persistence in completing difficult tasks, and self-monitoring, Ramdass and Zimmerman (2011) stated that this would lead to academic success. Earlier, Hill and Tyson (2009) concurred stating that the approach of coaching is more effective for positive academic outcomes, than direct homework assistance. Ramdass and Zimmerman noted that in the elementary grades, teachers typically spend time regulating the student to help them be academically successful. For example, they organized the student's schedule, planned the steps to achieve tasks, and measured and managed student success, step by step, through several means including goal-setting. However, middle school is different because the student is expected to have assimilated those regulatory skills. Barkley (2010), Xu and Corno (2003), and Dawson and Guare (2004) identified a way to teach parents how to provide homework coaching and monitor progress for successful homework completion. This is especially important due to selfregulation deficits in youth with ADHD (Bempechat, Li, Neier, Gillis, & Holloway, 2011). It is important to note that in the qualitative study by Bempechat et al. (2011), of the 92 ninth graders, it was revealed that high-achieving students were motivated to learn

and had well-developed self-regulatory skills when they did their homework; low-achieving students typically did not complete their homework and had significant difficulty with self-regulation and, as such, avoided homework responsibilities.

Halsey (2005) based her parent involvement study on her literature review noting that teachers, school administrators, and parents overwhelmingly agreed that parent participation is a positive step in improving student outcomes. In view of this conclusion, Halsey conducted a qualitative study in a rural farm community with eight teachers, 20 parents, and 19 students (about 4 percent of the school's student population) to determine the barriers to parent involvement as well as ways to enhance parent participation. The study took place at Redwood Junior High School (RJHS). Data were collected through three interviews conducted by the author (one unstructured and two semi structured), the author's observations of parents, parent-youth interactions, and teacher-parent interactions at school activities (fundraisers) and when parents visited the school to discuss or transport their youth. Halsey analyzed the RJHS data utilizing a method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), called the continual comparative technique. Halsey conducted her analysis utilizing a coding technique and her process was inductive. She turned responses into categories, and subsequently integrated those categories to develop themes to understand parental involvement contextually. In view of these results, Halsey developed the 2005 Volunteer Initiative Program (VIP). The main goal of VIP was to get parents involved in their youth's school and academic success. Interestingly, one of the concerns that emerged for the parental involvement initiative was the actual definition of what parent involvement was both in terms of teacher perceptions and parent perceptions. The teachers viewed parent involvement as

classroom-based while the parent's idea of involvement was in extracurricular activities. Other challenges in the project included determining ways to incorporate effective communication as well as deal with the confusion of the role and perceptions of the parent in the participation process. Parents identified parent participation as attending extracurricular activities versus involvement in academic areas as the school expectation. while teacher participants of this study identified classroom and academic assistance as parental participation. Most parents reported limited involvement in their youth's academic activities, such as checking their homework or signing report cards, and perceived that the extracurricular participation was the scope of their involvement. Interestingly, miscommunication between parents and school personnel often caused roadblocks that affected youth. For example, the school in this study claimed that they had an open-door policy for parents during the school day to encourage parent participation in the classroom and with academics. The parents on the other hand did not know there was such a policy and did not feel encouraged to be involved during the academic school hours. In fact, most of the parents in the study verbalized a belief that they were not allowed to enter the school and classroom during the instructional hours of the school day. The Halsey study emphasized the critical importance of effective and consistent communication to parents by the teachers and the school. Halsey found that parent involvement was initially low, but after clear communication of the open-door school policy and the promotion of parental involvement in the academic areas, parental involvement and positive attitudes increased. Halsey's results were not as much about student outcomes but about the necessity of good communication and the importance of

the school's initiative to elicit parent involvement, through such things as explicit invitations to increase effective and positive parent involvement.

Parental Involvment With Homework Assistance in Middle School

It is important to note that policies and educational law have endorsed the value of home-school partnerships and parent involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Chao, 2009; Seginer, 2006). Yet, research seems to support models that promote independence in middle school. Hill and Tyson (2001) suggested that direct assistance with homework for the middle school students can even be counter-productive. According to their meta-analysis of over 50 studies, middle school is a time when teachers and parents should promote initiative, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. Accordingly, on supporting parent involvement in middle school, Hill and Tyson contended that although the middle school years are times of many changes that can negatively affect school performance and family relationships, some practices (e.g., helping them directly with homework) that enable youth, are not helpful.

In view of the developmental challenges of middle school youth, Hill and Tyson's (2007) analysis identified that parents' assistance with homework had negative consequences, unless parents took a coaching role where they were teaching their youth strategies for study skills and homework completion. Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis showed that parental involvement with less direct homework assistance and more empowerment to leverage school resources develops other skills and improves homework performance. Examples of such strategies are metacognitive strategies (e.g., problemsolving, decision-making and self-monitoring), skills learned to promote academic socialization (Mo & Singh, 2008). The authors noted that increased cognitive abilities of

middle school-age enabled adolescents to play a more active role in their education, while moving them toward more independence.

Hill and Tyson (2009) used a wide variety of statistical analyses and examined the relationship between parental behaviors in helping their middle school youth (grades 5th – 9th) with school tasks and academic outcomes. The authors focused their analysis on studies of parental involvement, specifically, home-based, school-based, and involvement that promoted academic socialization (Mo & Singh, 2008). Hill and Tyson's metaanalysis of the correlational studies showed a positive relationship between general parental involvement and middle school academic achievement. Hill and Tyson stated, "The correlations ranged from -.49 to .73; the average weighted correlation across the 32 independent samples was r = .18, 95 percent confidence interval (CI) = .12, .24, O(31) = 1,581.10, p < .0001" (p. 753). Of note is that the authors found that the positive relationship of academic achievement was even stronger when the parent was in tune with the objectives, expectations, and goals for the youth and if they provided the strategies to coach their youth. However, helping and supervising the homework was not consistently related to academic achievement yet school-based involvement, such as volunteering at school events, was moderately related to student achievement.

Fan and Chen's (2001) meta-analysis showed that the parental involvement at school had greater correlation with positive academic outcomes (r = .32), than parental home monitoring, such as homework supervision (r = .09). Fan and Chen did not examine home involvement beyond supervision. Fan and Chen and Dawson and Guare (2004) encouraged teaching metacognitive skills while Hill and Tyson (2007) supported strategies to increase competence and independence.

According to other research, homework help has been shown to both accelerate and interfere with achievement (Cooper, 1989, 2007; Wolf, 1979). In fact, Seginer (2006) indicated that the maturation of cognition can increase an adolescents' ability to make decisions and be more self-directed. Thus, interference could limit self-motivation.

Bembenutty (2006) identified that even monitoring homework had a negative impact on youth, although that study was looking at high school age youth. Nevertheless, the authors endorsed that youth with strong self-motivation, autonomy, and even self-efficacy had high math achievement. Based on their research, Hill and Tyson (2009) suggested that parental involvement must change direction once a student reaches middle school, especially with respect to homework help. Hill and Tyson found that direct assistance with homework for this age group can be counter-productive and that more strategies promoting initiative on the part of the student are more appropriate. However, the information was not based on any research addressing special populations, such as youth with learning disabilities or ADHD.

Further, parental involvement, including homework help characterized as academic socialization, a term coined by Mo and Singh (2008) and referred to by Hill and Tyson (2009), had the strongest and most positive relationship with achievement, especially if that involvement served to increase the youth engagement in school. Mo and Singh's results demonstrated how the continuation of parent involvement in the middle school was important. Hill and Tyson did not negate the importance of homework help by parents for middle-school-age youth, but highlighted the need for a different approach as compared with elementary school youth, which was to elicit a more autonomous response from the student.

Is Parental Involvement Indicated?

A longitudinal intervention study exploring the effectiveness of a homework program involving parents of elementary and middle school youth, examined the effects of a family involvement homework program, family attitudes, and student achievement (Van Voorhis, 2011). This program, called Teachers Involve Parents (TIPS), involved 153 youth in a two-year quasi-experimental study. Teachers from four elementary schools were randomly assigned to the TIPS grouped youth or the control-grouped youth. The TIPS sample included 57 percent African-American youth and the remaining 43 percent were Caucasian, with approximately 70 percent of the sample from low socioeconomic status (SES) qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The researchers explored the effectiveness of parent involvement in both language arts and middle school science. The program involved parents by providing weekly instructions to the students on a prescriptive parent involvement activity such as participation with the youth in a discussion, interview, experiment, etc. According to the study results, not only did the TIP students gain academic benefits over the control group, but had significant emotional gains as well, especially those who remained in the study for its duration. Academic gains included notably higher standardized test scores, while emotional gains involved increases in motivation and significantly more positive attitudes.

Another related study involving middle school students found the benefits of parental homework help (Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner, 2010). The researchers analyzed the 5th grade data of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, kindergarten class of 1998–1999 (ECLS-K), to determine if there was a relationship between parental involvement, self-regulated learning (SRL), and reading achievement.

The process of SRL was described and measured as self-motivation, self-control, and self-reaction/evaluation. To conduct the analysis, yes/no items were reverse coded so that the high score represented a high level of parental involvement. The results of this study suggested that both parent involvement and school involvement in academic areas (home and school) contributed to positive student outcomes.

To measure SRL, the authors analyzed seven parental involvement variables and seven teacher rated variables. The parent variables were: (a) parent—child communication, (b) school involvement, (c) TV viewing rules, (d) homework help, (e) homework frequency, (f) parental education expectations, and (g) extracurricular activities. The teacher dimensions or variables were how often the youth demonstrated the following skills: (a) attentiveness, (b) task persistence, (c) eagerness to learn, (d) learning independence, (e) flexibility, (f) organization, and (g) following classroom rules. The actual items on the scale were scored using a 4-point Likert scale which had the following categories: 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often. As such, the scores for the seven items were averaged to calculate a scaled score. According to the authors, the split-half reliability for the scale score was .91, which indicates a high degree of internal consistency.

The reading achievement score designed to rate the youth's language and literacy skills was assessed through an Item Response Theory (IRT) of 5th grade scale scores on reading. The reading measured proficiency levels on literal inference (making inferences using cues in text), extrapolation (identifying clues used to make inferences), evaluation (demonstrating understanding of author's craft and making connections between similar life problems), and evaluating non-fiction (comprehending biographical and expository

text). Interestingly, the reliability alpha for the reading IRT scores was .93, which, according to Tourangeau et al. (2004), showed a high degree of internal consistency of the scale

After examining the 5th grade data of the ECLS-K data, Xu et al. (2010) found that parental communication of expectations, school involvement, and homework help had stronger effects on self-regulated learning and ultimately pointed to the positive relationship to reading achievement. According to Jones (2001), a proponent of parent involvement home programs, direct engagement by parents on learning activities such as reading, is the most effective involvement parents can offer. Parents engaged in working directly with their children on teacher-provided learning activities in the home, was key. Jones cited the Sanders, Epstein and Connors-Tadros (1999) study of 423 parents from six high schools, which identified that such practices improved parental and student attitudes and engagement around positive family relationships about education and homeschool partnerships.

An abundance of literature demonstrates that proactive home learning activities by parents are beneficial. Researchers like Shure (2001) and Cooper et al. (1998) demonstrated that home practice by parents including parent reinforcement strategies and ongoing instructional help, had far-reaching benefits. There is a notable amount of literature demonstrating that the use of other home-learning techniques, such as parents teaching their youth cognitive strategies (self-monitoring), was very helpful. This is particularly true if the youth is challenged with problems that affect learning, such as ADHD (Kim, Park, & Baek, 2009; Williams, Blyth, White, Li, Gardner, & Sternberg, 2002; Wood, Masui, Chris, De Corte, & Erik, 1999; Wood et al., 2002). Mohlman and

Gorman's (2005) and Masui and De Corte's (1999) studies used student self-monitoring as a key component of retention and reinforcement strategies.

Wang and Lin (2005) conducted a comparative study to analyze differences in parental involvement in China as compared to the United States. They examined the higher mathematics achievement of Chinese students' versus U.S. students, and related the higher Chinese achievement to more parent involvement in the learning process. According to the authors, Chinese parents placed a higher value on education, which translates to higher expectations and increased involvement by parents. The Chinese parents spent significantly more time in home-teaching and coaching by engaging and assisting their youth with homework and other tasks related to math learning, including systematic practice lessons and prescriptive instructional strategies. Even when the researchers looked at Chinese families living in the United States, they found similar parental involvement with similar results, including higher math performance in school by the youth.

Parental Involvement in Middle School

At the middle school stage, youth are trying to resolve issues related to their own identity, and may even seek separation from parent. While parents want to get closer, their children are moving in another direction. Davis and Lambie (2005) studied the reasons why parents withdrew and found that it had little to do with the students' actual need, but more to do with the time of life where youth became more engaged and interested in their peer relationships and their priorities outside the family. Moreover, middle schools tend to have limited programs and activities that encouraged parent involvement, which discouraged parental involvement and lacked invitation.

Interestingly, the authors found that middle school was a time when parental involvement was just as important for positive academic outcomes as when the youth were in elementary school.

Parent Involvement for Youth With ADHD

Many authors, when looking at parental involvement, analyzed the various types of involvement, which this researcher reviewed in the parent involvement model section. However, when Rogers et al., (2009) studied parental style the findings were interesting. The relationship and influence of parental self-efficacy, specifically among families coping with ADHD, may be relative. Rogers et al. looked at 101 parents, approximately half were parents of children with ADHD and half were parents of children without ADHD. The male parents of children with ADHD reported little involvement, other than disciplinary, in contrast to male parents of the children without ADHD. Additionally, the female parents of youth without ADHD were equally involved while the female parents of youth with ADHD reported a feeling of defeat, since they believed they did not make a significant difference in their youth's academics. Studies (Barkley, 2006; Langberg et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2005) have identified that youth with ADHD have unique needs when it comes to school tasks. This uniqueness needs to be addressed in a customized way, in order to reduce the risk of school failure. Barkley (2006), Langberg et al. (2008), and Evans et al. (2005) clearly noted that youth with ADHD have transitional problems when moving from elementary to middle school, and needed more recognition and support to successfully survive this change, and the increased requirements. According to Evans et al., the transition to middle school was associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms, likely due to increased demands and a heavier workload. Further,

most of these youth have significant difficulties with homework (Brown, 2007) and parental help is necessary.

Parent models for ADHD youth may need to resemble successful coaching models of brain-injured patients, who have similar deficits with executive skills (attention deficits, sustained focus, memory, planning, organization, task initiation, and time-management). Levine et al. (2000) developed goal management training, which is similar to goal-directed rehabilitation, introduced by Manly, Hawkins, Evans, Woldt, and Robertson (2002). Both research teams discussed and demonstrated how effective programs teach skills prefaced and coupled with goals that have built in tasks, cueing or self-monitoring, and motivational elements.

Fish et al. (2007) studied 20 brain-injured patients and worked with them to rehabilitate various executive skills such as planning, self-monitoring, inhibiting behaviors, and managing their attention. The first step was to teach the participants cueing, a type of self-monitoring, so that they could see and understand the text message that would be the patients' periodic reminder to initiate the task of the phone call. For three weeks, the patients were directed to make four phone calls to voicemail each day. Fish et al. concluded that a self-monitoring system (cueing messages) would generate an action, which in this case, was making the phone call to the voicemail. The days that the cueing occurred, the participants' goal management was expedited with good accuracy. It is important to note that in this study, cueing was simple and free of extraneous information. Thus, the cueing led to follow through (goal management) for the participants. There is a possibility that goal-management and goal directed approach by parents is a way of teaching self-monitoring skills.

According to Dawson and Guare (2004), the challenges of poor attention and disorganization of youth with ADHD often push many parents to develop support systems outside of school, such as home tutoring and parental involvement with school tasks like homework. In fact, Brown (2007) insisted that most middle school ADHD youth have significant difficulties with homework and parental help was necessary.

Murray, Rabiner, Schulte, and Newitt (2008) randomly assigned children in elementary school and compared them to a group of children with ADHD. The goal was to determine if there was an increase in the effectiveness of keeping a daily report card (DRC), considered the intervention. The parents were included in the use of the DRC used to monitor desired classroom behavior and organization; teachers scored the DRC. Through the DRC, a reward system helped to motivate the student and connect the parents with the student and the teacher. The teacher subsequently measured academic progress with the DRC. This report card helped with behavioral distractions and inattentiveness. In this evidence-based study, Murray et al. sampled 24 students. With a daily report, youth with ADHD were rated by teachers on organization, attention, work completion, and staying on task. The DRC's were sent home every day so the parents were involved in the progress. The encouragement of the home-school connection initiative and the active participation of parents were accomplished. The children who were given the DRC showed significant improvement in their academic skills and achievement, unlike the children whose parents were not part of the parent-teacher consultation portion of the program.

Parent Involvement Models

Parent involvement in education and engagement in academic achievement is a

multidimensional construct (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Anderson and Minke (2007) revealed that educators and parents defined involvement in different ways. Anderson and Minke identified variations in parent perceptions and the way they thought about involvement in their adolescent's middle school was different than when their youth was in elementary school. Parents thought of their involvement in home support as participation, while teachers thought of their involvement as a parental presence at the school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Other models of parent involvement included Springate and Stegelin's three-model description: (a) the protective model, which separates the functions of home and school through various responsibilities that are relegated to school, such as the complete education of a student; (b) the school-to-home model which involves the idea of home-school collaboration and the belief that parents support the values and objectives of the school; and (c) the curriculum-enrichment model where both parents and teachers are viewed as critical resources and educational providers working together to enhance student outcomes.

Parental self-efficacy as it related to parental involvement was researched by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues since 1995. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) developed a model known as the Hoover-Dempsey Sandler model (HDS model) of parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2001), Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002), Walker et al. (2004), and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) noted that self-efficacy was one of the three most significant factors in a parent's decision to get involved in their youth's education and home learning.

Fulton and Turner (2007) studied parent involvement relative to perceptions of parenting and students' academic success and motivation. This study evaluated 245 college students from ages 17 to 22 from the southeast. A 60-item questionnaire measuring the youth's and parental perceptions was utilized. The youth's questions were related to parental control (self-beliefs and school performance), while the parents' questionnaire focused on measuring warmth/involvement, the promotion of independence, and areas of supervision. According to the results, warmth had a positive correlation to academic achievement for both males and females and supervision predicted perceptions of control for females, but not males.

Mo and Singh's (2008) study using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health's "Add Health" data (sample = 1,235 adolescents from grades 7-12), revealed that parent involvement, parent-youth relationship, and student engagement all had significant effects on school success and parents who were most involved, motivated their youth to strong school engagement and positive school outcomes, regardless of gender and ethnicity. Although the school engagement and achievement was different among ethnic populations, the importance of parent involvement and its relationship to positive student outcomes was consistent among all groups. The variables used in this study for parents' relationships consisted of identifying the relationship of increased parental involvement to positive outcomes for youth. The youth answered questions regarding parental involvement in school, parent-child relationship, and parents' educational goals. The variables used in this study for the students' school engagement consisted of a questionnaire related to behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. The data were collected from interviews of youth who had

been selected from school rosters and the parents of each of those youth. The data used from the *Add Health* study were collected from September 1994 to December 1995.

MANOVA was used to identify correlations. Gender and ethnicity were independent variables. Mo and Singh concluded that there was significance in terms of parental relationship and involvement and the youth's school engagement, which subsequently had positive effects on overall school performance. There was no significant difference among female and male students, but there was a significant difference among ethnic groups. Mo and Singh's results highlighted how the continuation of parent involvement in the middle school years was important to student success.

Parent involvement among youth with ADHD has been tied negatively to parental self-efficacy in that, parents of youth with ADHD tend to perceive their role as unimportant and believed that the school lacked interest in engaging them, and helping their youth (Rogers et al., 2009). As such, ADHD youth were especially susceptible to academic failure, due to their academic vulnerabilities as well as the limited or inconsistent parental involvement due to poor parental self-efficacy. This factor of self-efficacy was particularly intriguing because parental self-efficacy has a strong influence on parental decisions especially for parents of children with ADHD. In fact, Rogers et al. (2009) showed that parents of children with ADHD lacked self-efficacy, which influenced their participation in a negative way and led to them not offering assistance. Rogers et al. pointed out that these same parents felt a lack of engagement, encouragement, from their child's school and teacher. In contrast, the parents of children without ADHD, reported high self-efficacy in their ability to make a difference in their child's academic achievement and felt supported by the teacher and school community.

Mayseless, Scharf, and Sholt (2003) conducted a parenting practices study that included 85 Israeli male adolescents, with an average age 17.5, who had mandatory military service. The researchers used questionnaires (parents and the youth) where military adaption and coping skills were compared and used as outcome measures. The researchers found that various parent styles affected the young man's ability to cope with and adapt to the military. The authoritarian style which was "demanding, using power-assertive practices and was low in responsiveness" (p. 428), was not effective, nor was it a style which helped the youth. However, the authoritative parents who, although demanding, were attentive, involved, and warm, developed appropriate expectations. The significant finding from this study was that the authoritative parents' success was very much related to their involvement and appropriate expectations as well as their promotion of independence through teaching their youth skills such as decision-making and responsibility.

Finally, Mo and Singh's 2008research examined parental relationships in terms of parent involvement in schoolwork and effectiveness relative to their middle school youth's academic outcomes. The findings were relevant to academic outcomes. The authors looked at parent engagement and identified that supportive parental engagement positively influenced academic outcomes. The authors concluded that parents were ineffective in influencing increased academic skills and achievement of their youth in school if they used power and demands with an authoritarian approach or the hands-off approach (Mo & Singh, 2008). In contrast, the parenting styles that helped improve school success were the authoritative, assertive, warm, and involved parent. The authors noted the lack of research on middle school families.

Mo and Singh (2008) utilized data collected from the *National Institute of Child Health and Human Development* (NICHD) longitudinal study in 1994-1995 and then again in 1996. This data looked at adolescent health for youth in grades 7^{th} to 12^{th} grades and data on how various influences, such as family and school, affected educational and social behaviors in school. However, Mo and Singh focused their data analysis on the 7^{th} and 8^{th} grade youth (N = 1971). To note, the NICHD funded study collected data on how various influences such as family and school, affected educational and social behaviors in school. After looking at the data, Mo and Singh created three parent involvement/relationship constructs, which included the parents' involvement in the school, the parent-youth relationship and the parents' educational goals for their particular youth. In looking at the relationship of each construct, the authors used a computer program that measured the structural equation, which they called the SEM Model.

Hill and Tyson's (2009) study on the academic socialization model provided a framework for teaching youth academic skills that helped them to problem solve and self-motivate. Some of the skills fostered in Mo and Singh's model included assuring that youth to do their own work. Parents should set their own goals and self-monitoring. Hill and Tyson's meta-analysis, which identified that the *type* of parental involvement was critical to achievement, is consistent with other research. Although this research indicated that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, the caveat was that the involvement should not enable, but rather be involvement that promoted independence and certain autonomous skills such as self-regulated learning (aka self-monitoring) by the youth. Self regulated learning (SRL) is

when a learner consciously controls his or her initiatives and objectives regarding learning behavior, motivation, and cognition (Pintrich, 1995). Hill and Tyson and Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner (2010) determined that middle school was a time when parent involvement should be more about teaching youth self-monitoring, organization skills, and other competencies, to strengthen their ability to develop strong working and academic homework habits. Academic socialization was a model whereby the parent's role, especially in middle school and beyond, was to foster independence and competence so that the student can expand on their skills and grow without being enabled.

Previous research examined factors influencing parental participation was conducted by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995a). Earlier research identified factors such as student motivation, home-school relationships, culture, education level, and parental self-efficacy as influencing parental participation. Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues found that parental involvement in children's learning was a multidimensional construct and developed and utilized the *PIP Parent and Teacher Questionnaires (PIP-PQ and PIP-TQ)* in their research on parental involvement. This instrument is grounded in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of the parental involvement process and was utilized in previous studies, as a semi structured interview in order to explore parental decisions including self-efficacy relative to homework involvement. Previous studies cumulatively included data from 2,150 parents of public elementary and middle school children.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) theoretical model of parental involvement examined the following: (a) parental role constructions, including those that structured

the parent's belief system about their role in their youth's education; (b) parental sense of efficacy as it relates to the idea of feeling competent enough to assist their youth with their schoolwork and ultimate school success; and (c) a parent's perception about being empowered by the school or teacher through such things as invitations, opportunities, and expectations of involvement. As theorized and empirically confirmed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997), these constructs directly related to parental decisions to be involved in youth education. Earlier research identified factors such as student motivation, home-school relationships, culture, education level, and parental self-efficacy as influencing parental participation. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) formulated their HDS model of parent involvement by identifying the factors that influenced parent involvement. They summarized these factors as: (a) Personal Motivators: parental role construction for involvement and parental efficacy, (b) Parent's Perceptions of Invitations to be Involved: general school invitations, specific invitations from teachers, specific requests/invitations from student, and (c) Life Context Variables: parental knowledge and skills, parental time and energy, family culture. According to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model, there are three main areas that are typically in place before a parent makes a positive decision to get involved in their youth's school and/or education. The first was related to self-efficacy in that the parent(s) believed that school involvement is part of their role and their involvement has a positive effect on their youth's academic outcomes. The second area was a form of invitation from the educational institution or teacher. In fact, this factor includes a component whereby the parents believed that the school or teacher saw the value and importance in parental involvement. A third area that was identified as a critical decision-making factor was an

area that often excludes single and/or financially struggling parents, it involved having the time, the skills, and the adequate knowledge to understand how to be part of the academic effort and school partnership. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) theorized that parents who had all three areas in place were more positively involved. Given the empirical support for Hoover-Dempsey's school involvement decision-making model and that parental self-efficacy seemed to enter into decisions to be involved as well as the concern in the literature about the vulnerable self-efficacy of those parents of youth with ADHD, this research further investigated those areas.

After re-creating their model Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) determined that there were facilitators that promoted parent involvement and the types of involvement. The authors intended to understand the reason(s) why parents made certain decisions and the indications of the internal and external variables that were part of their decisions. As such, the first level of their study looked at the parental decision-making variables that caused the impetus to act, such as self-efficacy as well as how much influence the school or teacher invitations had in the involvement, versus internal motivators or belief system for past experiences. The second level looked at the type of behaviors associated with the parents' involvement (e.g., point of monitoring, setting and implementing rules like homework times and locations, or providing more intensive modeling and coaching, like teaching strategies, practicing the skills being learned, providing examples of the skill and re-teaching or pre-teaching for a youth to then develop the skills). For the purposes this study, parental decision and the relationship to self-efficacy was the important focus, and the main reason why further review on literature about types of parental involvement, was not conducted.

Self-Efficacy as Related to Parental Involvement

Throughout the literature, the relevance of self-efficacy was raised as a factor related to parent involvement. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) found that parents often feel powerless about their involvement in schools and she emphasized the importance of authentic communications between parents and teachers for the best interest of youth. She found that a parent's past negative experience(s) of school may "linger like ghosts in the classroom" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, pp. 3 & 4); these past experiences may cause a parent's behavior, to appear apathetic or otherwise uninterested. Lawrence Lightfoot supports the overt effort by schools to create an inviting environment for all. Further, she encouraged educational institutions to respect, take into consideration, and offer practical opportunities for all types of families/parents, including English-language learners, parents with limited vision or hearing, single parents, grandparents, different gender parents, and step and foster parents. The degree to which self-efficacy informs parental decisions of assisting youth with homework is still in question. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process examined, among other things, the parental role constructions, including those that structure the parent's belief system about their role in their youth's education, parental sense of efficacy specifically around the idea of feeling competent enough to assist their youth with their schoolwork and ultimate school success, and, a parent's perception about being empowered by the school, or teacher, through such things as invitations, opportunities, and expectations of involvement. As theorized and empirically confirmed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995a), these constructs directly relate to parental decisions to be involved in youth education. Regarding actual participation by parents, Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, and

Sandler (2005) identified student motivation as well as home-school relationships, culture, education level, and parental self-efficacy as influencing parental participation. However, parental self-efficacy seemed to be a driving force influenced by home-school relationships, culture, and education level.

Singh, Mbokodi, and Msila (2004) conducted a study in South Africa and found a relationship between parent involvement and self-efficacy. If parents had poor literacy and/or limited education, they were less likely to participate because they didn't feel they could make a difference. This was especially true if there were no forms of encouragement such as a school support program that would motivate and provide realistic opportunities for parents to become involved. Recent research about parents' past school experiences, including the perception of school atmosphere and the encouragement of participation and communication between home and school, showed a causal relationship to parental self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2001). For example, poor experiences contributed to low efficacy in parents, consistent with Bandura's 1977 self-efficacy theory. Furthermore, the research pointed to parental self-efficacy as a contributing factor in parent involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Shumow & Lomax, 2002; Walker et al. 2005).

According to Bandura (1997), the theorist on self-efficacy, the term connotes the idea that a person holds certain beliefs regarding his/her abilities to accomplish certain tasks or meet specific expectations. Research has shown that there is a notable link between adolescent self-efficacy and motivation to achieve academically (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000), but there is limited research addressing parental self-efficacy and

how that translates to helping the child. Generally, experts identified a strong relationship between self-efficacy and positive academic performance (Zimmerman, 2000), which is aligned with a parent's sense of self and their motivation to help their children succeed academically.

Research showed that parental self-efficacy is critical to the parent's ability and motivation to assist their youth with school tasks. The relationship between parent involvement and self-efficacy has been corroborated in Mbokodi, Singh, and Msila's (2003) study and Singh, Mbokodi, and Msila's (2004) studies showing that when parents had poor literacy and/or limited education, the parents were less likely to participate because they didn't feel they could make a difference. This was especially true if there were no forms of encouragement like a school support or parent outreach program.

Parental Self-Efficacy of Parents With Children With ADHD

Alizadeh, Applequist, and Coolidge (2007) examined the relationship between parental self-confidence, warmth, and involvement, and corporal punishment in families of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in Iran. The researchers identified the experimental group (ADHD youth) through clinical interviews with the parents, children, and teachers, utilizing criteria of the DSM-IV, and the Conners' measurements: the Conners' Parent Rating Scale, and the Conners' Teacher Rating Scale. In the study, the researchers had two groups of Iranian parents. Both groups completed questionnaires measuring parental self-confidence and parenting styles. The results of the study demonstrated that the parents of children with ADHD reported lower self-confidence and less warmth and involvement with their children. In addition, parents of youth with ADHD used corporal punishment significantly more than the parents in the

control group. Results of this study identified that youth with ADHD may be at more risk of parental abuse than youth who do not have ADHD and that parents attitudes influence their decisions. As identified, there is a connection between positive parental attitude and their youth's success including school success (Chinapah et al., 2000).

Mbokodi et al. (2003) insisted that schools can play a role in encouraging and empowering parents to be involved, especially to help the parents who have low self-confidence and poor efficacy. As revealed in their research, many of these parents had limited education and reduced knowledge of the educational system. School systems can provide education, library resources, and access making information and engagement possible. Incidentally, Gonzales et al. (2004) highlighted the relationship between higher educational levels of parents and the achievement scores of their youth. These authors found a clear relationship between parental attitudes about school, parental involvement, and youth attitude and academic outcomes. An educational institution's role in encouraging and even providing help to parents in the form of knowledge, empowerment, and even education was suggested, because positive parental attitude, parent involvement and home-school collaboration has been linked to positive academic outcomes for children and youth (Chinapah et al., 2000).

Fan and Williams (2010) examined the effects of parental involvement on self-efficacy using the data collected from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS 2002) on 10th grade students. In this study, parent involvement was measured with eight variables: (a) parental aspirations for students' postsecondary education; (b) parents' participation in school functions; (c) family rules reflecting parental home supervision; (d) parental advising; (e) parental participation in extracurricular activities; (f) parent-

school communication; (g) school-initiated contact; and (h) parent-initiated contact. Student academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, engagement, socio-economic status, and gender were measured. The SAS 9.2 statistical program was utilized to conduct a regression analysis of 15,325 students and the results revealed that there were certain dimensions of parental involvement that linked to students' engagement in academic activities, self-efficacy, and motivation in academics. Generally, there was a positive correlation between parental involvement and youth's school success.

Summary

Youth populations who demonstrate academic vulnerability in the school setting and who may particularly benefit from parental involvement in their education, are students with ADHD (Barkley, 2006; DeShazo et al., 2002; Frazier et al., 2007). Yet, parental self-efficacy can influence parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Further, there is evidence that parents' of youth with ADHD may struggle with a positive attitude and warmth toward their youth (Chinapah et al., 2000), as well as lack efficacy with regards to making a difference with homework help for their youth (Rogers, Wiener, Martin, & Tannock, 2009). Brown (2006) pointed out that there is a significant body of research that links ADHD to at-risk emotional well-being, school performance, and quality of life. Research has indicated that children with ADHD are notably at-risk of school failure and many have learning problems in addition to their attention problem (Barkley, 2006). The literature reviewed in this chapter covered the significant areas of the study, including the concerns around ADHD and school achievement, the literature about parent involvement in home and school, and its relationship to school success, parental self-efficacy as it relates to past school experiences, as well as the various parent

involvement models. I also covered literature noting parent involvement as it related to both youth with ADHD and parent self-efficacy. This review offered insight into parent self-efficacy concerns as well as the role efficacy plays in a parents' decision to become involved in their youth's home learning.

The information presented in this chapter can be summarized as follows. Although a relationship exists between parental involvement and positive student outcomes as well as a relationship between parental involvement in homework and student success, it was crucial to learn that a parent's self-efficacy is related to assisting their youth with homework. According to the literature, parental self-efficacy often determined if a parent's involvement was going to be realized. However, efficacy and parental involvement was often influenced by past as well as recent school experiences and negative experiences can have a long-lasting effect on a parent's involvement. Negative past experiences can look like a parent is disinterested, but may very well be fear or lack of confidence (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Middle school-age youth with ADHD continue to require parental support with homework, even though typical sameage peers become more academically independent (Barkley 2002; Dawson & Guare 2008b). Therefore, a conscious effort on the part of schools to partner with parents of youth with ADHD and vice versa for the academic success of this risk group is indicated. Certainly, there are different parental involvement models and triggers for being involved with helping their youth with homework, but parent self-efficacy appeared to make a notable difference in whether a parent even attempted to assist their youth. Furthermore, parental self-efficacy determined the type of involvement (active, passive) as well as the effect of the help, given the empirical support from Hoover-Dempsey's school

involvement decision-making model. According to the researchers, parental self-efficacy entered into virtually all decisions to be involved in homework help. The concern is about the vulnerable self-efficacy of parents of youth with ADHD.

This study explored parental self-efficacy and the relationship to effective involvement for middle school ADHD youth. This study investigated untapped research topics about this population in terms of parental homework involvement. The relevance of parental self-efficacy in relation to parental involvement and the importance of parental involvement for positive school outcomes for youth made this study a particularly important undertaking. Through this study a broader understanding of ADHD parents' understanding, experiences, decisions, and involvement were explored. The experiences of middle school parents of students with ADHD needed to be discussed more thoroughly in available literature. This research attempted to better understand middle school students' parents and their experiences with homework help, thereby provided insight into parental involvement with home learning.

Reviewed literature indicated that parental input, insight, and perspective was critical to understanding parental self-efficacy and necessary to the research in order to understand the factors in engaging parents in home learning. This was especially true for the ADHD population in middle school, due to the school failure risk factors (Brown, 2007) and the relative benefits of parental partnerships in home learning (Crotty, 2000). This study utilized a qualitative method to assist in understanding parental experiences relative to their own self-efficacy in helping with homework. The next chapter provided information on how this study was performed, how the participants were identified, the questions that were asked, and how the information was organized and analyzed.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of parents' decision making regarding participation in school tasks, such as homework completion, for middle school youth with ADHD, as well as how decision making related to parental self-efficacy. The study explored how self-efficacy related to parental decision making. This chapter outlined the qualitative methods and research design used in understanding parental experiences around self-efficacy relative to decision making about homework help for middle school youth with ADHD. Self-efficacy was chosen as a focal point because, according to the Hoover-Dempsey model of the parental involvement process, which identifies three primary factors that influence parents' decisions to become involved, Personal Motivators (parent role construction for involvement and parental efficacy for helping their youth succeed in school) were paramount and in the top three factors of involvement that were considered most important (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005). i. Additionally, this chapter provided an overview of specific processes, such as procedures for ethical protection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and verification of findings, were managed.

In that this study explored self-efficacy and how it relates to parental decision making, a case study method was used to analyze parental self-efficacy and its relationship to parental decisions about participation in school-related tasks. Interviewing parents with open-ended questions provided rich detail and content concerning participants' meaningful experiences. Using interpretive content analysis based on the interviews was critical because the goal of qualitative research is to uncover themes,

patterns, understandings, and conceptual links, as well as to understand underlying processes (Patton, 2002). To achieve triangulation, a focus group was used to generate information from practitioners on the subject of involvement of parents of youth with ADHD. The foundational theory for the study was the self-efficacy theory developed by Bandura (1977, 1997). In linking to this framework, a better understanding of the efficacy of parents and their experiences and decisions related to participation in the education of their ADHD youth was achieved. Bandura's model had a direct relationship to this study, providing a perspective and framework. For example, as described in Chapter 1, Bandura (1977) theorized that self-efficacy involves positive self-esteem, coping strength, and persistence toward goals. This idea is important in gaining a better understanding of how parents' sense of self-efficacy influences their decision making; thus, it formed the essence of the interview questions used to get at the parents' experiences. In terms of qualitative research, it was important to inquire into and examine parents' understanding and attitudes about homework help, as well as their perspectives on involvement decisions and factors relative to self-efficacy. A parent's attitude, confidence level, and inner beliefs may be understood through a qualitative study. Parents create their own understanding of the home-school partnership, their role and relationship with their youth, and their experiences. As such, a qualitative study allowed me to gain an understanding of the perspective of each participant. In this study, I looked more closely at what the parents of youth with ADHD said about the experience of living with a child with ADHD through interviews; this helped in clarifying the actual difficulties and experiences of participants at a personal level.

Self-referred parents of middle school youth with ADHD at a clinic in Weston, Florida, were the subjects of this study.

Research Questions

The major research query in this study was whether parental self-efficacy has an impact on parents' motivation and attempt to assist their youth with home-school tasks such as homework. In addition, I sought to understand to what extent parental self-efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in youths' school tasks. The following interview questions were asked of each parent in the study (Appendix B):

- 1. What are your past and current experiences assisting your child with homework and studying responsibilities? In what ways has this assistance influenced his/her academic outcome?
- 2. From a parent's perspective, what influenced your decision about involvement in your youth's schoolwork with specific regard to homework and studying?
 Describe your experiences.
- 3. How would you describe your confidence in your ability to help your youth as impacting the decisions (a) to get involved in helping your child with homework and (b) to participate at the level you chose?
- 4. As a parent of a middle school youth, can you discuss your encounters and communications with the middle school around your involvement with your youth's home studies/homework?

In addition to the parent questions, the following questions were asked of the focus group (Appendix H):

- In your opinion, regarding homework and studying, what can parents do to positively influence their youth's academic achievement? What kinds of things does your school do to partner with parents in order for them to get involved effectively with home tasks? What, if any, are the differences in the school approach and offerings, among parents of typical youth versus parents of youth with attention problems/ADHD? How do you think these school behaviors affect the efficacy of parents to partner with the school in order to positively influence their youth's academic achievement?
- Discuss your specific experiences with parent involvement in your middle school.
- Explain how your middle school reaches out to parents. Please discuss any services, programs, or initiatives that encourage parent partnership and participation, especially relative to homework and studying tasks.
- Think about the behaviors, school climate, and other factors (e.g., cultural factors) in your school community that may influence parental school involvement. Please discuss.
- In your experience, how do you think these factors affect the efficacy and decision of a parent of a typical youth to become involved with helping the youth with homework and studying? Now, discuss these factors and parental efficacy and decision making relative to parents of youth with ADHD. What are the differences (if any)?

- Discuss how, as a middle school psychologist, you understand parental selfefficacy and how a parent's sense of efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in a youth's school-related tasks.
- Tell me about your thoughts relative to parental self-efficacy and in what ways parental efficacy might have an impact on a parent's motivation to assist a youth with home-school tasks like homework. How do you think parents' efficacy may differ if they have youth with attention problems/ADHD versus typically developing students?

Research Methodology

The qualitative methodology was selected to study parental self-efficacy in the decision to assist middle school youth diagnosed with ADHD with their homework because this approach uses a wide- and deep-angle lens to examine human choice and behavior.

Creswell (2013) described the use of qualitative studies as important because variables are not easily identified. I examined how the self-efficacy of parents of middle school youth with ADHD affected their involvement with their students' studying and homework completion using specific markers, such as contemplation, confidence, motivation, decision making, and action. Parental input, insight, and perspective were critical and necessary to the research, as I sought to understand the factors important for engaging parents in home learning, especially for ADHD youth (Brown, 2007). In light of this, I chose a case study approach.

Research Design

Case study, the qualitative research design approach chosen for this study, centered on descriptive analysis of each of the seven cases. Case study is a preferred reporting format for naturalistic inquiries intended to gather data that may be generalized into the larger setting of society (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Merriam (1998), descriptive case study is beneficial for research whose purpose is to illustrate the complexities of a particular case, detailing multiple factors that have contributed to current relationships and offering the potential for capturing the meaning of perceptions. The case study method is increasingly being used in qualitative research as a rigorous research strategy (Hartley, 2004). In case study research, the researcher provides a detailed account of one or more cases with the plan to address and explore, and thus describe and explain (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). This is consistent with what I set out to do. I chose case study research because a case study allowed more variability, and the cases would generalize to the population of ADHD youth in middle school. Yin (2009), a recognized leader in case study methods, suggested that a case study method allows for the description of real-life context in a causal chain that will likely identify constructs and create clarity when results are not particularly clear. I considered ethnography, but because it focuses on some aspect of a culture, it was not appropriate for this study, in which I was not looking at a specific cultural group. Likewise, grounded theory, which focuses on the development of an explanatory theory, was not appropriate. A case study approach fit well with my research because, as Yin (1994) pointed out, all pure case studies focus on each case as a whole unit, and case study research is holistic and has real-life context. Even though my focus was on a few single cases, other parents as well

as school administration and staff will be able to learn from my analysis and findings based on their experiences. I interpreted history and built a logical argument around an explanation of the data I collected from parents. Relative to the validity of the findings, I used bracketing, which allowed me to set aside my own views about the topic during my interpretation so that I could accomplish objectivity, as Gearing (2004) recommended.

After I examined, in detail, the personal, social, and past as well as present school/academic experiences of the parents in my research, I was able to conduct cross-case comparisons, identifying similarities and differences. For my case studies, I examined the experiences and self-efficacy of parents of middle school youth with ADHD, and specifically their decisions about school involvement, in regard to assisting their children with studying and homework. Through this inquiry, I set out to derive meaning from the experiences around decision making and self-efficacy of the parents studied. I used open-ended semi structured interviews that examined the past and present experiences of the parents. Because there is little research on actual parental self-efficacy and decisions around homework help for youth within middle school families (vs. elementary school families), my research has the ability to generate a conversation involving middle schools and parents about parental participation in homework and home study for youth with ADHD.

Study Participants and Selection Process

According to Lichtman (2006), the goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand rather than generalize; as a result, there is no specific number of participants that must be studied. In addition, Lichtman stated that the majority of qualitative research studies use a small number of participants; often fewer than 10 participants are studied.

For this study, a sample of seven participants was ultimately selected from the parents identified as meeting the criteria.

Participants included eight parents of middle school children selected from a criterion-based logic sample using a convenient (purposeful) sample. The goal was to derive information-rich cases for my in-depth study. With attrition, I completed seven cases. Criterion sampling, according to Patton (2001), involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (p. 238). A criterion sampling allows a researcher to choose all cases that meet some criterion, which, in the case of this study, was being a parent (one per family) of a middle-school-age youth with ADHD. Criterion sampling was useful for me in identifying and understanding cases that were informationrich and provided an important qualitative component to quantitative data. Locating parents of youth specifically diagnosed with ADHD in middle school was not a barrier because the clinic (community partner) that provided the letters of invitation in their lobby was a clinic whose primary clients were youth with ADHD. The target population for the study was parents of middle school youth who received services and/or evaluations at this clinic for attention deficit(s) and related school issues. The clinic placed letters of invitation in its waiting room area with a phone number to reach me, the student researcher. As potential volunteers came forward, I discussed the nature of the study and explained their right to withdraw from the study. Privacy of the parents was respected by assigning numbers to each participant. Discussing the study with parents provided an avenue to identify appropriate candidates and served as a catalyst to participation. Interested parents were identified, and they provided contact information to begin the interview process. A letter describing the study was provided to the clinic for

potential volunteers along with a community partner letter, which was signed by the executive director of the clinic. These letters can be found in the appendices.

Participant Selection Process

I used single-subject research with a case study approach. Participants included a criterion sample of eight families (one parent participant from each family) that was identified via the clinic through a self-referral process. A letter of participation from the community partner—the clinic's director—was obtained. I screened the participants for willingness to participate after outlining the process and discussing the informed consent content and criteria. To obtain the seven parent participants, I screened eight middle school parent volunteers of youth with attention problems/ADHD. The letter of invitation was provided by me and placed in a display in the waiting room of the clinic. Once the sampling of parents was established, I used interview questions, which were open ended in nature, to explore parental involvement decisions. I noted participants' body language, attending to their spoken and unspoken responses, as I sought their rendition of and perspective on their experiences and self-efficacy. For triangulation, the use of a focus group was established. This focus group allowed for a second data collection method. This group consisted of three school psychologists responsible for middle school students. The group was chosen because of their common characteristics which were school psychologists working in a middle school. I recruited the focus group participants from colleagues at the state professional organization. The focus group was an hour-anda-half-long interactive session held at a practice conference room. Additionally, I provided my own school psychologist perspective and anecdotal information on my experiences with working with parents of students with ADHD.

The following focus group questions were asked of the group of school psychologists, and discussion was encouraged:

- In your opinion, regarding homework and studying, what can parents do to positively influence their youth's academic achievement? What kinds of things does your school do to partner with parents in order for them to get involved effectively with home tasks? What, if any, are the differences in the school approach and offerings for parents of typical youth versus parents of youth with attention problems/ADHD? How do you think these school behaviors affect the efficacy of parents to partner with the school in order to positively influence their youth's academic achievement?
- Discuss your specific experiences with parent involvement in your middle school.
- Explain how your middle school reaches out to parents. Please discuss any services, programs, or initiatives that encourage parent partnership and participation, especially relative to homework and studying tasks.
- Think about the behaviors, school climate, and other factors (e.g., cultural factors) in your school community that may influence parental school involvement. Please discuss.
- In your experience, how do you think these factors affect the efficacy and decision of parents of typical youth to become involved with helping their youth with homework and studying? Now, discuss these factors and parental efficacy and decision making relative to parents of youth with ADHD. What are the differences (if any)?

- Discuss how, as a middle school psychologist, you understand parental selfefficacy and how a parent's sense of efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in their youth's school-related tasks.
- Tell me about your thoughts relative to parental self-efficacy and in what ways parental efficacy might have an impact on a parent's motivation to assist their youth with home-school tasks such as homework. How do you think parents' efficacy may differ if they have youth with attention problems/ADHD versus typically developing students?

Instrument for Measuring Parent Participation

To do this research and conduct this study, the following interview questions were asked of each parent in the study:

- What are your past and current experiences assisting your child with homework and studying responsibilities? In what ways has this assistance influenced his/her academic outcome?
- From a parent's perspective, what influenced your decision about involvement in your youth's schoolwork with specific regard to homework and studying?
 Describe your experiences.
- How would you describe your confidence in your ability to help your youth impact the following decisions: a) to get involved in helping your child with homework b) to participate at the level you chose?

Tell me about your experience with educational institution(s), in terms of home-school collaboration / communication around studying and homework?

Procedures

I used observation, interviews, discussion, and collecting text as methods of interaction with parents and the participants of the focus group in the study. I analyzed the natural conversation. To do this effectively required the use of certain data collection methods of systematic procedures for gathering meaning from the qualitative information. Information gathering for the study involved an inductive and interactive process with the parents and the school psychologist participants of the focus group. There was a manual analysis of the data with an open coding process in order to code the parental responses obtained through interviews and the comments and discussions derived from the focus group. Then, I conducted a manual process to convert qualitative information into numerical data for analysis. Theory building employing axial coding to disaggregate core themes to identify how the parents' responses relate to one another and how the focus group responses relate to one another was the process; the responses of both groups were compared and contrasted which was important for validating responses. Finally, the use of selective coding was utilized to develop themes. The following procedures serve as a sequential guide to recruit and inform participants, collect and analyze data, and validate findings. There was one face-to-face interview with one parent of 7 middle school youth with ADHD. Within a two-week period of the first interview, there was a phone interview for clarification as needed and to address any additional questions or comments that arose. Prior to the individual face to face interview, each participant was given a copy of the letter describing the study and signed the Consent Form regarding the subject of efficacy and homework help for their middle school youth. The interview allowed obtaining the parents' historical perspective of the ADHD

problem as it related to their youth's school experiences especially with regards to homework as well as historical data on the parents' involvement with a school partnership or in-home schoolwork and included asking the open-ended questions listed in the Appendix B.

A Ph.D. level individual with experience in qualitative research assisted in validating themes extracted from notes from a 5-7 page sample of material I coded, to assess interrater reliability, as a way of validating my coding approach. Credentials were confirmed to ensure the individual had the capacity to perform the validation procedure. The person selected to participate in the validation procedure adhered to the ethical protection of participants previously identified in this proposal, including signing a confidentiality agreement and adhering to IRB requirements.

Steps for Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was conducted to select the participants for this study.

Creswell (2003) maintained that in qualitative research participants who can best help the researcher understand the research questions should be purposefully selected. The participants for this study were parents who have pursued services from the Clinic in South Florida including testing, tutoring or other offerings, for their middle school youth, who have been diagnosed with an attention problem/ADHD. Self-referred parents who met the criteria were identified and had an invitation for participation from the waiting room of the clinic. According to Lichtman (2006), the goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand rather than generalize; as a result, there is no specific number of participants that must be studied. Participant selection included the following:

Contacted the clinic to provide information about the study and display the letters of invitation in the clinic waiting area. Willing participants, who were parents of middle school youth with attention problems/ADHD, as described in the letter, came forward and contacted me from the contact information on the letter of invitation. I subsequently spoke to each prospective parent volunteer over the phone detailing the nature of the study and reiterated the criteria of being a parent of a middle school youth with attention problems/ADHD. During the phone screening, the prospective participants' gave me their contact information. Once the contact had occurred and the seven parents agreed to participate, the first interview in the study process was scheduled with the identified parents. Subsequent to his/her agreement, a consent form was signed. During the parent interview, I received a brief history of the youth's medical (ADHD)/ behavioral/academic problems and proceeded to the interview questions as described above. A follow-up telephone was completed within two weeks of the first interview. At this meeting/call, it was important to clarify information as well as give the parent participant the opportunity to add or edit information that was provided in the first interview.

The focus group participants were recruited from volunteers who were school psychologists' in middle schools in Florida and who belong to the state professional organization that I am part of. These volunteers were chosen based on being practicing middle school psychologists. Since the focus group session was held at a clinic in the Miami area, the volunteers agreed to be available to get to the location as well as sign an informed consent, as they did.

Ethical Protection of Participants

The study was properly designed and carried out by this researcher with respect to the rights of the participants and the identity of the parents with an informed consent. I took steps to protect their youth's confidential information and the proper steps in storing of the records. The parents were free to choose whether, or not, to participate. The study was properly designed and carried out by this researcher with adequate levels of supervision. I respected rights and did not do any work until the proposal had been approved by the IRB. In terms of ethics regarding the population sample, protecting their youth's information and the confidential reading and storing of the records — precautions were taken. Each member completed a consent form with explanation and confidentiality verbiage, approved by IRB. Files, notes, and forms (e.g., informed consent) were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. Only the researcher and those selected to assist in validating results had access to the material. Identifying information was removed from the files and notes, prior to data validation. Copies of the Informed Consent and Statement of Confidentiality are located in Appendix C.

Data Collection

This researcher developed semi structured interview protocols (Appendices E & F) using open-ended questions to guide parent participants in to describe their experiences with their youth's homework and study tasks as well as to query school psychologists about their experiences with parents and the school when it relates to parent involvement decisions and efficacy. A semi structured interview protocol uses predetermined key themes and questions to provide a sense of order; however, does not prevent the researcher from asking additional questions and probing deeper into a

particular experience (David & Sutton, 2004). The order allowed me to obtain data across participants (Gall et al., 2007), which facilitated probing deep into the research questions concerning the commonalities and differences among the experiences of parents of middle school youth with ADHD and their homework completion.

Data was collected through a series of parental interviews and a focus group with middle school psychologists. For each parent, one interview occurred face to face with a follow up telephone interview for clarification or additional information as needed. Each interview was an hour. The first interview involved building rapport, signing the consent form and focused on the background of the participant with the intent to put the participant's experiences in context and covered the semi structured interview questions.. This interview process served to learn about parent's experiences in helping their youth with homework, efficacy and decision-making around assisting their youth with homework and studying. Information gathered during the first interview provided insight into the type of home structure and attitudes about school that existed when the youth was a child as well as recent experiences as a parent. In addition, the interview provided a better understanding of the context in which the student experienced school in the transition year (6th grade). By asking the focused questions, the researcher is more intimately connected to the interview development through a process called the "interview of the interpretive researcher" (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008), which the authors describe as a modern type of debriefing interview in qualitative research. The authors also see this debriefing exercise as enhancing reflexivity through a thorough examination of the biases of the researcher. The interview was conducted in a location selected by the participant that is free from distraction and ensures privacy. I took notes

during each interview, to include the important information, concepts, and feelings of the participants. It was important to collect rich narrative data through in depth interviews with parents and this was done through building the essence of participants' experience as they expressed their involvement with school communication and their participation in their youth's homework.

The second interview, by phone, was used for clarification and to offer the participants an opportunity to add additional thoughts, experiences and recollections that were not expressed during the first interview.

As identified above, the focus group was the additional academic research method where I generated information from practitioners, who collectively provided a unique perspective on the subject of efficacy and decisions of involvement by parents of youth with ADHD. I gathered a small group of school psychologists who worked in a middle school environment for this semi structured focus group. Although the expectation was five, I ended up with only three participants. Even so, a group process allows for exploration and clarification of the various points of view, which was obtained among this group. Methodologically, focus group interviews assess elements that other methods may not be able to garner and effectively and typically involve 5-8 individuals who have similar experiences and concerns (Liamputong 2011). As Stewart et al (2009) noted, discussion between participants occurred, after pointed and thoughtful responses. Each school psychologist shared lived experiences and conversed on the topic at hand – parental efficacy as well as their perspective on the relationship between the parents and the school with regards to parental involvement. As such, the questions did generate the discussions and I, as the researcher, had the opportunity to see the school psychologists'

perspective relative to the parents and compare for validating data. As the moderator, I asked a series of questions to uncover the school psychologists' experiences relative to working with parents of youth with ADHD and their perspective about parents' efficacy and decision-making around helping their youth with homework and study skills. The focus group allowed me to draw upon the respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and experiences and enabled me to collect a substantial amount of information in a short period of time. As the moderator, I encouraged interaction between group members, by promoting debate, such as by asking open-ended questions and encouraging discussion. The information and experiences derived from this focus group helped in the comparison of what I had heard from the parents but found some discrepancies versus corroboration relative to parental perceptions. Instead, there was shown some divergence.

In this way, I was able to explore the gaps between what people say and their actions and it allowed me to get closer to the data.

Data Analysis

I used an inductive process to understand the data collected from parents, categorized the data into various themes, and uncovered relationships and links of interconnected thoughts. An inductive process allowed me to analyze the collected data, locate patterns and similarities, and subsequently condense the raw text data into a brief summary format. In addition, this allowed me to develop a model about the underlying structure of experiences of the parents. I conducted an inductive coding process, and identified patterns in the data and established categories by which the remaining data was coded. That allowed for the discovery of patterns, similarities and contrasts regarding

self-efficacy and the decision-making process of involvement as well as other themes that emerged.

Prior to each interview this researcher recorded in writing any preconceived beliefs related to the topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs (van Manen, 1997). Bracketing any preconceived feelings or beliefs will allow this researcher to approach data collection and analysis non-judgmentally. Additionally, prior to each interview, the participant and I read and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). Each interview was recorded by note-taking, by using a notebook. These written recordings of the interviews provided complete verbal records, and prevented me from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the my biases (Gall et al., 2007). This researcher wrote memos during and after the interviews to record the things this I heard, saw, thought, and experienced while collecting the data. In the memos, the goal is to maintain a balance between descriptive and reflective notes (Groenewald, 2004).

Data was organized by creating and organizing files on the basis of transcribed interviews, as the author Creswell (1998) discusses when preparing data for analysis. Files and recordings have been maintained in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. As the researcher I gathered detailed information from the participants and subsequently categorized the information into themes, categories, patterns, theories, and generalizations. As planned, I selectively coded the meanings of the various interview responses.

The assessment of the various responses was based on a systematic analysis of the perceptions and experiences and central beliefs of the parents. I coded the parents' perceptions of self-efficacy as related to helping their youth succeed in school with homework. It was important to look at behaviors and code them in terms of variables and issues that influence parents' decisions about involvement in their child's education.

The systematic procedures used in getting meaning from the data was critical considering the goals of the study, which include identifying parental roles, experiences, and encounters as well as understanding the subjects' feelings, reaction, experiences, and perceptions, especially in terms of the parents' sense of whether their help and strategies contributed to study skills and completion of homework, and how that sense of efficacy contributed to their ongoing (or not) homework assistance to their youth. Gathering this information was paramount. This involved an inductive and interactive process in that I relied on the parents as important data sources, in order to confirm and even change or expand on certain issues.

Once the data was organized, I obtained an overall understanding of what type of information the data provides. It was important to read each page of notes completely to develop a conceptualization of the information provided. In this process, I began to comprehend and appreciate experiences of the participants (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The goal of the first step is to understand what type of information the data provides. Since qualitative coding is about data retention, my goal was to learn from the data and revisit it until I determine the patterns and explanations. The relevant parts of the coding were coding the experiences of parents that influenced their self-efficacy, such as having their own negative school experiences, or having ADHD themselves. Hand coding was my approach as opposed to using software. In the second step I highlighted and listed statements in the notes that had specific relevance to the phenomenon. Content analysis was used to code the participant's responses. Parent responses were be plotted and

compared. Statements were extracted that exemplified how middle school children and their parents experienced decision-making around schoolwork, and if the parent's confidence about ability to help their youth played into that decision. Statements and units of meaning (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) were extracted and further analyzed. These statements were listed separately and reviewed to reduce the number of items. I utilized coding, sorting, and pattern analysis to generate information.

The next step was to label the statements, specifically those that are significant to the identification and comprehension of the phenomenon. For this study, I labeled meaning units in the form of "psychologically sensitive expressions" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 252). These expressions represented the feelings, emotions, and actions of how the participant experienced the phenomenon. The essential statements were interpreted using psychological meanings concerning the phenomenon.

The final step in analyzing the data involved developing individual and then group descriptions of the experiences. Constructing individual descriptions on what it means to believe they helped their youth with homework completion or if they have poor self-efficacy about their ability to make a difference for their youth as well as construct descriptions for each participant regarding their experience in making decisions to help their youth with homework completion. These individual descriptions were formed by reviewing the psychological expressions and determining which items were related, connected, or establish a theme. These relationships, connections, and themes were grouped as well as synthesized and experiences were revealed.

Trustworthiness

In assuring reliability and validity, qualitative research is focused on data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As such, to attain credibility, triangulation is important. In fact, Creswell (2013) suggested using several methods of data collection including interviews, audiovisual, documentation, and artifacts to capture data that will help to develop a detailed analysis of the problem. The essence of qualitative research is distinctive without specific set of methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is naturalistic because the researcher is observing behavior and responses that are influenced by the physical, sociocultural, and psychological environment (Creswell, 2013). As such, qualitative research embodies an interpretative approach that is focused on exploring phenomena by taking the participants' perspectives and revelations (Flick, 2009). As a researcher, I must be aware that behavior goes beyond what I might observe. That being said, one has to consider the trustworthiness of the data collected and use some strategies to ensure validity especially in the interpretation, in view of potential bias and cultural influences. To confirm the trustworthiness of the information and interpretations gleaned from the interviews in my study, I included strategies that assisted in creating internal validity. This included member checking, triangulation, and reflexivity.

To insure data collection integrity, it was important to reframe questions, repeat questions, and encourage the subject to expand on his or her responses. May (1989) suggested that credibility is also established when interviews or observations are internally consistent.

Triangulation and reflexivity are critical to the quality of research. Triangulation, for ensuring the quality and credibility of the research is another viable method. It means to have the convergence of multiple perspectives for correlating confirmation of data. To minimize the distortion of data as well as interpretation bias, I assessed the triangulated data sources against one another as well as crosscheck data and my interpretation. This was done by comparing multiple parent responses, analyzing and comparing as well as contrasting the discussions of the focus group of middle school psychologists, and sharing my experiences as a school psychologist when working with this population.

Trustworthiness was achieved by the use of three methods: the semi structured interview, participant observation, and life history. I checked for bias and reflexivity by using journaling as well as utilizing of a Ph.D. individual with qualitative research experience who validated themes I extracted, by sampling 5-7 pages of my coding work, which established interrater reliability. I described and interpreted my behavior and experiences throughout the research in a field journal with three types of information, as identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In my journaling, the daily schedule and logistics of the study, a methods log and rationale was included.

The other type of information in my field journal was my self-reflective thoughts, ideas, questions, issues, comments, and hypothesis. In writing these thoughts and feelings about the research process, I became aware of biases and preconceived assumptions, which could in fact, have caused me to adjust the way I collected the data. Verification also consisted of using peer review through the Ph.D. individual identified to look at interrater reliability as noted above, for clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and

having a rich, thick description. Several strategies for the achievement of rigor in qualitative research are useful for both researchers and consumers of research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of self-efficacy on the decisions of parents of youth in middle school with ADHD with respect to assisting their youth with studying and homework. Using the case study method, I framed a strategic set of open-ended questions to examine the relationship between parental involvement and self-efficacy.

My literature review indicated that there is a significant body of research on parental involvement in children's learning processes, including helping with homework (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). However, much of this literature centers on families who have children in elementary school. This gap in the existing literature led me to focus on a particular age group—youth in the middle school years.

For youth with ADHD (Dawson & Guare, 2008; Evans et al., 2005; Langberg et al., 2008), the transition to middle school has been associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms, and the need for increased parental involvement has been indicated.

The current study used semi structured interviews with seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD. In the first section of this chapter, I outlined procedures, data collection, methods of analysis, and other research information, such as description of demographics. Then, the results of the data collection implemented in the study are presented.

I began with a description of the setting of the study and the demographic characteristics of the population. The data collection measures and data analysis

procedures were then detailed within the chapter. Following these descriptions, the research findings are presented. Following these descriptions, the evidence of ethical accountability is discussed, including trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and dependability. The chapter closes with a summary of the most important information presented. I used selective coding to develop themes by identifying the core variable that includes all of the data. Using multiple-case study design facilitated the investigation into the behavior of the parents of middle-school youth with ADHD. The decision to approach this problem using a qualitative approach allowed for the exploration of common themes and differences within and between cases. Five themes were identified through my interviews with the seven case study subjects, from which several sub themes emerged.

For triangulation, a focus group consisting of school psychologists who had experience in middle school met to discuss issues related to their specific experiences with parental involvement in the middle school.

The qualitative methodology allowed for the exploration of common themes and differences within and between cases, which I outline below. I used selective coding to develop themes by identifying the core variable that includes all of the data. For example, one of the themes identified was *communication breakdown*. Core variables that were presented by each of the seven parents, which got me to the theme in the study, included the following:

 Parents were not able to get the teachers to respond to them when their children were struggling. The school administration was not proactive in including the parents' ideas
and input, and it did not take into consideration that parents are partners in
their children's education.

My application of a multiple-case study design facilitated the investigation into the behavior of the parents of middle school youth with ADHD in my study. I was able to interview each parent with anonymity, privately, for over 1 hour and learn about the parent's experiences without any circumstances that would inhibit candid responses. Overriding themes that were consistent across all parents were noted and identified. It was interesting to learn that the behavior of all seven parents was similar when their youth struggled, and that they were not satisfied with the help and support that they received from the school. All of the parents felt they needed to "rescue" their youth in the face of seeing their youth suffer, become overwhelmed, and/or become depressed. They all stated that this was a matter of impulse, instinct, and their youth's survival. In light of this, another theme capturing both the feeling of rescue and confidence to help developed: instinctual parental involvement and confidence.

In all, four themes were identified among the seven parent case studies, in which several subthemes were evident. For triangulation, a focus group consisting of school psychologists who had experience in middle school met to discuss issues related to their specific experiences with parent involvement in the middle school, how their middle school reached out to parents, their understanding of parental self-efficacy and decision making around involvement, and parental self-efficacy and the ways in which it might have an impact on parents' motivation to assist their youth with home-school tasks such

as homework. The research findings are presented, and the chapter closes with a summary of the salient information.

Restatement of Research Questions

I conducted parental interviews and a focus group with school psychologists who worked with this population. Through these sessions, I was able to learn about participants' experiences with their youth and the school during the 6th grade year. The research questions guided this phenomenological study.

The central research question was the following: Does parental self-efficacy have an impact on a parent's motivation and attempt to assist his or her youth with homeschool tasks such as homework? In addition, I sought to answer the following question:

To what extent does parental self-efficacy relate to parental decisions about participation in youths' school-related tasks?

Research Setting

Participants were recruited from a clinic located in Southeast Florida. The interested parent participants, who reviewed a letter of invitation at the clinic, contacted me and agreed to take part in the study, with the first interview being carried out in their home and a second interview being conducted by phone. At the time of data collection, some parents had moved their youth from one middle school (where the youth attended 6th grade) to another school for 7th and 8th grade. Notably, the parent participants did not report any significant personal issues that were ongoing during the time of the interviews. There appeared to be no major external events or conditions that could potentially affect the interpretation of the results of this study.

Research Recruitment

Case study was the qualitative research design I selected. The study was centered on descriptive analysis of each of the seven cases. For this study, a sample of seven participants was ultimately selected from the parents identified as meeting the criteria, elected from a criterion-based logic sample using a convenient (purposeful) sample. The use of criterion sampling allowed me to choose all cases that met the criterion, which was that participants needed to be parents (one per family) of middle-school-age youth with ADHD.

I recruited the parent participants through a community partner—a Southeast Florida-based clinic that specializes in testing and working with children and adolescents with ADHD. The target parents for the study were parents of middle-school youth who received services and/or evaluations at this clinic for attention deficit(s) and related school issues. A letter describing the study was provided to the clinic and potential volunteers. The clinic director allowed a waiting room display with letters of invitation (Appendix A) for parents of youth with ADHD. If interested, potential volunteers were instructed through the letter of invitation to contact me—the researcher—and further discuss participating in the study. This display of letters of invitation included return envelopes as well as my phone number. The staff members who worked at the clinic were not involved in recruiting. Although staff could forward the letter packet to clients, no one from the clinic was part of the recruitment process. The invitation clearly stated that the clinic was not sponsoring or endorsing this study. Further, participants were informed that their involvement was strictly voluntary and confidential.

To reinforce the parents' privacy, clinic staff members were not given any information on who participated in the study. From the display of letters, a sufficient number of appropriate candidates were recruited for a participant pool. I accepted potential participants from those who read the invitation letter and chose to take the initiative to contact me directly. Privacy of the parents was respected by assigning numbers to each participant. Interested parents were identified, and their contact information was provided to me to begin the interview process. The final set of participants consisted of seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD (one parent participant from each family), who volunteered to be interviewed after viewing an invitation displayed in the waiting area of a Southeast Florida-based clinic. A letter of participation from the community partner—the clinic director—was executed per IRB guidelines, making it clear that I was the sole researcher for the study.

Sample Size

The sample size was nine potential study participants. One of the potential participants was excluded due to being a clinic employee and thus ineligible, and another potential participant who contacted me had a youth who was a junior in high school at the time of the study. As such, seven parents were chosen, which ultimately allowed me to reach data saturation with repetition of data.

Data Collection

Participant Recruitment

Case study was the qualitative research design approach I used, as it allowed me to center on descriptive analysis of each of the seven cases. For this study, a sample of

eight participants were ultimately selected from the parents identified as meeting the criteria, but one was lost to attrition, which left me with seven.

Participants included seven parents of middle school children who were selected from a criterion-based logic sample using a convenient (purposeful) sample. Criterion sampling allowed me to choose all cases that met the criterion, which was that participants needed to be parents (one per family) of middle-school-age youth with ADHD. I recruited the parent participants through a community partner, a Southeast Florida clinic that specializes in testing and working with children and adolescents with ADHD. The target parents for the study were parents of middle school youth who received services and/or evaluations at this clinic for attention deficit(s) and related school issues. A letter describing the study was provided to the clinic and potential volunteers; the clinic director allowed a waiting room display with letters of invitation (Appendix A) for parents of youth with ADHD. If interested, potential volunteers were instructed through the letter of invitation to contact me to further discuss participating in the study. This display of letters of invitation included return envelopes as well as my phone number. The employees who worked at the clinic were not involved in recruiting. Staff could forward the letter packet to clients, but no one from the clinic was part of the recruitment process. Within the content of the invitation was a statement that the clinic was not sponsoring or endorsing the study. Further, participants were informed that their involvement would be strictly voluntary and confidential. To reinforce the parents' privacy, clinic staff did not receive any information on who participated in the study.

From that display of letters, a sufficient number of appropriate candidates were recruited for a participant pool. I accepted potential participants from those who read the

invitation letter and chose to take the initiative to contact me directly. Privacy of the parents was respected by assigning numbers to each participant. Interested parents were identified, and these individuals provided their contact information to me to begin the interview process.

Of note, the final set of participants consisted of seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD (one parent participant from each family) who volunteered after viewing an invitation displayed in the waiting area of a Southeast Florida clinic. A letter of participation from the community partner—the director of the clinic—was executed per IRB guidelines, making it clear that I was the sole researcher for the study.

Sample Size

The sample generated from the recruitment process produced nine potential study participants. One of the potential participants who had been recruited worked at the clinic and was thus ineligible, and another potential participant who contacted me had a youth who was a junior in high school at the time of the study. As such, seven parents were chosen, which ultimately allowed me to reach data saturation with repetition of data and no new data received.

Location, Frequency, and Duration

To gather data, I used a confidential and secure location in the home of each participant to conduct each interview. In most cases, the interview took place when the home was empty except for the parent participant. In one case, the interview occurred in a home office of the participant; in another case, the interview took place in a separate, enclosed space to block out other family members who were in the home at the time.

Both were secure, confidential locations. Following each interview, I spent 10 minutes

going over the responses with the parent participant to ensure that I had recorded the information correctly. The staging of the interviews was the same in each of the seven cases. I reiterated the points of confidentiality, the purpose of the study, procedures and possible risks, as well as the voluntary nature of study participation. I supplied informed consent forms, which were signed by the participants and me. I used a notepad with a form with the interview questions on a separate paper.

The duration of the interviews was 60 minutes, as previously agreed, with the possibility of a follow-up phone call to occur 2 weeks later. The follow-up call was set up in order to clarify any information that was not clear and to allow the parent participants to add any related information that they might have omitted at the time of the initial interview. There were no variations to the data gathering process.

Demographics

In reporting the demographics, similar characteristics as well as differences were noted. The sample consisted of seven parents of middle school youth with ADHD. As a condition of eligibility for the study, all of the participants were custodial parents of youth with a diagnosis of ADHD. Participants were both male and female, as were their youth. Detailed demographic information for the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Parent	Race/	Youth's gender	School in 6 th grade (public, parochial, private and	School in 7 th grade+ (public, parochial, private and
participant	gender	and grade	private SPED)	private SPED)
Parent 1 Jamie	Caucasian/female	Male/8 th grade	Parochial	Private SPED
Parent 2 Antonio	Latino/ male	Female/7 th grade	Parochial	Public (with SPED services)
Parent 3 Loretta	Middle Eastern/ female	Female/7 th grade	Public (with SPED services)	Public (with SPED services)
Parent 4 Tasha	African American/ female	Female/6 th grade	Public (with 504 only)	Public (with 504 only)
Parent 5	Caucasian/	Female/8 th grade	Parochial	Parochial
Jeanine	female	E 1 /Oth 1	D : 4	D' (CDED
Parent 6	Caucasian/	Female/8th grade	Private	Private SPED
Rachal Parent 7 Nadia	female Latino/female	Male/7 th grade	Parochial	Private SPED

As stated above, the sample consisted of seven parents of middle school youth who had been identified as having ADHD. Each parent participated in a 1-hour face-to-face interview with a follow-up phone interview 2 weeks later. The parents provided information about their youth's gender, level of education, category of school attended (parochial, public, private, private SPED school, etc.), and current grade.

The parent participants were of both genders, and one parent from each family was interviewed as part of the study, due to availability. Within the sample, three participants had moved their youth after 6th grade from a parochial school to either a private or public school. For all the parents in the study, the transition year for their youth from elementary to middle school (6th grade) was described as an overwhelming year

for both parent and child, when it came to homework and studying. Each parent attempted to obtain special education services and had psycho-educational assessments done to identify special needs and accommodations that could assist their youth. Of the seven parents, five were successful in either obtaining Special Education Services (SPED) in the current school or had their child move to a private school that had a separate SPED school program. One parent was able to have her child receive services under Section 504, which is a legal accommodation plan**, but could not get the school district to offer Special Education (SPED) services, which public schools offer through an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Once deemed eligible, an IEP allows a youth to get individualized instruction and accommodations such as untimed tests, reminders to do homework, cues for redirection, etc. One parent was not able to obtain any additional services for her youth but stayed at the school as she hoped things would become better after the psycho-educational testing and with the extra help and support she was providing her youth.

Participant Biographical Sketches

Parent 1 (Jamie): Jamie was a married mother of three biological children and one stepchild. Her middle school youth with ADHD (male) is the oldest. He was in a parochial school for 6th grade but transitioned to a Private SPED school once in 7th grade.

Parent 2 (Antonio): Antonio was a married father of two children. His middle school youth with ADHD (female) is the younger of the two (7th grade). She was in parochial school for 6th grade and transitioned to a Public School for 7th grade and received SPED services once attending the public school.

Parent 3 (Loretta): Loretta was a married mother of four. Her middle school youth with ADHD (female) is in 7th grade. She also has a diagnosis of high-functioning autism and has been receiving SPED services through an IEP in the public school system for several years. Her place in the family is second from the oldest.

Parent 4 (Tasha): Tasha was a single parent of two. Her middle school youth (oldest) with ADHD (6th grade) was tested in 6th grade but only placed on a 504 accommodation plan even after this parent requested an IEP. However, the school system determined she was only eligible for a 504 plan which is for health disabilities versus an IEP which is for learning disabilities. This parent's youth continues in public school.

Parent 5 (Jeanine): Jeanine was a married parent of two with the youth who has ADHD being the younger. The parent's youth is a female in 8th grade, who has attended a parochial school throughout her school career. The school offers one accommodation which is that she can obtain her notes from a student who is scribing for her.

Parent 6 (Rachal): Rachal is a married mother of two whose youth with ADHD (female) is now in 8th grade. The youth attended private school in 6th grade but transitioned to the private school's SPED school (a separate but connected school) for 7th and 8th grades.

Parent 7 (Nadia): Nadia is a married mother of one 7th grade male youth with ADHD. She had an executive position in health administration prior to having her child. Nadia is a self-described hands-on parent who stated her world is her husband and her two sons. She explained during the first interview, that she believes she has ADHD stating "I have all the symptoms" but "I am not officially diagnosed". Her 7th grader has been diagnosed with ADHD. "He needs so much of my attention that I could not work".

Nadia stated that she spends hours every day teaching and helping her son be successful in school. Her son went from parochial school in 6th grade to the private SPED school in 7th grade.

Data Analysis

Following collecting and confirming the data of the initial interview, I conducted follow-up phone interviews with each parent, to both clarify and confirm for accuracy, as well get any additional information they might want to impart. I then examined the data and organized it for analysis.

Using coding, initially I organized the data by the four open-ended questions, as identified in Chapter three, that were asked of the participants during the interview process. I then began the process of my qualitative analysis by coding words, phrases and sentences. I used symbolical interpretations that assigned a summative, essence-capturing attribute to these codes, as well as began to identify commonalities, differences in experiences as well as themes in the data I then, read and re-read the data, and then organized the data for analysis. Initially I organized the data by the four open-ended questions that were asked of the participants during the interview process. I then began the process of my qualitative inquiry by coding words, phrases and sentences that symbolically assigned a summative, essence-capturing attribute, as well as began to identify commonalities, differences in experiences as well as themes. After the fourth re-read of the notes I created a chart for each participant and re-wrote groupings of statements.

After multiple parsing of the notes, I created a chart for each participant and rewrote groupings of statements. At that time, I obtained over 23 invariant meaning broad statements. Subsequent to that, I identified 14 preliminary groupings of statements and color coded each grouping:

- 1. Home-school collaboration issues
- 2. Homework increase—overwhelming
- 3. Youth's negative response to transition
- 4. Parent to the rescue
- 5. Reteaching and coaching responsibility frustration
- 6. Continued homework challenges (even after extra help/support by parent)
- 7. School encouraged more independence (tools?) and school was more "hands off"
- 8. Youth's emotional well-being
- 9. Perception of school atmosphere
- 10. Parent involvement motivation
- 11. Impetus for the decision to get involved (as a parent)
- 12. Parental level of support
- 13. Parent efficacy (self-confidence)
- 14. Parent suggestions for a better experience

Being focused on descriptions of what the parent participants' experience and how it is that they experience it, I utilized a general phenomenological perspective to reveal and clarify the importance of using methods that capture the parent participant's experiences, including their shared experiences, of the environment. In my first level of coding, the first thing I did was list each parent's on a separate piece of paper and then, wrote down each quote of each parent and used separate pieces of paper for each parent. I

denoted the expressions relevant to the parent participants' experience by using a highlighter to group and code these expressions, which were sentences or phrases used by the parent participant, from my written notes. I color coded with highlighters, similar statements of each parent. So if a parent said her youth had a large amount of homework and studying in middle school, I color coded that type of statement with a blue highlighter. In addition, when the individual parents consistently spoke about large amounts of homework, academic responsibility, learning coverage, studying, in middle school, each time they did, or something mentioned something related to a large amounts of homework, I used the same color highlighter - blue. With these quotes, I began seeing distinct concepts and categories in the data. This process ended up allowing me to form the basic units of my analysis. I broke down the data into first level concepts and secondlevel categories. High homework load became a concept and other things related became a category—such as a parent telling me their youth would spend hours every night doing homework, all blue-highlighted. I then created a list of each sentence or phrase that represented a separate thought as noted above. This process required me to review the data to recognize and isolate noteworthy statements or quotes that clarified and described the ways in which the participants experienced the phenomenon. This was the first cycle in my coding process. I looked for distinct concepts and categories in the data, which formed the basic units of my analysis. In breaking down the data into first level concepts, and second-level categories I developed subheadings and then headings. To illustrate, each parent shared that their youth's teacher had an expectation of the parent to re-teach the youth with no offer of extra help. I initially labeled this category of data the parents' perception that "teachers putting responsibility of teaching/re-teaching on to parent."

A second level category was "all parents hired tutors" because they believed they were unable to get extra help for their youth at school and they were unable to connect effectively with the teacher and/or lacked a satisfactory response from the teacher. From this, developed the theme "communication barriers," I used different colored highlights to distinguish each broad concept and category. I re-read the text to confirm that my concepts and categories accurately represented interview responses and explored how my concepts and categories were related. In doing this, I thought about what was the social context as well as the associated effects or consequences.

In my second cycle of coding, I reconfigured the developed codes that I noted above, and in the second step of this process, I employed reduction and elimination. In this step, each expression was tested by determining whether it met the criteria of its inclusion and was sufficient in describing an element of the phenomenon of interest. I then had to abstract the overall descriptive meaning and thus re-labeled with the intent of eliminating redundant or vague expressions and reduced the data to only that which added informative value and the specific elements of the experience.

After considering each sentence or phrase as having equal value during the horizontalization process, I removed those statements that were overlapping, repetitive or vague; I left only the invariant components of the experience. These resulting horizons were clustered into 14 initial categories as stated above.

My third step in this process was the clustering of the core categories of the parents' experiences and I established themes of the essence of the elements and factors.

This step was conducted to arrange the data into themes which represented the essence of the parents' experiences. As the researcher, I searched for essentials, the fundamental

nature and meaning of the occurrences and encounters as well as central underlying meanings of the experiences of the parents. I clustered the 14 initial categories of the invariant constituents into four primary themes and six subthemes by identifying and consolidating overlapping or repetitive categories As such, I started out with several color highlights but soon related certain themes together. What resulted in the transcripts were highlighted text - 5 different colors.

The fourth step involved validation of the core themes of the experience. To validate the core themes, I first compared them to the notes of each parent to determine whether they were

- 1. quoted in the participant's accounts of their experience(s),
- 2. compatible with the account if not quoted exactly, or
- 3. if not explicit or compatible, at least relevant to the participant's lived experience.

Through this analysis of the data, I clustered themes until four primary groups. An example of this process was when I asked participants about their experiences with home-school collaboration now that their youth is in middle school. From their answers, the broad theme that initially emerged was parental perception that the school decreased their collaborative efforts and that the parents were not encouraged to help their youth. Upon further analysis, I discovered that such parental perception about the lack of collaboration, in part, stemmed from what parents stated middle school administration allowing large class sizes which burdened teachers. In addition, resources for students and programs to adequately train teachers were identified by the parent participants as key concerns. The parents' perception is that teachers can be over-worked and under-

supported leaving them little time for communication to parents – resulting in a core theme - *Communication breakdown*. Therefore, the more specific theme emerged that school practices cause *communication breakdown*. Once this was accomplished, I identified twenty subthemes, which the reader will see in Table 2.

The last step of my analysis process involved the development of a composite description. A merger of the descriptions was created to form a synthesized version of the "essence" of the phenomenon. The commonalities among participant experiences were highlighted. The goal was to provide a descriptive summation of the phenomenon, which will enable the reader to better understand and appreciate what it is like to have experienced this situation with their own youth. I transferred these into a <u>brief</u> outline, with concepts being main headings and categories being subheadings.

The themes were analyzed to develop and reveal meaning using verbatim quotes from the data. The four primary themes were the following:

- 1. Transition barriers for kids with ADHD (from elementary to middle school)
- 2. Communication breakdown
- 3. Instinctual parent involvement and confidence
- 4. Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support

Validation

The next step of the process was the validation of the core themes. I tried to capture the essence of the related concepts and clustered them into closely-related themes. The subthemes were then grouped into closely-related ideas and subject matter. In this regard, salient statements were identified as themes and subthemes in light of their recurrence. My aim was to have statements that represented the parent responses that

identified the important aspects of the data in relation to the research question but more importantly, that represented a level of patterned response or meaning within the data as Braun & Clarke (2006) discussed. This is important in this study because often, when I asked specific questions, parents went off in certain directions that were related but not necessarily direct- responses to the question at hand.

I was consistent about consensus being reached, albeit independently among a significant amount of participants prior to noting a theme and subtheme. To validate the identified themes and subthemes, I compared them to my notes of each participant and identified that they were stated directly in the parent participant's account, compatible with the account if not explicitly stated, or were relevant to the parent participant's lived experience. This validation step involved reviewing the interview notes and double checking to confirm that the identified themes and subthemes in concurrence among the parent participants' responses. Tables E1-E5 (see Appendix E) illustrates the endorsement found for each of the emergent themes and subthemes among the seven parent participants. I had ample corroboration among the parent participants to identify themes and subthemes and that saturation was accomplished. The clarification of the themes using verbatim quotes from the participants will be found in the Results section. The themes and subthemes identified within the current study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1

Theme: Transition barriers

Subtheme School-teacher-parent-youth Subtheme Homework increase/school

Subtheme Student overload results in

Theme: Communication breakdown Subtheme Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership Theme 3 Theme: Instinctual parent involvement and confidence Subtheme Parents feeling empowered (positive self-efficacy) Theme: Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support Subtheme The youth need increased Middle schools should increase guidance, extra tools, and more collaboration emotional support Middle schools should increase accommodations to youth emotional support Subtheme The youth need increased collaboration accommodations to youth emotional support Subtheme They outh need increased collaboration accommodations to youth emotional support Subtheme They outh need increased collaboration accommodations to youth emotional support	relationship challenges	support decrease	parent rescue	
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guidance, extra tools, and more collaboration accommodations to youth	Subtheme	Subtheme	Subtheme	
guidance, extra tools, and more collaboration accommodations to youth	The youth need increased	Middle schools should	increase Schools should provide	
	guidance, extra tools, and more	collaboration	accommodations to youth	
	emotional support		with ADHD	

Emerging Themes

Central to this study is the exploration of the efficacy of parents of youth in middle school with ADHD, to be able to make a difference and to additionally identify their decisions involving assisting their youth with home tasks such as studying and homework. The experiences and perceptions that the parent participants had relative to the middle school transition, their youth's responses and their decisions to get involved in order to help their youth who has ADHD were, in many ways, similar and will be demonstrated throughout the emerging themes.

Positive self-efficacy in the belief that they made a positive difference—when helping their youth with home studies and homework—was unanimous among all seven parents in my study, regardless of their past experiences.

Explaining the Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1: Transition Barriers

Parents described the transition year of middle school (6th grade) as a significantly-difficult process because of multiple factors. All saw that going from one or two teachers in elementary school to having multiple teachers created barriers as it became more difficult to have a relationship with the teachers individually.

Subtheme: Homework increase/school support decrease. According to the parents, the multiple middle school teachers were not aware of how much homework another teacher might have assigned so there was a major increase in workload, such as homework, tests (which meant doing hours of homework and studying after school hours). Most parents complained that there was so much homework; their youth had no time for extracurricular activities or to engage in afterschool recreational and family time. What's more, the schools involved did not offer support services such as before- or afterschool tutoring or adviser-advisee class that the parents were aware of.

In elementary school, students received in-class support since they were in the same classroom with the same teacher most of the day. The parents stated the teachers in the middle schools they were involved with did not seem inter-collaborative around assignments, which influenced the workload increase, as well as confusion at home as to the approach of some assignments. Some parents stated their student had four times as much homework and studying responsibility as when in elementary school.

Parents felt that with such a significant change more support and involvement was needed—at least for the transition year and instead, their youth were being encouraged by their respective schools to be more independent, a step that the students were not ready to take, as per all the youths' parents.

Subtheme: Student overload results in parent rescue. According to all the parents in my study, all but one student had "shut down" in such a way that they weren't able to attend to their homework unless a parent was sitting with them, helping them including re-teaching material, and in some cases doing some of the homework for them. The youth of parent #6 had limited ability to complete the homework. Although not completely shutting down as in the other cases, this youth according to her mother, was unable to complete the homework.

Instead of the parent sitting with her, this parent decided to approach the teachers and explain the issues with too much homework and, after several requests, the teachers finally cut down on the volume of homework for this specific youth. The unintended consequence of middle-school transition, especially around homework overload, according to all the parents in the study, was family stress and sacrifice. The issue of homework in the amounts that is being reported seems to be impeding family time, eliminating extra-curricular activities, prompting arguments and creating stressed relationships among the youth and their parent(s), besides triggering many emotional issues for the youth.

Jamie, Parent 1 (mother of parochial school student during middle school transition year to 6th grade). Jamie acknowledged, "It was always difficult for him to do

homework...he did not have self-motivation, I had to sit with him." "Getting him to do homework and studying - it was always a war," she added.

In middle school, with the increase in teachers and workload, Jamie reported, things became worse and he stopped doing much of the homework and studying which resulted in poor and in some cases, failing grades. He then stopped doing his homework altogether stating, "he couldn't" and complaining it was "over his head."

The parent then, feeling desperate to "keep him in school and passing" began "micromanaging him," which negatively affected their relationship.

Jamie and her husband would sit with him for hours each evening in order to reteach some material that he had "no clue of" as well as get him to accomplish some of his homework. Jamie was quick to point out the toll this took on the family, especially around the stress it created in the household, and the fact that they had three other children in the home who were being, in a sense, neglected because of the time the homework took with the son with ADHD. Even so, the school did not offer any support. In fact, Jamie acknowledged, "even when I sent long emails sharing" the difficult "experiences with homework…no one wanted to take time to help him" at the school. The teachers and school administration "had a set of rules" …and his failures were his fault or my fault." "I never felt they wanted a partner" instead "I felt beaten up all the time."

The school and teachers "made me and him feel like failures...his accomplishments never got celebrated" but "...he did better for the one teacher that did believe in him. However, "I don't think any of them were that supportive." The school administration and his main teacher "just told me to get him tested."

What was worse, they had him suspended from the basketball team, which was the one positive thing in his life at that time. They felt if he couldn't get his work done, then he didn't have time for basketball

Antonio, Parent 2 (father of parochial school student during middle school transition to 6th grade). Antonio reported that "the middle school gave a lot of homework but most of the time she did not know what to do." With the amount of homework, "without a doubt she was lost." "She would sit at the table for hours and not get anything done," he said. "She was distant but when I helped her she was more engaged."

Antonio was upset with the school due to the workload and that the school wasn't aware (or didn't care) that his daughter wasn't learning the material. He was also concerned that even when his daughter was failing, there was no offer to meet and discuss or offer any kind of support. Antonio was re-teaching material almost daily. This, of course, took hours and Antonio, who worked from home, would end up spending the time between mid-to-late evening, prompting and assisting her with the homework and study task. "She shut down all the time if someone wasn't beside her tutoring her...she would daydream instead of doing the homework...." she wouldn't know where to start," he said. "I saw her struggle and her change in mood, from up to down."

Both the youth and her parents were sad that she no longer had time to play and do the activities she loved, such as softball and soccer. "I can't get her involved with any extracurricular activities because of homework," Antonio exclaimed. He also reported that his wife and the older daughter used to do many activities together as a family but this was all lost because of this youth's homework and studying requirements. Of course,

the stress level in the home was sometimes overwhelming because of the issues around all the homework and studying and teaching that needed to occur for this daughter. The parents got her tested and both the attention problems and a learning disability were raised as requiring accommodations and remediation, but being a non-public school, the institution did not have any specially-designed instruction nor was required to provide such accommodations. There was no offer to help from the school according to Antonio. As a parent, he "did not feel [that] I have been invited...you have to force yourself to get invited in to have a discussion even when your child is failing."

Typically, when a meeting is requested, the parent noted that the school sent a note "we'll get back to you," and they tended to not get back.

Loretta, Parent 3 (mother of public school student on an IEP during middle school transition to 6th grade). Loretta shared how her daughter, who has a diagnosis of both ADHD and high functioning autism, found the "new ways" and homework overwhelming. "She came home not wanting to do anything and...6th grade was horrific because of the change from elementary to middle school," the mother reported. All of the new issues with the middle school—such as changing classes, having several teachers and experiencing an increase in the workload "made it difficult for her to maintain focus...it was too much! Homework quadrupled!" This is "because there are now seven teachers and they didn't coordinate with one another" relative to workload. "She may have three tests in one day! That would never happen in elementary school...the teachers know how to adjust the load," said Loretta. The circumstances "escalated her ADHD."

"My husband and I always had to sit with her in order for her to get her homework done. We had to sit with her for 20 minute increments." Their daughter

needed the break in between to regain her mental energy for the next 20 minutes. However, the process of getting the homework done would take hours. In fact, Loretta sadly explained that "after 2-3 hours a night, just listening to her tell us how overwhelmed and depressed she was about middle school, then she was able to start homework...but it would take an hour and a half to do a 20-minute homework assignment.

Loretta was also much stressed because her husband was running out of patience and the other three children in the home were not getting their needs met, with all the time and attention being provided to this daughter. The other children began to resent this daughter and the family strain was heavy. "We even stopped having dinner together as a family because there was no time and I had to spend the time comforting my daughter who was very upset and stressed," said Loretta.

The youth became so depressed, that "she began making comments that sounded like goodbye, so we had to bring her to a therapist." Although the school guidance counselor and homeroom teacher listened to the parents and showed empathy, they did not offer additional tools or support and just encouraged the parents to keep helping her at home." "There was not that close relationship with your child's teacher or that safe feeling that my daughter had when she bonded with her teacher, like you have in elementary school," said Loretta. She explained to me that she had to "give daily reminders to the teachers to deliver her daughters accommodations, "including letting her sit in the front of the class – but the teachers never remembered, as well as redirecting but they hardly ever did this. Another accommodation extended time for tests – that one, they did!" smiled Loretta.

For 6th grade, the daughter was not able to do any extracurricular activities, except for a social skills group once a week, but by 7th grade, with the encouragement of the therapist, the parents decided that it was detrimental to just focus on school work and started their daughter playing a musical instrument and had her join volleyball activity, once a week. "She found music which helped her find confidence." Therapy and this helped the depression," Loretta noted. By 7th grade, Loretta had asked to have an accommodation for 'reduced homework' added to the daughter's IEP.

Tasha, Parent 4 (mother of a public school student who is in her middle school transition year, 6th grade). Tasha reminisced about elementary school, saying, "it was so easy...she did so much better and I had full confidence to help her...there was one consistent teacher that you (and your child) get to know...you build a relationship." "I and the teacher had working communication—sometimes two-to-three times a day!" "Knowing she freezes on tests—the teacher would not tell her it's a test and she would do great."

"Not in middle school...I keep telling the teachers that she freezes up, but they are not so accommodating." In fact, "the middle school teachers keep threatening her and me that if she doesn't do well and focus, she will stay back," Tasha said. "Now, with five-plus teachers in middle school, relationship and communication are lacking...It's too much to manage with five teachers and I don't feel the teachers are accessible," the mother noted. "Some of them (teachers) are frustrated and tired of her."

"To access teachers now is too complicated...and the teachers do not need to be focused on one kid!" Regarding homework, Tasha finds that there is "definitely an increase and she's not focused – she's not on task." I can tell her the simplest thing that

should take her 20 minutes but it takes her two hours...she gets off track—uses the iPad, takes TV breaks...and when I try to redirect her, I have to stay there and tell her over and over you can do it."

"However, with the next task, I have to start all over again." Even without being sidetracked, Tasha states that the homework takes "way too much time." The school does "okay" according to the parent in the relationship area. "They contact me when she's missing something and they are open to collaboration," but according to this parent, Tasha and her daughter do not have a real connection with any of the teachers. "When I request a meeting or when they call a meeting, they do ask my opinion, however, I wish the school would offer tutoring and have a class to help kids with organization, study skills, and a monitoring system to see where the gaps are" such as "missing homework, or declining grades."

Overall, since Tasha's daughter has moved into middle school "she regularly shuts down, freezes up when taking tests which cause her to fail classes" for which there was no accommodation offered. Tasha explained to the school and teachers that she helps her daughter prepare for tests by printing out the test study notes and practice tests obtain the answers and practices with her daughter by going over the material until her daughter has assimilated the information. Sometimes, "it would take all night," but again, when it comes time to actually take the test, "she freezes."

Tasha is so "frustrated" as her daughter knows the information when she sends her off to school. Even so, the teachers did not seem to take into account that Tasha's daughter was knowledgeable of the information she is being tested on. It was simply that her daughter could not perform well when she has to take a test in written format.

Unfortunately, "my daughter becomes frustrated and stressed out" and the way this is manifested in the classroom is by "outbursts", at home, "she cries" and retreats to her room, becoming isolative.

At school, "she's been suspended two times for outbursts," reports Tasha. "I tell the teachers, don't tell her it's a test." This parent is very concerned, at this point, that her daughter has given up, especially since her daughter believes she will have to repeat the 6th grade again, after hearing the teachers threaten that so often. Regarding home life, this is a single parent who has a younger daughter with Down's syndrome. The homework and test preparation that is required to help her daughter with ADHD is so intense that she feels her other daughter is starting to act out. Both Tasha and her daughter have frequent "fights" and the stress has created much tension in their relationship. "Often now, our family activities get canceled because of her homework issues." Tasha asked for her daughter to be put on an IEP, but stated "I am frustrated that the school district will not put her on an IEP." "They only put her on a 504," which is an accommodation plan. This just occurred at the time of the interview, so there has not been time to see if the accommodations make a difference. Tasha did state. "I finally had her go on ADHD medication...she couldn't do it (middle school) without ADHD meds." "I felt like there was no nurturing."

Jeanine, Parent 5 (mother with parochial school student during middle school transition year to 6th grade). Jeanine explains that she longs for the way it was for her daughter in elementary school. "The school's attitude in middle school is that they are trying to prepare the kids for high school and they have to do it without the parents' help, [which is] ridiculous." "There is no warmth, no desire to include parents in anything!"

Jeanine has a daughter, now in 8th grade in that same school (parochial) as she attended in 6th and 7th grade.

Although she wanted to change schools, Jeanine's other child (younger) attends the same school. Jeanine had hope that things would get better, and the religious aspect was important to this her. Nonetheless, her daughter has continued to struggle but now has not only the parental help with homework but a tutor three-to-five times a week to reteach and help with challenging homework and studying for tests.

"Family time was not possible. We are all stressed here, because of homework!"

Jeanine ended up doing some of the homework for her daughter just to alleviate some of the stress for everyone in the family. "I've talked to other parents about changing it but worry about repercussions on my kids."

Jeanine felt like the school did not want any relationship at all with the parents. "I am not happy with the school. I continue to get the impression from the school that the parents are worthless."

Prior to the recent parent-teacher conference, parents received a written note stating – 'if your kids are getting As and Bs, there is no reason for us to meet with you. Jeanine was shocked by this overt message that the school didn't have time for parents. She was somewhat relieved that there is a school website where she can see assignments, deadlines and what's coming up academically. Initially, in the transition year (6th grade), "I thought my daughter would breeze by like she did in elementary, but it was a struggle."

Jeanine reported that as her daughter moved to the higher middle school grades – "it was 10 times worse! I would have to constantly check the school website to see what

was due as well teach almost everything again as well as help her with everything. The school avoided talking to parents." Regarding a homework increase in middle school, Jeanine agrees that there was a significant increase. So much so that she could not keep up and had a tutor several days a week to augment what she was doing to help and support her daughter with homework and studying. "She would cry and scream and I would have to first, calm her down, and then, sit down with her the whole time" so her daughter was able to get to her homework and complete it. "I had to help her with everything. I had to sometimes 'feed' her ... I did more homework than I should. My son would get his homework done at school where she would have a ton and have to do it at home," Jeanine said.

Subtheme: Student overload. "She and I had a lot of screaming matches over homework." "There was so much more to do (than in elementary school) ...I was on the school website constantly to see what her homework was and I had to help her with everything!" "Definitely, she shut down and got depressed. She became so sad – crying and screaming with the homework." Jeanine commented that "I do see the teachers are frustrated (in middle school) but they don't try to do preventative things...they are more reactive – fixing things...the teachers are disempowered because of the system."

Rachal, Parent 6 (mother of private school student during middle school transition year to 6th grade). Rachal talks about her daughter becoming overwhelmed in 6th grade, which led to her being transferred over to that private school's SPED school program. Her experiences in 7th and 8th grade showed marked improvement. Rachal's daughter had been through two evaluations prior to entering 6th grade and things got better with some of the individualized instructions by 5th grade.

However, "in middle school," (6th grade) because of the workload— especially homework, "she started getting overwhelmed and frustrated and started doing poorly." She began labeling herself as stupid. Rachal shared how, once in middle school, the homework extensively increased. Initially, the school would not give her daughter accommodations to reduce the load, even after the parent asked multiple times. "In middle school, I was working full-time and having my mother- in-law watch the kids. So I wasn't available to help with her homework. I also got a tutor, who came twice a week, just for math," she said.

Rachal endorsed how much stress she, as a parent, felt over the increased schoolwork and endorsed that this interfered with family time since both parents work. After work, the parents had to deal with a stressed daughter and help her attend to the remainder of the homework that she didn't get to after school. Rachal also felt saddened by her daughter losing out on after-school play time and activities because she had so much homework. When Rachal went to the school and teachers for support and ideas, all they suggested was "you need to get her a tutor." She did not feel a relationship with most teachers but there were two that she felt went out of their way to empower the youth and engage the parents. "They would sometimes just write to parents just to say – *your daughter is doing great.*" These were the same teachers that would initiate an email if there was a missing assignment to give the parent a heads-up. "I like a direct line of communication with teachers but some teachers would just not get back to me." Overall, there was "no collaboration in middle school. I had to call every meeting and after she crashed! I finally did get the teachers to stop giving inappropriate homework and so much

homework, but my daughter was already overwhelmed and shut down more of the time than not."

Rachal thought the school spent too much time on excessive rules such as "no red hair", when they could have put more effort in being engaged with the youth and the parents. Relationship was lacking as far as Rachal was concerned.

Nadia, Parent 7 (mother with parochial school student during middle school transition year to 6th grade). Nadia describes her son's transition in 6th grade as "turbulent." "There was no communication and no support on the part of the school. I had to chase them," she said. By 7th grade, Nadia's son was attending a private SPED school where things were exponentially different in a positive way, so the son is thriving now. "Just a year ago, though, this was a child that was almost failing out—and he hated school." Because the homework in this parochial middle school was so heavy, "he got frustrated and shut down. He used to like to spend time with friends after school. They would have fun and get out their energy—enjoy life but once middle school started, all that was over because of the amount of homework and studying. It's not fair," said Nadia. "Our family time has also been affected since my son is stuck in front of his books and homework often from afternoon through dinner time and into the evening."

Since we are focusing on the transition year (6th grade), it is important to share this parent's story so one understands why he has both a tutor and a cognitive behavior therapist. "When my son was in the other school (the parochial school during 6th grade), things weren't on a school web page (like Edline). They did not have such a thing. It was difficult because they had no tools or ways to get information for each subject. So, I was proactive and ordered extra set of books. However, one is unable to have an IEP or 504

enforced in that school. My son had no accommodations for his ADHD, there were large class sizes and he got depressed."

"He needs a lot of prompts, and still, gets disorganized and behind," but not like what occurred in the 6th grade. In the school he attended when in 6th grade, "I had to be the one to reach out to teachers and the guidance counselor to go over his suggested accommodations ...except for one teacher. I'm trying to be a more hands-off parent but I needed to coach him a lot during this period, including with reminders and prompts to asks the teacher important questions, without which might cause a missing grade or failing mark."

Nadia was disappointed in her relationship or lack thereof with the majority of teachers in the parochial school, where her son was in 6th grade and expressed in her interview that she had no connection with the administration. Unfortunately, during this particular transition year, the parochial school did not honor any of the recommendations or special instructions that were expected since he had been tested. The parents were not offered any tools or extra help.

Nadia had to provide daily coaching and a significant amount of homework help.

She also hired a tutor. If Nadia doesn't provide these daily suppots, her son

"procrastinates, gets disorganized and overwhelmed."

Because of the resultant depression triggered in the 6th grade school year, "my son also went to a CBT therapist (cognitive behavioral therapy) who also helped him." The CBT therapist has continued to work with this youth. These interventions "helped tremendously."

Prior to that transition year to middle school, however, Nadia's son did not have such a dramatic reaction (shutting down). She places much of the blame on that school for her son's current coping struggles. Once in the new school—the Private SPED School—there has been a significant change for the better, both relative to her son's mood, adjustment and performance as well as the school's relationship with both parent and son.

"It's more of a partnership. At this school, they have a school website, the class sizes are small, and there is relatively good communication with the teachers," smiles Nadia. One of the policies this parent likes best is that philosophically, there is no homework as the school considers that "everything should be covered in class. Only occasionally, he might come home with a brief practice activity."

Subtheme: Student overload results in parent rescue. All parents in the study identified significant stressful responses by their youth once attending middle school. These student meltdowns ranged from the students becoming overwhelmed and unable to attend to any tasks, experiencing disorganization, having angry outbursts to becoming disengaged and disconnected, and literally, shutting down. For many, there were tears and talk of failing and in two cases, the youth became so depressed over school that they had to go to a therapist.

It is understandable that all parents want to rescue their children. Each parent endorsed feeling almost desperate to provide help to their youth, triggered by their youth's distraught reaction to the changes (e.g., many teachers), as well as the overwhelming homework load in that transition year, being 6th grade.

As Jamie, Parent 1 reported, "the school and teachers made me and him feel like failures...his accomplishments never got celebrated." This perception on the part of the parent and youth, per parent interpretation, caused her son to give up. He stopped doing homework, had difficulty getting the motivation to study for tests and even would skip classes and hide in an abandoned part of the school to avoid attending class. These behaviors just caused a proliferation of his problems. Jamie related that her son's self-esteem was at an all-time low and "he felt stigmatized" as a poor, unmotivated student who was a school problem and not liked by the teachers.

"I don't think anyone there was that supportive and I felt all alone. This made me feel angry at him. He had many meltdowns—mostly at home, and we began having nightly arguments which created stress in the home. It took all my energy," said Jamie.

Hitting the lows, however, started the ball rolling to get him tested, seeking professional help and coming up with ways to calmly help her son. Jamie actually received coaching from a behaviorist on ways to support and assist her son so he would engage rather than be resistant, as had happened in the midst of the turmoil. Jamie was admittedly quite overwhelmed and remarked that "there is no roadmap of what to try."

To get through that year, Jamie found ways to pull her son through, including family meetings, calm sit downs, providing homework help in chunks, and finding a tutor, who would go to the school two-to-three times a week and provide homework help and organization during a "study block." Jamie came to her son's rescue to avoid negative behaviors and the onset of depression. Her son cleared 6th grade with some failing marks but will not have to repeat the school year. Instead, he will work in summer school and move to the next grade.

Having barely passed the 6th grade, both parent and youth agreed to pursue additional testing and ultimately a new school for the next school year. Jamie's son was re-evaluated by a school psychologist in order to see if he would be a candidate for a private SPED school. The results demonstrated a good match and the parent is happy to report that his last two years in the private SPED school have been excellent.

"My son is thriving and very happy," she reports. "He has regained his selfesteem. The school invited him to be on the basketball and golf teams, which he was not allowed to do at the prior school as he lost that privilege in view of his grades."

Further, the school has a variety of supports, small classes, and positive and frequent communication with the student and the parents. "They offer study groups, study skills classes with their teacher (providing the students with school success skills such as organization and test preparation), as well as one-on-one help, study notes and a whole list of accommodations for each student's specific needs. Now I don't even have to check on him," Jamie said.

Antonio (Parent 2) daughter has not had a healthy adjustment with the transition. Antonio described his daughter's meltdowns as a more passive reaction than parent #1's youth. Antonio's daughter reacted by shutting down—sitting at the table inactive and disconnected. "She would sit at the table for hours and not get anything done, and was disconnected," said Antonio. He also stated that his daughter would often cry quietly while sitting at the table, which he believes was her sadness and frustration over being "lost" around the homework.

"Of course, I had to step in. I saw her struggle and her change in mood," Antonio said. "I was not enamored by the school. The school would have been fine if you had a

kid who was self-motivated or exceeded expectations, but she is not this kid. There was no sense of partnership. In fact, there was a lack of partnership and they were lax in orienting the child and the parent, he noted." In view of the lack of school supports and collaboration, Antonio had to cut his work hours and step in. "I tried to do all that I could. I had to re-teach, to explain things differently."

Antonio felt that the school did not take much responsibility for insuring the school was successfully teaching the students. "For example, the math teacher told me if she's behind, you should spend more time with her, and all but one teacher pointed the finger back at me. You had to force yourself to be invited in and the teachers gave a lot of homework but most of the time, she did not know how or what to do," said Antonio.

Antonio felt he had no choice but to step in and help his daughter daily with homework. He eventually got his daughter tested; found a tutor to augment what he was doing to help his daughter with homework, studying and teaching. After this transition year, Antonio got his daughter tested by the public school district, hired an educational advocate and transferred his daughter to the public school, where she was placed on an IEP with accommodations.

In this way, his daughter legally and consistently received accommodations and had access to specially designed instruction via the Exceptional Services Education Department (Special Education/SPED) in the public school system.

Loretta (Parent 3) daughter's experience with the transition year of middle school was troubling in that her meltdown resulted in a clinical depression, where she even seemed to be hinting about feeling suicidal. This primarily was over the notably increased workload—especially homework and studying, which the parent explained had

"quadrupled" in 6th grade. In the elementary grades, this youth would be able to do her homework, in her room, independently, in 1-2 hours.

The transitional year of middle school was transformational in a very negative way. The volume of homework sent this youth into a severe depression and by the time the parents figured out it wasn't oppositional behavior as she would sit in her room, emotionally paralyzed; this youth had become so depressed the parents had to seek out a therapist. During the initial weeks of middle school, Loretta reported (as noted above) that they would spend "2-3 hours a night, just listening to her tell us how overwhelmed and depressed she was about middle school, then she was able to start homework. I would stay and help with her homework," explained Loretta.

This is an example of a serious *student meltdown* as well as the *parent* coming *to the rescue*—putting in those hours to provide support to the daughter and then, staying there to help with the homework. "We had to build her self-worth because at the time, she had no self-worth."

Tasha, Parent 4 revealed that her daughter's maladjustment was a combination of avoidance and impulsive behaviors such as blurting out in class and her meltdowns consisted of being distracted for hours—unable to focus on her homework and studying. "She is much worse with regards to focus this year (6th grade)," said Tasha. Tasha felt pressure to help her daughter with homework and studying because the teachers have continually threatened both her and her daughter with possibly having to repeat the grade, unless performance, including completing and passing in homework improves.

Tasha's daughter's meltdowns typically show up at home as inactivity—
overwhelmed and unable to do any tasks. At school, she is acting out. This school year,

Tasha started doing homework with her daughter for the first time. "I have to stay there, help her if there's a test. I print out the test study notes and get the answers for her, then practice with her" (*Subtheme: Parent to the rescue*). Tasha stated that otherwise her daughter would not get much or any of the work completed.

In meeting with Jeanine, Parent #5, it became clear that there was a fair amount of resentment toward her daughter's school for, what has been perceived by Jeanine, as the acts of shutting out parents and ignoring the needs of the daughter. Tasha complained that "there was no communication at all." When she pursued a response, she reported that the teachers just would complain that her daughter "lacks the ability to focus." To the youth, they would tell her "get your act together. "According to the parent, "The school ignored her needs...because she is a sweet girl who doesn't get in trouble, and so she was just passed over."

Tasha's daughter's response of being overwhelmed—feeling overloaded (*Student overload results in parent rescue*) was especially around the huge piles of homework.

There would be sessions at home where "she would just cry, scream...get hysterical... and then shut down. She and I had a lot of screaming matches over homework," stated

Tasha. "I would have to help her re-compensate and sit with her the whole time."

Tasha reported that at school, her daughter felt lost" but "it was that she did not understand the material and was unable to perform", "rather than what the teachers though (lack of focus)", "so she would not finish the work and what she did do was not usually correct."

As such with studying and homework, Tasha explains how she would have to "feed her...I would have to help her with everything and I did more homework than I should." (Subtheme: Parent to the rescue).

Rachal, Parent 6 was more frustrated with homework than anything else with the school her daughter attended, saying "I had to continually ask them to stop giving so much homework to help my child." Rachal also complained that the school (during the transition year) "never gave her accommodations."

Relative to homework, Rachal's daughter had notable issues around homework and workload, as well as assimilating the content during teacher instruction. Her daughter's response to large amounts of homework that came as a result of middle school was that "she was overwhelmed and underwent a complete shutdown."

Coupled with the homework issue was that this youth was bullied as somehow she was identified as a special-needs student and was made fun of for being unable to grasp the work, per Rachal. "There was no collaboration in middle school. I had to call every meeting but after she crashed," stated Rachal. (Subtheme: Student overload results in parent rescue). The school, according to Rachal, took hardly any responsibility and would usually suggest that the parent have a tutor more often and get any youth who was having difficulty, tested." The school didn't help empower my kid...they fell very short and she was expected to learn at home and with lots of homework," said the mother. Rachal had to double the tutoring hours per week once her daughter was in middle school

Nadia, Parent 7's son has a happy middle school ending (when he transferred to the private SPED school after his middle school transition year in *6th grade*). However,

his experience during the transition year (6th grade) at the parochial school was difficult. As corroborating with the *subtheme: student overload*, Nadia reported a lack of a caring attitude, large amounts of homework, little communication initiated by the school, which resulted in her son becoming so overwhelmed and depressed from hating school and failing classes that this parent had to step in (*Subtheme: student overload results in parent rescue*) and get a therapist, as well as hire a tutor. Nadia also had to spend hours of time each week helping her son do his homework and studying.

After 6th grade, Nadia had her son transfered to the private school's SPED school where is thriving.

Theme 2: Communication Breakdown

In the transitional year of middle school, which is 6th grade, six out of the seven parents interviewed complained about significantly reduced collaboration, a lack of communication and little follow-up coming from the school and teachers (*Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership*). The parent who was satisfied with the level of communication, was Rachal, Parent #6, who had her youth in a private school. However, even with the private school, there were a myriad other issues relative to a hefty workload, her daughter's meltdowns in the transitional year of middle school, and the fact that regardless of her daughter being on an accommodation plan, the parent had to remind teachers often to implement the accommodations. In this transitional year, the parent complained that she had to call the meetings when her daughter was failing. As such, this parent decided to transfer her youth over to the private school's SPED school. Moreover, most parents felt that school climate and policies on homeschool relationships should begin with school administration, but this didn't occur. The

parents in my study blamed the leadership as much as the teachers for the lack of communication and collaboration between home and school (*Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies*).

Jamie, Parent 1 was adamant, saying, "there was no collaboration. I wanted to get the feeling that teachers care but we did not get that from the school. The school had a set of rules...the school leaders set the negative tone. I never felt they wanted to partner." (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies). Jamie stated that when there was communication, it was to complain about her son and noted that "often the school would send long letters or emails to me trying to get me to do something...get my son help or tested...No one wanted to take the time to help him, the school and teachers gave me the impression 'we don't want to deal with him'."

Jamie complained that the school took no responsibility in being part of a solution (Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership). For Jamie, it was clear by the end of 6th grade that she needed to make a change for her son. From a parochial school to a private SPED school was the plan of action and this parent saw a tremendous improvement in the communication and collaboration once in the new setting. As noted above, her son is now thriving.

Antonio, Parent 2, whose daughter also attends a parochial school, concurred in that he never felt "invited" to the school to discuss his daughter (*Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership*). This parent went on to criticize the teachers, in that aside from the teachers telling him to spend more time working with his daughter at home, they did not have any answers or make any offers to help. In reality, this parent reported that the teachers deferred recommendations at the face-to-face

meetings and "there was no follow-up." He pointed to an example of when his daughter was failing math early on, the math teacher told him that he should "spend more time with her." Antonio began and completed the interview with the statement, "I am not enamored...there is no sense of partnership. The school is lax in orientation—this is the fault of the principal and above." (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies.)

Loretta, Parent 3, whose daughter has been diagnosed with both high functioning autism and ADHD, attributed the communication she did get from the teachers to the fact that her daughter was on an IEP and certain mandates were in place because of that. The parent said, "We really only hear from the school and teachers twice a year...in regards to "the IEP meeting."

This was especially true in the transitional year. The only school staff the parent heard from was the school guidance counselor but this was because Loretta's daughter was being bullied and went to the guidance counselor about it. Loretta was frustrated with the lack of communication and absence of a partnership that she had enjoyed in elementary school, for several reasons. Loretta was especially disappointed because "I had to do daily reminders to teachers to do all the accommodations," and she said, "They gave us no tools." (Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership.)

Although Loretta was frustrated with the teachers, she expressed her belief that it was a systemic problem. According to her, "Teachers have too many kids in the classroom and so kids have to fend for themselves." Even though this youth is on an IEP, Loretta felt that the school put too much responsibility on parents to fill the gaps and get

through the homework, which was monumental for this youth with all that she was dealing with. "All the school would tell us is to continue to work with her at home. The school has poor and missing policies, and a lacking of programming, especially for special needs students. There is a major breakdown at the middle school level. No orientation for the changes that were to take place in middle school," Loretta noted. (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies.) Agreeing with the other parents who were interviewed, Parent #3 said, "The teachers never initiated communications unless she was failing."

Loretta went on to say, "I don't blame the teachers as they are thrown in with no training. The school system is to blame. They (teachers), though, need to really speak on behalf of kids with special needs."

Tasha, Parent 4 objected to the nature of much of the communication that was initiated by her daughter's middle school teachers. According to Tasha, most of the communication once her daughter got in middle school, was negative and occurred only when her daughter was having problems. "The teachers keep threatening her and me that if 'you don't do well and focus,' she will stay back. They usually contact me when she's missing something," said Tasha. (Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership.)

For Tasha, there was disappointment in the absence of a classroom website. As a parent, she could not access such material as upcoming tests, projects, homework, class expectations, and progress reports and have some communication from each teacher. (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies.) Tasha was unhappy and felt that these resources "should be [part of] a policy of the school leadership." That

being said, some of the teachers did provide study notes which Tasha would print out and help her daughter with. However, "the school/teachers do not publish what is due so I can't do homework checks. "I wish they had a syllabus so a parent or kid can see what's going on, what's required..."

Tasha longs for the elementary school days, as her daughter received more individual attention and there was frequent communication and collaboration.

Reminiscing, Tasha said, "When she was in elementary school, it was easy...and I had confidence to help her. Now it takes too much time to manage with five teachers and I do not feel confident...it's a work in progress with her."

There was however, one teacher "who stayed on top of her, had an invested relationship—and she established ongoing communication." With this one teacher, Tasha's daughter did relatively well. She agrees undeniably that frequent communication and a collaborative partnership makes the difference towards her daughter's success and her own ability to help.

Jeanine, Parent 5 stated at the onset of the interview, "I thought my daughter would breeze by in middle school—but it was a struggle!" Jeanine explained that the workload, homework and complexities of middle school, such as having multiple teachers and having courses where the level of difficulty was notably increased from elementary school to middle school, made things tough. "I would have to sit with her ...the whole time...help her with everything," Jeanine said. This was because when her daughter would come home, already saturated with the school day, she had mountains of homework. "She was already overwhelmed, but facing all the homework, she could not do anything more," the parent said.

When Jeanine tried to help her daughter, it would result in "crying and screaming to get homework done." Regarding communication, it was beneficial that the school had a website,* where this parent would download and print out material to work with her daughter on. "I was constantly on the school website to see what her homework was", she said. Between the parent(s) and the tutor they had to hire in order to keep up with all the study tasks and homework, the school website gave them the opportunity to get all the work done, which often involved re-teaching.

According to Jeanine, aside from the school website, there was no communication from the school. Jeanine was disappointed that her daughter's teachers rarely took initiative in establishing any dialogue. (Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership). "I felt like there was no nurturing, nothing for parents". In fact, the lack of communication prompted Jeanine to note that the administration and teachers appeared to "avoid talking to parents and indeed, there seemed to be no conversation between the teacher, the school staff, and the leadership." (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies.)

Rachal, Parent 6 was the one parent who was not dissatisfied with school and teacher communication. Her daughter went to a private school for the 6th grade (and then, to the same private school's SPED program for the remainder of middle school). Communication (but not as true with collaboration) was the one brighter spots in the 6th grade experience. Rachal reported that "certain teachers would initiate emails" – mostly when her daughter did not turn in an assignment. Then Rachal explained, "I would have to go into her locker and would find missing homework."

Rachal was frustrated that she would have to help her daughter with organizational skills and other such executive tasks but did so because her daughter needed the assistance and the school "never offered a 'learning strategies class'."

Regarding the less-than-optimal collaborative effort on the part of the school, she said, "I had to call every meeting...always in math, I would have to initiate communication after she crashed"

Regarding homework, since there was missing work often, and "I didn't hear from many teachers until it had gone on for a while. I started to have the teachers sign a check sheet. I developed a log book with check sheets for homework assignments for passing to teachers so they could check/acknowledge that my daughter did the assignments." Rachal was very upset that she had to ask the school multiple times not to give so much homework before they finally responded to her and eventually cut down the homework.

As with Loretta, Parent #3, Rachal placed a lot of the blame for her daughter's problems on the school system. "The school system as a whole is more reactive. I see the teachers frustrated...prevention versus fixing is so important but the teachers are disempowered because of the system". (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies.)

Rachal stated, "I love teachers who want to empower and engage the children and the parents. I like a direct line of communication with teachers, but some teachers would never even get back to me, even when I initiated correspondence". Rachal works full time and really expected that the school would reach out to parents on a regular basis, since she felt she paid for that level of service.

"They had non-relevant and excessive rules like no red hair, but then, when something mattered that would promote school success, like her daughter needing more academic help, they simply told this Rachal 'you need to get her a tutor'." Rachal was especially discouraged since she was making hefty tuition payments for this private school, and had expectations of excellence in programming, service delivery as well as communication and collaboration. She felt that with more communication and collaboration, and research-based programs to support students would the school would have met her expectations, but was quite disappointed in the lack of practices for improving family-school relationships. In an ideal world, Rachal had envisioned a collaborative alliance with the school her daughter attended where teachers and administrators would be in support of the learning and growth of the students. This would include the school offering preventative programs, tools, assorted communication pathways, relevant training for the teachers, and approaches that encourage partnering with parents. Rachal strongly believed that a positive, collaborative tone should be set, promoted, and supported by the school administration. Rachel contended that it was most important for administration to provide adequate teacher education and tools for teachers as well as parents. As referenced above, Nadia's (Parent #7) son attended a parochial school for his transition year of 6th grade. With the discussion of communication, Nadia stated, "There was a breakdown in this." (Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership). She also reported that there were virtually "no tools or ways to get information for each subject" at the parochial school, unlike his new school (private SPED), where they have Edline the 6th grade. In the parochial school, the

parents and student experience was "difficult." (Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies).

Nadia's son became disorganized and lagged behind, which resulted in him entering into therapy sessions with a Cognitive Behavior therapist. Her son also required a tutor so he would complete tasks and stay on track "just to get Cs". Nadia even purchased an extra set of books which helped, but with the large classrooms and the school offering no accommodations for her son's ADHD, Nadia taught almost every lesson again at home, simultaneous to her son being taught in class. Even with all this, her son still became depressed that year.

Nadia felt blessed that she was able to quit her job (in health administration) so that she could attend to her son and still have time for her other child and husband. Nadia was hopeful that a collaborative spirit would take place at the school but stated "that it was definitely lacking." "Now, at the new school (private SPED school), I am active in the school PTO and am addressed when in the school, both as Mrs.____ and ____'s mother. The administration, staff and teacher always offer accolades about my son…it's a great collaborative atmosphere."

At this SPED school, "my experience is that the staff and teachers are open to parent involvement. They communicate in many ways, via emails, meetings, phone calls and they also have a well-maintained and up-to-date school website. This school takes the responsibility to reach out to parents and students and is open and inviting."

Theme 3: Instinctual Parent Involvement and Confidence

In witnessing their youth struggling and in some cases going into depression, parents were instinctually moved to get involved with helping their youth with the

homework and studies (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision). Most stated that they were compelled to step in after urging the school and/or teachers to engage or offer help and information but experiencing that the school was not responding (Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered). Additionally, every single parent in the study felt good about their ability to help their youth with homework and studying (Subtheme: positive self-efficacy).

Each parent referred to the fact that they felt they had rescued their youth from academic failure, and all of the parents additionally hired a tutor and in some cases both a turor and a therapist. These hirings by parents were in view of the reaction of their youth because of 6th grade, including the high volume of work and their youth being overwhelmed, developing depression and/or reacting with angry/oppositional behavior. Most of these parents have full-time jobs, so they lack the time to cover everything that needs to be accomplished, relative to homework, instruction and studying.

When asked about the issue(s) that influenced the decision about involvement in her youth's homework and studying, Jamie felt she had no choice than to get involved after seeing her son struggle(Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision). She couldn't sit idle and stated, "As a parent of a student who needed support...it was all up to me." (Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered.)

This parent solicited additional assistance as well. She stated, "We finally realized we needed to get him a tutor due to the extent of the help and support needed to get the studying and homework done." Regarding efficacy, Jamie's response to question 3 (How would you describe your confidence in your ability to help your youth) was, "He made it through because of me."

Jamie, Parent 1 is convinced that her proactive role in helping her son with homework and studying, initiating conversations with teachers, and getting her son tested and hiring both a tutor and a behavior therapist, made the difference in her son getting through this year at the middle school. This positive self-efficacy is what kept both Jamie and her son going and her son managed to pass on to the next grade as long as he did summer school. As Jamie realized the poor fit with that particular school, she transferred her son to the SPED private school where he has thrived.

Antonio, Parent 2 reported feeling compelled to step in and take over with homework help, re-teaching and studying with his daughter. The school did nothing to help them. (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision and Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered.) "The stress level in the home due to her homework and studying...and I saw her struggle and her change in mood (sad). I had to take over ...the school did nothing," said Antonio, who felt very confident about helping with the homework as well as the studying and re-teaching (Subtheme: positive self-efficacy).

"I had to re-teach, to explain things differently," Antonio said. He found that he had helped his daughter "be more engaged. I made a little difference especially helping with comprehension, by explaining things. I would be an awesome teacher for her." Although Antonio had positive self-efficacy about helping his daughter, he realized that there was so much to accomplish, between homework, studying and re-teaching, that he had to hire a tutor. This way, he could get to his own work that he had been neglecting as a result of his daughter's 6th grade year of middle school.

Loretta, Parent 3 explained that 6th grade was an enormous change from elementary school, relative to multiple teachers, "the amount of homework quadrupled, and because the teachers" who apparently did not coordinate with one another...she could have three tests in one day which would never happen in elementary school." "She had no self-worth."

Since Loretta's daughter has two disabilities (ADHD and high functioning autism), the effect was dramatic. "Me and my husband had to help her with homework. It was hard," said the parent. "We would spend 2-3 hours a night just listening to her tell us how overwhelmed and depressed she was about middle school – then she would be able to start homework – but one of us would have to sit with her and help." (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision and Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered.)

In addition to being paralyzed—unable to do her homework and studying at all—this Loretta's daughter became clinically depressed and required professional therapeutic intervention. "It was too much for her. With all that we did, especially with my support and the therapists' expertise, she is now doing well. I am confident that I made a difference in getting her through the year," said Loretta (*Subtheme: Positive self-efficacy*).

Loretta was very positive about the therapy her daughter received. She shared that her daughter's therapy was an important resource that made a huge difference in the outcome of her daughter's 6th grade experience. The therapist also offered consultation to both parents so that they could continue to be positive support for their daughter. This youth is thriving now, as her IEP was extended to include more accommodations such as

reduced homework and the parents got her involved with two activities, which have further helped her self-confidence and mood. "She found music – she found confidence. Now she is happy and loves her music and has even won awards for it," said the parent.

Additionally, the parents also agreed to have their daughter start on ADHD medication and they do believe that she is now doing very well because of the combination of therapy (which she completed over a year ago) and medication, in conjunction with reduced school homework, extracurricular activities, time with family and friends and "because of us parents and not the school." (Subtheme: Positive self-efficacy.) Loretta's daughter is doing well enough that she was able to terminate therapy but still practices the Cognitive behavior Therapy skills that she learned with her therapist.

Tasha, Parent 4 explained that from the onset of middle school, things have been overwhelmingly difficult for her 6th -grade daughter. "She is not focused, not on task, easy to be distracted. I can tell her the simplest thing that should take her 20 minutes but it takes her two hours," said Tasha.

Tasha realized her daughter did not understand the homework often and seemed to be missing the content. Tasha elaborated, "If there was a test, I would print out the test and get the answers for her. It would take all night...but still doesn't understand—it's not clicking in her head. I get so frustrated." Yet, Tasha remained motivated about helping her daughter by studying with her, looking up material for teaching and answers to practice tests, etc. "It's hard to see your kid fail, I had to step in," she continued. (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement).

"I can't hand it off to the school - I am involved in everything", reported Tasha whose daughter attends public school (*Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered - positive self-efficacy*). Tasha stated that she is doing homework checks, keeping up with tests and grades, helps with studying contacts the teachers to make sure her daughter is behaving and turning in her assignments. "They do not publish what is due so I can't do homework checks easily" Tasha has confidence that her involvement makes a difference. As a hands-on presence, she can catch missing homework and assignments and insures she gets the responses from the teachers for issues that may be brewing. However, Tasha also works full-time and has a younger special needs child, so she criticizes her own ability to keep her daughter on task, without staying in the room through the whole series of homework assignments.

Jeanine, Parent 5 shared how she thought middle school would be easy for her daughter but admitted, "it was a struggle. My daughter would be crying and screaming to get homework done. I had to help her with everything." (*Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement.*)

"I would have to sit with her the whole time. I was constantly on the school website to see what her homework was," said Jeanine. She admitted that she did more homework than she should have but at least "I was able to get her through with passing grades." (Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered—positive self-efficacy.)

Rachal, Parent 6 is a working mother, who has two businesses that required long hours of work. Although she had little time to help her daughter hands-on, she was confident that between the tutor that she secured for her daughter and her advocacy, she made a difference, although the amount of tutor time and advocacy "did not reflect on her

grades." Nevertheless, Rachal stated, "I have confidence that I made a difference but felt I had to be a complete advocate." (Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered—positive self-efficacy.)

Rachal was struck by the fact that the school never provided any accommodations for her daughter even with a diagnosis of ADHD and significant symptoms. (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement.) Shortly after the first week of 6th grade, "my daughter started getting overwhelmed and frustrated and started doing poorly. She began labeling herself stupid. That was enough for me! I had to become involved."

Part of that involvement was advocacy, as well as getting a tutor to her daughter several times a week, helping her with organizational skills, getting teachers to eventually stop giving so much homework, initiating either email or in-person communication with teachers and even going into daughter's locker on the occasions where the teacher told Rachal that her daughter had missing homework. "I definitely wanted my daughter to take ownership and be responsible to do her homework but the school didn't help. I want to empower my kids," she said and as part of the plan, she asked the teachers to sign a homework check sheet. "I developed a log book with check sheets for homework assignments. If she passed the assignment, the teacher checks the box, acknowledging that my daughter did the assignment(s)," said Rachal.

Nadia, Parent 7, whose son had been identified as a child with attention deficit problems, knew what she had to do when, in 6th grade, her son was having difficulties in school. She left her job as a health care administrator because her son's academic and homework difficulties resulted in depression, impacting Nadia's son's self-esteem and his mood. His fledgling self-esteem further hindered his academic work including his ability

to complete homework as well as study for his tests. Nadia quit her job because she was confident that she could help her son and believed he would not get all the assistance he needed without her undivided attention. (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement.).

Nadia exclaims "He has ADHD! He procrastinates and gets disorganized so I help him prioritize. I am proactive and as his parent felt obligated to get the tools, including an extra set of books, to have inclusive information for each subject". "I also give him reminders often, such as asking a teacher for a study sheet."

Nadia still is very involved with helping her son with school. Nadia transferred her son to a private SPED School and he is now in 7th grade. Nadia is happy to say that she now "downloads each Edline (school website) subject screen" so she can keep track of her son's assignments and due dates.

Theme 4: Parents Recommend Schools Provide More Collaboration and Student Support

All seven parents made recommendations even though not solicited. In fact each parent was taken aback by the absence of communication and lack of a sense of partnership as compared to elementary school and pointed out that they got the impression that in middle school, parents are not considered part of the youth's education, except when things are going very wrong and the school asks the parent do something, such as getting the youth tested. All the parent participants suggested middle schools provide more collaboration among school administration, teachers and parents in order to create a partnership in student success.

In that process, the parent participants urged schools to provide teachers with the tools and environment in order that they may provide adequate student support services and the appropriate tools so that youth can experience positive academic achievement. Further, it was felt that youth with ADHD were entitled to accommodations and those needed to be implemented for those eligible youths.

Jamie, Parent 1, felt that schools should have more preventative strategies, including ways of identifying at-risk students, do needs-based assessments and provide what those students need (Subtheme: schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD) and "it is important that I feel and my son feels that teachers care," which Jamie did not sense was the case at the parochial school. Her advice centered on the importance of having caring teachers, who want to partner with the parent and the youth and help the student secure accomplishments. (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support; Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration; Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD.)

Antonio, Parent #2, was a proponent of cutting down on homework as well as providing accommodations for his daughter as well as other youth with ADHD. These accommodations included extra time for tests, homework assistance programs, prepared lecture notes, reduced homework, seating in the front of the classroom and checking in with the youth for understanding of the instruction. This parent also believes that youth who are not making effective progress and continue to receive failing grades, should receive specially designed instruction by placing them on an Individual Education Plan. He stated that schools should "put kids who continue to fail on IEPs" (Subtheme: Schools

should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD). This father felt very strongly that schools should also provide extra help and before- or after- school programs for homework help, as well as give parents some tools to work with the kids at home (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support). In the school Antonio's daughter was in, there were large class sizes, and Antonio felt there should be a policy statement by school leaders around class sizes as this makes it more difficult for youth with academic struggles to get enough attention.

For Loretta, Parent 3, "ideally I would have liked to have a weekly note or checklist of her issues and accomplishments—like a weekly report card" (tools). In this way, this parent felt strongly that "we could have prevented the issues or catch them before they became such a problem." She suggested that administration step in with the homework overload in middle school. (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support.)

Loretta also suggested that all persons involved (teachers, administration parents, students) should be more collaborative. Additionally, she urged that schools not wait until there is an annual IEP meeting or a major problem before reaching out to parents. Loretta suggests a much more proactive partnership approach in middle school because she feels middle school is actually a more volatile, precarious, and vulnerable time for students than any other period. (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support; Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration; and Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD.)

However, Loretta wanted to send the message that school administration should be mindful of class sizes and how many students their teachers are responsible for. "The school should have after-school tutoring in middle school," stated Tasha, Parent #4, a single parent, who had been frustrated with the hours she spent after work, helping and teaching her middle school daughter her lessons while she had her younger daughter with Down's syndrome who needed her attention.

Tasha also had other excellent suggestions including that middle schools should provide an online syllabus for each subject class "every quarter" so parents and students can stay on track, check to see "what's due" and if the student was given credit for assignments that were passed in, identify and review upcoming tests and test materials, confirm dates when certain chapters are being covered in each subject, etc. (*Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support*).

Tasha's third recommendation was for middle school administration to incorporate, as a class in the school day, an advisory-type workshop/class (*collaborative tool for student and teacher*) where the mentor or a teacher (such as the youth's homeroom teacher) facilitates an active "study" where the facilitator can

- 1. assist students with planning, research, task management and organization,
- 2. help students set goals and work toward those objectives and monitor their progress toward those goals, and
- 3. give students a chance to meet with their teacher/mentor for consultation and advisement on a one-to-one basis.

Tasha was also on board with the importance of schools proactively providing accommodations to students with special needs (*Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD*).

For Jeanine, Parent 5, one of the major things that helped her as a parent to successfully assist her youth with homework and studying was the school website (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support). Jeanine spoke often of how she was able to go on the school website and get her daughter's homework, see if homework assignments and tests were checked off and graded, and the website made it possible for Jeanine to be aware and knowledgeable about upcoming tests, what her daughter was studying by chapter, and see deadlines. All this was useful in order to help her youth with homework, studying and overall academic achievement. Although feeling that the homework was burdensome in middle school, it was easier to keep ahead of it with the website. The website was also helpful in monitoring her daughter's progress and checking her grade status. This was especially important because this school's culture promoted limited parent contact. Some other suggestions Jeanine made were: to accommodate students with disabilities in some way, such as reduced homework, offer study notes, provide un-timed test-taking, and offer multiple ways of striving for academic success such as give a performance task in a different modality that pencil and paper test (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD).

Jeanine also suggested that when a student is in middle school, teachers and administrators should deal with them in a developmentally-appropriate way as opposed to "preparing them for high school," as was articulated by the school administration. This is particularly important for a youth's first year of middle school.

Finally, Jeanine suggested that school administration be more open to listening to parents—maybe in the form of a parent forum to pay attention to parent input and ideas

(Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration). She believes that if the leadership knew about the vast amount of homework and studying that was being put on the students, it would be addressed and coordinated in a fair proportionate way. Instead, she feared voicing her ideas and perspective because she got the impression that there may be retaliation and that it would be directed towards her youth.

Rachal, Parent 6, felt that the availability and opportunity for collaboration and student support should rest on the administration and she holds the administration responsible for not creating an atmosphere and culture that promotes and makes these things more possible. Rachal stated that "more preventative" initiatives should be in place so that students don't need "fixing" when the system fails them, commenting how even the private school her daughter attended in 6th grade, was more "reactive" instead of "proactive."

However, she stated "teachers are disempowered because of the system." There is nothing in place that this parent knew of, to assist the students, including the special needs students (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD), with things like study skills and homework help (Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support). When she inquired about this, she learned that a tutor could be found through the school but that it was an extra cost. Moreover, the administration was aware of the tremendous increase in homework but remained hands-off instead of taking an approach to set policies that would reduce homework and test-studying being assigned by multiple teachers each day. The administration, according to Rachal, did not have a feedback system in place so that parents would be aware of policies and activities that were impeding or enhancing

student progress and success. (*Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration*). Rachal stated "I had to call every meeting". Certain teachers would initiate emails, but that wasn't the norm or a policy. "The school never offered a "learning strategies program or class".

According to Rachal, teachers were not expected to offer extra help even or a learning strategies class, even if for a student in need, like a student with a disability such as ADHD, at the school her daughter was in. If they provided this, it would be considered "extra services" and come with a cost, a monetary charge. Otherwise, the school would recommend the student transfer over to their SPED school, which does offer specially designed instruction, accommodations study skills seminars, and other academic enhancements (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD). However, their SPED school is notably more expensive. (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD).

"I definitely wanted my daughter to take ownership and be responsible to do her homework, but the school didn't help empower my kid". By mid-year of 6th grade, Rachal designed a check sheet that teachers would sign when her daughter passed in the homework. "I developed a log book with check sheets for homework assignments for passing in to have teachers check acknowledging that my daughter did the assignment". Rachal recommended that school administrations have parent-collaboration programs. They should also empower teachers, give them policies, training, guidance and the tools to deliver best practice teaching and subsequently, encourage teachers to empower students, offer students with challenges such as ADHD, accommodations to give them a

fair chance and engage parents (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to vouth with ADHD).

A suggestion Rachal had for parent communication included teachers connecting with parents on a regular basis especially to say something positive about their youth.

(Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support; Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration; Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD.)

Nadia, Parent 7, stressed the importance of tools for students and ways for both the students and parents get information for each subject (*Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support*). She was promoting the idea that schools should have online access to this information, but when her son went to the parochial school in 6th grade, they had no such resource. As such, Nadia ordered an extra set of books and had to reach out continuously to the teachers to kept things on track. Nadia strongly recommended that all schools, especially middle schools, have an online Management System with student and parent portals, where each subject teacher provides a calendar of homework assignments, check off assignments received, test dates, study notes, and the textbook online.

Nadia also said, "...give him (her son) the tools he needs so when he gets out into the world, he can stand on his own.... I don't want him to use ADHD as a crutch." According to Nadia, the number one tool to give her son would be to teach him to be his own advocate and enhance his self-confidence. In addition, she urged teachers and school administrations to honor and practice the appropriate accommodations for students who need them (Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD). If

they are missing assignments, Nadia suggested that teachers be proactive and document all assignments and due dates on an online school website or notify the parent and student in some way. She believed in second chances for students, so students stay motivated, such as being given an opportunity to make up a missed assignment and get partial credit. The administration in the school Nadia's son went to did not have a website for students and parents to monitor progress. Her suggestion was for schools to have a school website with a student and parent portal that served as a subject/academic management system. In the new school her son attends, Nadia enjoyed the parent-teacher organization (PTO) and suggested that all middle schools have a PTO because it generatesd a "great collaborative atmosphere."

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group of school psychologists who work in a middle school was used to provide another voice to the earlier parent interviews. This process, known as triangulation increased the confidence level in the study's findings. These practitioners had provided their unique perspective on the subject of parental involvement of youth with ADHD and their perception of the school's responsibility to engage and support parents, particularly around parent involvement in homework and studying.

In this section only aspects related to the themes identified above from the parent interviews are discussed: The focus group consisted of three school psychologists (Veronica, Susan and Nancy). Veronica and Susan are also parents of middle school-age children and Nancy is a parent of two—a son who is now in college and had a typical profile and a daughter who is in high school who experienced attention problems,

becoming overwhelmed and consequently suffered from depression. Nancy's daughter chose to finish her senior year in high school online using a homeschool curriculum.

I observed that Nancy came across in the focus group as more sensitized to the issues of middle school and to students who are challenged by a disability, such as ADHD. Incidentally, Nancy had also been a middle school teacher in a parochial as well as a private school, which gave her additional perspectives relative to the population I am looking at for this study.

The school psychologists were eager to share their experiences. All but the individual who had also been a middle school teacher (Nancy) had the viewpoint that parent involvement at the middle school level primarily consist of parents "being there for school activities," "open houses" and "parent-teacher night," which typically occurs after report cards mid-school year. This notion offers an insight into why parents perceived their respective schools as not being collaborative or inviting.

As will be seen in the Q&A session below, the psychologists were not able to share their knowledge of any school-initiated programs to assist parents and students with homework and study skills, which may indicate their lack of awareness that this is a need. The members of the focus group noted that a school's responsibility to encourage parent involvement would be satisfied by offering open houses, award programs, fairs such as science fair or art fairs, although Nancy supported additional programs, such as guidance classes where students can learn study strategies and social skills. The primary idea of the other two psychologists was that at the middle school level, open house and the typical school activities is what they believe school involvement should encompass. Susan then added that in the middle school there are two programs where the school reaches out,

other than when they ask parents to volunteer. However, these programs are not aimed at parents of youth with disabilities but more to families who have experienced economic hardship or whose children have behavioral concerns. The social workers in the public school system in Susan's district offer parenting classes, called "The Active Parenting," where they assist homeless families and offer a few sessions of effective parenting skills training.

According to the two school psychologists who worked in the public school system for several years, budget cuts and the emphasis on the Florida State Assessment or the FSA, formerly the FCAT) scores and now the Common Core tests, over-take the priority to have district-run programs to provide classes on study skills and homework management or initiatives to engage parents inter-collaboratively.

Both Veronica and Susan did report that sometimes a motivated staff member or teacher may kick off a new program, but these are isolated incidents. For instance, in one school in Susan's district, the band leader had a club for parents of the students in the band and students and parents would have activities outside of the concerts for the families. In Veronica and Susan's district, some areas provide home visits by the social workers as well as "groups for kids" and an "active parenting program" to "train parents on various skills" and "offer babysitting."

Veronica reminds the group that "...teachers reaching out and teacher productivity varies from school to school and that depends on the tone set by the principal", but this happens "more often at the elementary level." Nancy then interjected and said, "I've seen parents become so overwhelmed with their middle school child that they don't know what to do." The transitional year seems to be most memorably

traumatic and chaotic for the many students, who already are challenged by other issues (ADHD, ASD, emotional struggles, a learning disability, etc.). She attributes this to the youth's responses to the transitional issues, such as having multiple teachers, a dramatic homework increase, a considerable amount of studying, and "class switching," something that "these kids are not used to doing."

Only focus group member Nancy seemed to be able to wear a parent hat and point out the shortage of school invitations and lack of collaborative efforts relative to the school toward the general parent community. "Some schools don't make parents feel welcome," she conceded. Nancy brought up how even when the school where she worked, sent out communications, they were in English with no effort to reach the diverse population of parents, many of who are non-English speakers. Nancy went on to say, "...some parents are embarrassed to ask for instructions and communication in their own language, which means that typically, those parents aren't always going to initiate any conversation."

Relative to students having meltdowns, Nancy witnessed this often. She stated, "I've seen many parents become so overwhelmed with their middle school child…between the multiple teachers, class switching, large amounts of homework and studying." She said that schools don't do nearly enough to engage and collaborate with parents, "…and if the teacher doesn't catch it, kids and parents get lost." She felt that if the school did more, all kids would benefit and kids who have issues would have a fair chance

"For starters, schools should have a pre-meeting with middle-school parents so they would know what to expect. They should do this for the kids who are starting middle

school because I think that could help them feel more comfortable and help get them acclimated," said Nancy. A meeting like this might also be valuable so the schools could get input from the children and parents in order to prepare for the year ahead and anticipate solutions for possible problem areas. For example, Nancy brought up a former school, where the school administration set up a homework policy where only two subject areas could give homework or studying responsibilities in a given day. This almost completely eliminated the problems with homework overload that all our parents' students experienced in the study. This idea had come from some parents and according to Nancy, "the school listened and made that policy." In business, many top companies go through these types of exercises on a regular basis. They include customers, line staff, management and other stakeholders. The concept is sometimes called a process improvement approach. It reminds me that our parents and our students are the consumers/customers and they have a stake in this. I wonder if the schools would hear the parents in my study and take another look at their homework policies and parent communication initiatives.

Given below is the gist of the focus group Q&A session:

• In your opinion, regarding homework and studying, what can parents do to positively influence their youth's academic achievement?

Response: Keep the youth organized, provide a well-lit and quiet section of the home for study, help the youth prioritize and assist in structuring the time allotted to homework and studying. If the school has an online program, do check-ins on the site to insure your youth is doing their work and meeting deadlines, show an interest and demonstrate caring to support progress, be

there for school activities, especially open house and parent-teacher meetings, email your youth's teacher and create a positive rapport with your student's teachers, and if your youth is on a 504, send a reminder message to the teacher. As the reader can see, there was no mention of collaborative activities with the school.

 What kinds of things does your school do to partner with parents in order for them to get involved effectively with home tasks?

Response: Open house, science and art fairs, music activities, awards ceremonies, ask for volunteers for activities like field trips, and in catholic schools, invitations to attend Mass and religious ceremonies. Notably, the specific question was not really addressed by the focus group. The question asked about school partnering around helping parents with home tasks like homework and studying. No tools were mentioned, nor any offerings at school for things like homework clubs, learning strategies classes or parent involvement as partners. Nevertheless, the school psychologists in the focus group all affirmed that parental involvement increases student achievement but their idea of parent involvement was different from what was being presented in the study, as identified above. However, all agreed that when parents play an active role in the educational process, it can serve as a source of personal motivation for students. The consensus was that students are more likely to take their studies seriously when they know that their parents are supporting their academic success.

- What, if any, are the differences in the school approach and offerings, among parents of typical youth versus parents of youth with attention problems/ADHD?
 - Response: For the public-school system, if the youth with AHD is on a 504 Accommodation plan, they will receive those accommodations. A common accommodation is un-timed tests for high stakes tests even in non-public schools. The focus group members could not think of any programs or offerings in their school system that were in place that were specific to the needs of youth with attention difficulties.
- How do you think these school behaviors affect the efficacy of parents to partner with the school in order to positively influence their youth's academic achievement? In the public school system, those students would be on a 504 and thus be afforded with the accommodations as written in their 504 Accommodation Plan. In private and parochial schools, this is discretionary, but typically the only accommodation offered would be un-timed tests for high stakes exams. Nancy noted that "in a parochial school, if the teacher doesn't catch it (needs that deserve accommodations), then the kids and parents can get lost." She went on to say in her experience, the teachers didn't identify the youth that required accommodations. As such, those youth's parents would have to pay for extra services, such as tutoring or study skills groups (which in some cases are offered in the private and parochial schools for a cost). The psychologists did not address the question specific to affecting the efficacy of parents to partner with the school.

- Explain how your middle school reaches out to parents? Please discuss any services, programs or initiatives that encourage parent partnership & participation, especially relative to homework and studying tasks?

 Veronica and Susan' responses: Our schools don't have a lot of after-hours for parents it tends to be teacher by teacher. Many of our public schools eliminated sports activities for the students "but the students and parents needed this."
- Think about the behaviors, school climate and other factors (e.g., cultural factors) in your school community that may influence parental school involvement. Please discuss?

Responses: Susan stated "diversity is huge — schools need to send communications in the home language." The schools that do this tend to have a higher parent attendance at activities and parent-teacher meetings. All focus group members agreed that some schools don't make parents feel welcome as they don't address the cultural differences or communicate in the parent's first language. Other than beginning of the year Open House and the usual parent-teacher meeting after report card, there were two school initiatives mentioned by the group. For suggestions, Nancy had an idea for middle schools, which was to initiate and implement parent and student orientations, especially for the transition year of middle school (at the very least). She was not aware of any such program in the schools she had worked at, however. Once this idea was introduced, Susan remembered an isolated program that was piloted in one of the middle schools called "pairs" where

mentoring parent partners act as support for new middle school parents, which established networks of support. The goal was for families to be more able to actively engage in their child's education, which led to "improved academic outcomes" for the students whose parents were involved. When this example was introduced in the focus group, all agreed this would be a valuable program for any middle school.

• In your experience how do you think these factors affect the efficacy and decision of a parent of a typical youth, to become involved with helping their youth with homework and studying? Now, discuss these factors and parental efficacy and decision-making relative to parents of youth with ADHD? What are the differences (if any)?

Responses: Two issues came up relative to this question. The school psychologists Veronica and Susan stated that the schools had incentives for high achieving students, such as awards ceremonies and gifted programs.

Susan stated that parents of "gifted children" tend to attend school activities and meetings since they "like hearing positive things about their kids." This could be very telling – that giftedness is rewarded and celebrated in the schools but possibly parents with youth who have disabilities indirectly are not invited and thus are not "there" because their youth are not celebrated? As a side-note, parent involvement to the school psychologists meant attendance at school functions and celebrations and interestingly, these school psychologists from the public school system never mentioned or addressed the questions about 'parent involvement in homework and study

tasks' for middle school. Regarding the parents in my study feeling a lack of invitation to get involved, the school psychologists corroborated that sense that parents are outsiders and not considered partners in the education of their middle school youth. All the parents in my study complained that they had to force involvement and claimed the school did not have any programs (other than an open house and parent teacher night). If the school psychologists' views are reflective of the school administration, it could be the perceptions of school personnel. What appears to be highlighted in the schools where the psychologists work, is that parents of youth who are gifted have specific programs geared for parents of gifted youth and those parents feel invited because of the reinforcement given to them and their children as well as the positive attention in the form of awards ceremonies etc.

Conversely, there is a lack of programs to help, support, and include parents of youth with disabilities.

- Discuss how, as a middle school psychologist, you understand parental self-efficacy and how a parent's sense of efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in their youth's school-related tasks?

 Responses: "Confident", parents feeling "connected." The focus group members did not elaborate on this response. However, they did endorse the idea that if a parent felt connected and had confidence, they would be more likely to participate in their youth's school-related tasks.
- Tell me about your thoughts relative to parental self-efficacy and in what ways parental efficacy might have an impact on a parent's motivation to assist

their youth with home-school tasks like homework.

Responses: Again, the focus group members felt that efficacy did play a role in a parent's motivation to assist their youth and all agreed that connectedness to the educational institution could play a role in a parent's efficacy.

• How do you think a parent's efficacy may differ if they have a youth with attention problems/ADHD versus a typically developing student?
Responses: The focus group members thought similarly on the question about potentially differing approaches if a parent had a youth with ADHD -there would be "no difference."

Composite Description of the Experience

The final step of my analysis was establishing an amalgamated description of the experience. Through the synthesis of the insights obtained from the parent participant's responses a composite narrative highlighting the commonalities within the participants' varied experiences was generated. After my investigation and examination of the data, it was important to present a descriptive summation of the essence of the phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, I looked at the transition year of middle school (6th grade) for each participant's youth, so that the contrast from elementary to middle school and the impact on the parent and their youth could be fully observed and examined.

Researcher Observations

All of the seven parents obtained tutors for their youth as a result of the increased homework load and the response to the transition by their middle-school student. Of the seven parent participants three secured additional professional services for the negative

emotional outcome (feeling overwhelmed, anger issues, depression) that they believe was triggered by the various transition issues, such as having multiple teachers and notably more homework and studying responsibilities.

Although two parents also reported that in their own childhood, they had experienced ADHD and had struggled in school; their decision to get involved with their youth's homework and studying was instinctual due to their youth struggles and meltdowns, as with the other five parents. In other words, their past negative experiences did not have an impact on making a decision to get involved nor did their past lack of confidence influence them in any way. They had the positive self-efficacy relative to having confidence that they made a difference for their middle-school youth by jumping in to assist with homework and studying.

This finding does not support the Rogers et al.'s(2009) study that suggested that parents who themselves had ADHD had lower self-efficacy than typical parents and that these same parents felt a lack of engagement towards their child's school and teacher, which led them to be discouraged, and subsequently exclude themselves from participation in helping their youth with schoolwork.

This was not the case in my study. Of note is that Roger's sample size was quite small and may not have been reflective of the population as a whole. All seven parents in my study reported positive self-efficacy in helping their youth to the point where they believed that without their involvement, their youth would have failed or become so overwhelmed about the homework volume in middle school that depression and anger would have sabotaged their ability to move forward.

In fact six of the seven parents (excluded is Parent #6) admitted to being distrustful of the school's commitment to their child's success and used that impression to be even more involved. All but one parent's involvement in homework and studying help was very hands-on and extensive because of the volume of the homework— which all parents reported to have increased by two-to-four folds from elementary school to middle school. The one parent who was not sitting with her youth for homework, had a tutor for her daughter several times a week for this purpose, and was actively advocating to get the school and teachers to reduce the homework, besides going to the school and initiating face-to-face teacher conferences and finding her daughter's missing homework assignments by rummaging through her locker. All parents endorsed attending school activities when invited. Each parent was significantly involved in their youth's education in elementary school. As such, they became accustom to a high level of parental involvement in the educational process and were disillusioned with the difference in middle school.

From their experiences of seeing their youth struggle and fail in middle school, emerged a sense of the urgency and importance of parental involvement in the middle school regarding the following: helping their youth with homework, studying, and managing the tasks to insure their son or daughter were completing the home assignments and preparing for tests. The youth did benefit from their parent's involvement and in some cases, the school personnel addressed the unintended result of large amounts of homework by decreasing it. The school psychologists in the focus group demonstrated little understanding of the impact of increased homework and transitional issues that

occur at middle school, nor did they see the part they might play in bridging the gap between the parents and the school system.

Where the parents were driven to become very involved in order to "save" their youth from failure and possible depression, the sense I got from the psychologists was that they lacked awareness of the gravity of the problem and further, did not see that increased collaborative efforts between school and parents would benefit students. Their comments centered on the idea that the mandatory twice-a-year meetings, such as at the beginning of the year-open house and after report cards are issued mid-year, were sufficient. Their true concept of what actually goes on from either camp (school system and parents), seemed disconnected.

The parents, on the other hand, understood the necessity of parental support in guiding a child's education, at the middle school level, especially for those youth with ADHD. However, this perspective was not shared, from the study parents' perspective, by most school personnel, such as teachers and administration. The disconnection and hands-off approach by most administrations may be the result of leadership being unaware of the issues the youth in middle school face, including

- 1. The encouragement of independence after coming from a relatively nurturing environment (elementary school).
- 2. At the elementary level, the substantial amount of parent involvement and homework divided by one or two teachers versus multiple teachers and mountains of homework.

Is it that the school personnel and administrators I general just aren't aware because they do not "ask" the parents for their views? Most parents in my study

complained that there was so much homework once their youth got to middle school, their youth had no time for extracurricular activities or to engage in after-school recreational and family time, and most parents reported the arguments, crying and resistance on the part of the youth as a reaction to the large amount of work.

Aside from Nancy, the members of the focus group, did not perceive the transitional year of middle school as problematic and did not address the subject at all. The emphasis seemed to be on listing activities and school functions that parents can attend and thus, be involved. The one focus group member who had also been a teacher (Nancy) had a great suggestion which was that middle schools should have pre-meetings (e.g., orientation) – one for the parents, one for the students so among other things, they would know what to expect and in that way, the schools could get input for the students and parents.

To recap, the following themes and subthemes emerged from my interview with parents of middle school students with ADHD:

- 1. Theme: Transition barriers
 - Subtheme: School-teacher-parent-youth relationship challenges
 - Subtheme: Homework increase/school support decrease
 - Subtheme: Student overload
 - Subtheme: Student overwhelmed and parent to the rescue
- 2. Theme: Communication breakdown
 - Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership
 - Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies
- 3. Theme: Instinctual parent involvement and confidence

- Subtheme: Parents feeling empowered—positive self-efficacy
- Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement
- 4. Theme: Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support
 - Subtheme: The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support
 - Subtheme: Middle schools should increase collaboration
 - Subtheme: Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD

The focus group of school psychologists seemed to stand behind the idea that parent involvement ceases in elementary school and did not want to encourage a parental role that included collaboration and communication, at the middle school level. The parents in my study, however, wanted respect among school personnel and teachers, and for the school system and teachers to embrace the ongoing role of parents in middle school education. The parents in my study all agreed that they did not feel invited or considered important by the school regarding to their youth's academic success. All the parents voiced their concern that the lack of collaboration and the insensitivity to workload as well as the dismissal of needed accommodations for their youth, who have ADHD, set a series of unfortunate events for their youth, including emotional shut down, being overwhelmed and having sadness, anger or depression and academic failure. In addition, the transitional issues of middle school and the lack of awareness on the part of the school (regarding the effect on the students with disabilities – specifically ADHD), resulted in loss of extracurricular activities and family time on the mild end to family turmoil and a need for professional help on the more extreme cases, such as Parent #3's

scenario. All the parents reported that their middle school youth had meltdowns and that the parent felt no choice but to step in (rescue) and make sure there were parent and/or tutors for the hours a night of homework and studying. Due to the communication breakdown parents described between the home and school (culpability on the school per parents) parents urged schools to establish open and positive communication with parents. In view of their personal perceptions concerning parent involvement, parents stressed the necessity for the school administration and teachers to be working collaboratively with them and other teachers. Also, instead of discouraging parent involvement, parents suggested school systems support parents who want to take a more active role in their youth's education. For school administration these parents recommended that school leadership: provide teachers the tools and resources as well as the appropriate class sizes so they can support and motivate students to successful academic outcomes and so the teachers can make the effort to assist parents with getting the resources they need to participate in their youth's education. Of most importance, according to all the parents, is an online learning community management system* with both a student and parent portal, such as Edline. This was considered optimal for non face-to-face communication. Other suggestions included regular academic check-ins by the school and teaching staff. All the parents in my study complained that the middle school, in their youth's transition year, did not provide assistance to their youth even though they had a diagnosis of ADHD and were failing. Parents asserted that for youth with challenges such as ADHD, accommodations to give them a fair chance (such as the check list log, study notes, extra time on tests, performance tasks that are alternative to paper and pencil testing, etc.) are paramount and should be standard in any school.

Because middle school is a precarious period (especially that 1st year coming from elementary environment) all the parents reported that middle school should be a time when youth be provided with increased guidance, support and additional tools and a time when collaboration should be amplified. The parents cited several strategies, including school-based programs and activities, including learning strategies-type class, after or before school homework clubs, an online website for class and learning management, parent input opportunities. One parent suggested that even a PTO could be successful to encourage positive communication among all stakeholders. As in elementary school, parents want to become more active in the school, especially because their experiences were so positive in the elementary grades but also because of the extra challenges and stresses that middle school brings and for parents of youth with ADHD, they endorsed increased vulnerability. Building positive working relationships with parents was emphasized as a key strategy in encouraging collaboration for positive student outcomes. All seven parents pointed out that school administrative buy-in and support would certainly be an essential contributor to the successful facilitation of parental involvement and student success programs.

Ethical Accountability

Inherent in the generalizations that research produces, is the emphasis on the responsibility of the researcher to maintain accountability so as to retain the validity of the performed research. As such, to minimize the risk, I took measures to establish ethical accountability including Trustworthiness, Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability.

Trustworthiness

As a qualitative researcher, I needed to have rigor in my study, which was achieved by establishing a verification process of reliability and validity strategies as identified in Shaw & Murphy (2013). In this way, I minimized bias and strengthened my accountability. As such, I was focused on providing evidence of data trustworthiness in assuring reliability and validity. Trustworthiness was achieved by the use of three methods: the semi structured interview, participant observation, and follow up interviews to confirm and/or clarify experiences and perspectives. I checked for bias and reflexivity by using journaling as well as utilizing of a Ph.D. individual with qualitative research experience, who will validate themes I have extracted by sampling 5–7 pages of my coding work to establish inter-rater reliability.

I then established and subsequently facilitated a follow-up phone meeting with the parent participants to confirm the data that I had recorded manually on my notepad and offered them additional input and perspective taking after they had time to process and reflect on our first interview. In my journal, I described and interpreted my behavior and experiences throughout the research with three types of information, as identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985): the daily schedule and logistics of the study, a methods log and rationale.

Trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. One way to attain credibility is to use triangulation, which is the purpose of the focus group. I had to consider the trustworthiness of the data collected and use some the strategies as noted above, to ensure validity especially in the interpretation, in view of potential bias and cultural influences as Creswell (2013) points out. Qualitative

research embodies an interpretative approach that is focused on exploring phenomena by taking the participants' perspectives and revelations (Flick, 2009). To confirm the trustworthiness of the information and interpretations gleaned from the interviews in my study, I included the strategies of the Ph.D. reviewer and the focus group of middle school psychologists, which assisted me in creating internal validity. This included member checking, triangulation and reflexivity.

Credibility

This relates to how well the results reflect what the participants were attempting to convey (Lincoln &Guba, 1985). To protect credibility in the findings of this research, it was critical that I collected the data in a way that reflected the data accurately as well as the perceptions of each parent participant was consistent with their experience. Several strategies were implemented in this study to contribute to credibility. Prior to beginning the interview process of the data collection, I used a bracketing method called reflexive journaling. Reflexive journaling was used to record my preconceptions for the purpose of increasing self-awareness and limiting the influence of my subjectivity on the data itself (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014). Prior to the interview process, I used reflexive journaling by answering the guided parent interview questions (Appendix B) as well as guiding focus group questions (appendix H) and documented my responses in my computer journal.

This process helped me identify my biases regarding the phenomenon and bracket them before data collection and analysis. During the interview process, I used open-ended semi structured interviewing and actively listened to responses, did verbatim note-taking in a separate notebook, initiated probing and clarifying questions, as well as encouraged

elaboration, with the participants in order that the data collected was accurate and captured the essence of their experiences—additionally doing ongoing member-checking throughout the interviews.

Again, follow-up phone meetings took place to further clarify and identify meanings and experiences of the parent participants. In that call, the parents were asked to acknowledge accuracies, inaccuracies, and discrepancies relative to the summary I provided to them from our first interview. All of the above allowed for the collection of richer responses from the participants. In my journal, I documented my personal observations (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly & Renshall, 2013), which is a bracketing method, as this allowed me, as the researcher, to reflect and examine my own feelings and biases about the data that led me to deeper insights about the research. This process was done right after the interview so I could consider and dissect the information while it was new.

During the interview process, all seven participants provided well-described explanations and illustrations of the phenomenon. During the process of data gathering and analysis, I repeatedly scrutinized the information to establish the point at which no new themes emerged from the interviews. Once interviews were completed, the data was collected and analyzed, then coded, and also member checked. I completed a final verification to make certain that saturation had been achieved. Every identified theme was examined to determine that it had been described and substantiated sufficiently in order to achieve saturation (Mason, 2010).

Triangulation was also implemented as a strategy to enhance the dependability of the study and as verification for the credibility process as described by Tracy (2010).

Adding the focus group to this inquiry was my pursuit for corroborating evidence. Seven

diverse parent participants formed the case study sample of this study. Although all parent participants were parents of middle school youth with ADHD, parents were of differing races and cultures (including African-American, Caucasian and Hispanic) and there were both male and female parents. In my study, both the focus group and the parent participants, parochial/private and public middle schools were represented. To further enhance the credibility of this study, I examined the data to identify discrepant cases. No discrepant cases were found during data analysis. By comparing the insights of these different individuals, I could triangulate the findings to develop assenting support for the emergent themes. As such, I had the convergence of multiple perspectives for correlating confirmation of data. To minimize the distortion of data as well as to alleviate interpretation bias, I assessed the triangulated data sources against one another as well as crosscheck data. This was done by comparing multiple parent responses, analyzing and comparing as well as contrasting the discussions of the focus group of middle school psychologists.

Transferability

Transferability is defined as the generalizability of the results across other individuals or settings (Transferability, 2009). Transferability within this study was accomplished by the acquisition of thick descriptions which afforded me substantially detailed responses to the open-ended interview questions. This enhanced the transferability of the study and allowed me to gather rich imageries from the parent participants. Thick description involves a detailed, context-heavy depiction of the participant's perceptions and experiences (Guion et al., 2011). I used probing questions to elicit more detailed responses from participants. Through this process, I was able to

collect data which offered a more vivid background through which the participant's perspective could be viewed. I validated emerging themes. Because the descriptions were rich, I was able to present the data in a way (above) that the reader can assess and confirm the research discoveries. Through these rich and thick descriptions, it was easy for the reader to see evidence of this important phenomenon. This data were used to contextualize the findings reported in this study.

Dependability

To establish dependability which is assuring the study is reliable and replicable, some specific activities were implemented. Ferguson et al. (2013) suggested a detailed protocol. As such, I created a concise interview protocol (Appendix B), which allowed me to offer a way to replicate: if given the same context, methods and participants, a researcher would arrive at the same or similar results. I had developed four questions with imbedded sub-questions. Some sub-questions asked the same question but with alternate wording, just to insure consistency. I presented the questions in the same order for each participant—following a concise interview protocol to insure dependability. Periodically, the parent participants answered questions prematurely however. I wrote the response verbatim, reviewed each statement with the parent participant for how well it described the experience twice: once at the interview and again on the follow-up telephone meeting. I organized the invariant meaning units into themes and hand-coded insuring that quotations were identified with the matching descriptions and then to themes. Once steps were accomplished and checked and re-checked, I was able to arrive at the research findings.

Confirmability

The goal of confirmability is to ensure the data collected is neutral and free from researcher bias. As such, confirmability is the qualitative equivalent to the objectivity within quantitative studies (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In an interview setting, it is important that the researcher remember follow and not lead the direction of the interviews as well as do member checks by asking the interviewee if your understanding of what they stated was – and then rephrase the statement to insure contextual understanding. Even prior to me entering each interview, this researcher recorded in writing in my field journal, any preconceived beliefs related to the topic in order to set aside, or bracket these beliefs. I could be more confident that the identified themes were valid representations of the participants' views, and not merely a reflection of researcher bias. Bracketing these pre-conceived feelings and beliefs allowed me to approach data collection and analysis non-judgmentally. Incidentally, prior to each interview the participant and researcher read and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix C). Each interview was recorded by note-taking, by using a notebook. These written recordings of the interviews provide complete verbal records, and prevent the interviewer from making an unconscious selection of data favoring the interviewer's biases (Gall et al., 2007). Additionally, the other activity I employed with my field journal, were notes and reflections after coming out of each interview. This was an important step in identifying my bias and then eliminating bias in my research.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to explore how parents' of middle school youth with ADHD, experienced decision-making around helping their youth with

homework and the self-efficacy related to that homework help. In order to comprehend the parents lived experienced my undertaking was to interview parents of youth with ADHD who are in middle school and derive an understanding of these parents' decisions relative to their involvement with homework and school tasks. I specifically looked at the parents' experiences with their youth regarding home studies and explored the nature of the relationship between parental involvement and self-efficacy. In investigating the influence of parental self-efficacy through the seven cases via parent interviews, this study uncovered parental involvement decisions that were related to the their fears about their youth's mental state, from being overwhelmed over school work to school failure. All the parents who I interviewed in this study felt confident about getting involved and agreed that self-efficacy played a significant role in their decision with home studies and homework involvement. However, all the parents were to some extent, disappointed in the lack of communication by the school even when their youth was unable to do the school work and failing classes.

Semi structured interviews with seven parents served as the key method of data collection. In addition, I had a focus group of school psychologists for triangulation.

Several research questions guided this study.

Based on the central research question and sub-questions guiding this study, four themes emerged. The themes and subthemes are

1. Transition barriers

- (1a) school-teacher-parent-youth relationship challenges
- (1b) Homework increase/school support decrease
- (1c) Student overload and parent rescue

- 2. Communication breakdown
 - (2a) the perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership
 - (2b) Negative perception of school administration policies
- 3. Instinctual parent involvement and confidence
 - (3a) Parents feeling empowered (positive self-efficacy)
 - (3b) Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision
- 4. Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support
 - (4a) The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support
 - (4b) Middle schools should increase collaboration
 - (4c) Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD

The subthemes were: (1a) school-teacher-parent-youth relationship challenges, (1b) Homework increase/school support decrease (1 c) Student overload and parent rescue; (2a) the perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership, (2b) Negative perception of school administration policies;(3a) Parents feeling empowered (positive self-efficacy), (3b) Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision; (4a) The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support, (4b) Middle schools should increase collaboration, (5c) Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD.

In general, the parents shared their personal experiences around the factors that led to their decisions relative to the importance of their involvement with helping their youth with homework and studying in middle school. Parents, who all acknowledged positive self-efficacy in their ability to help their struggling middle school youth, urged

schools to enable and encourage two-way communication in middle school so that both school administration and teachers would be aware—by listening to parents—of the volume and impact of the workload once a student hits 6th grade (middle school transitional year).

Parents hoped that schools would understand that youth with ADHD can avoid school failure and increase academic outcomes if schools empower and arm parents with support, guidance and tools. Moreover, because of the nuances of middle school, parents felt strongly that, more than ever, their student required accommodations that are typical for youth with ADHD. All the parents in the study voiced their confidence that they were partially responsible for the positive outcomes for their youth with ADHD, and believed that without their interventions their youth would have been emotionally distraught and depressed, and would have failed for that school year. Prior to the parent stepping in, they all described their youth was experiencing school failures and exhibiting negative emotional responses and cognitive shut-down as a result of the dramatic workload increase, especially with homework. The parents in my study asserted that when their youth was in trouble, it was difficult to get an audience with the teacher.

Relative to the theme of *Transition barriers*, parents described the transition year of middle school (6th grade) as a substantially difficult transition because of multiple factors, including students going from one or two teachers in elementary school to having multiple teachers. The parents in the study agreed that this issue was inherent with problems including that it was more difficult to have a relationship with the teachers individually (*Subtheme: school-teacher-parent-youth relationship challenges*).

Regarding the *subtheme: Homework increase/school support decrease*, according to the parents, the multiple middle-school teachers were not aware of how much homework another teacher might have assigned so there was a major increase in workload, such as homework, tests, which translated into the youth (and parents) doing hours of homework and studying after school hours. Most parents complained that there was so much homework, their youth had no time for extracurricular activities or engage in after school recreational and family time. The parents in the study were also disappointed that, unlike elementary school where there were built-in supports, the middle schools involved did not offer support services such as before- or after-school tutoring, mentoring/adviser time, learning strategies classes or study skills programs.

A major concern by the parents in the study was deficient inter-collaboration among teachers and school administration. The parents in my study expressed school cultures that that lacked a sense of partnership (between the school and parents). The parents stated the teachers in the middle schools they were involved with did not seem inter-collaborative around assignments, which influenced the workload increase as well as confusion at home as to the approach of some assignments and how to prioritize tasks. Some parents stated in middle school, their student had four times as much homework and studying responsibility as when in elementary school. There is a large body of research that demonstrates the connection between youth with ADHD and the suggested need to accommodate these students because of their academic struggles, including offering reduced homework and untimed testing, especially in middle school (Dawson & Guare 2008a). Researchers such as Evans et al. (2005) and Langberg et al. (2008) found

that the transition to middle school was associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms for youth with ADHD.

According to this research, the observed increases in ADHD symptoms are likely due to increased demands and a heavier workload. In this study, the parents felt that with such a significant change, more support and involvement was needed—at least for the transition year and especially for youth with ADHD.

Instead they were faced with a culture in middle school that encouraged students to be independent and limited parent involvement to school activities (e.g., sports, fairs, and awards ceremonies), open house, or parent-teacher conference nights.

In the literature review I conducted, there was a significant body of research that showed youth whose parents are involved with their learning at home had increased learning outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). Yet, each of the parents in my study complained that they felt ignored by the school and teachers. The participant parents insisted they were not given tools to assist their youth, that they were discouraged from hands-on involvement, and not forewarned about the increased homework and studying load that ended up sending their middle school youth into frequent melt-downs and in some cases, depression. Relative to the *Subtheme:*Student overload and parent rescue, all but one student had "shut down" where they weren't able to attend to their homework unless a parent was sitting with them, helping them by teaching the material and in some cases doing some of the homework for them. In fact all parents in the study identified significant stressful responses by their youth once attending middle school. The unintended consequences of middle school transition especially around homework overload, was, according to all the parents in the study, was

family stress and sacrifice. The issue of homework in the amounts that were being reported, seemed to be impeding family time, eliminating extra-curricular activities, prompting arguments and stressed relationships among the youth and their parent(s), and triggering many emotional issues for the youth which led this writer to identify the theme of *Transition barriers*. Each and every parent in this study went to the youth's rescue (subtheme) and endorsed feeling almost desperate to provide help to their youth, triggered by their youth's distraught reaction to the changes (e.g., many teachers) as well as the overwhelming homework load.

With respect to the theme *Communication breakdown*, for the transitional year of middle school, six out of the seven parents complained about significantly-reduced collaboration, a lack of communication and little follow-up coming from the school and teachers once their youth entered middle school (*Subtheme: Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership*). Moreover, the parent participants were dissatisfied with the school climate and frustrated with the policies that were absent of home-school collaboration. Most of the parent paricipants inmy study blamed the school leadership more than the teachers, for a lack of communication and collaboration between home and school (*Subtheme: Negative perception of school administration policies*).

Each parent described that their decision-making to get involved was instinctual and their confidence level that they could and did make a difference (self-efficacy), was high. Regarding the theme of *Instinctual parent involvement and confidence*, in witnessing their youth struggling and in some cases going into depression, parents were instinctually moved to get involved with helping their youth with the homework and

studies (Subtheme: Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision). Most stated that they were compelled to step in after urging the school and/or teachers to engage or offer help and and not receiving school support. Regarding the subtheme of parents feeling empowered, every single parent in the study felt good about their ability to help their youth with homework and studying (Subtheme: positive self-efficacy) and made reference to the fact that they felt they rescued their youth from academic failure, either solely themselves or by augmenting their assistance with professionals such as a tutor or therapist.

Finally, during the interviews all the *parents recommended schools provide more collaboration and student support* and also made several other unsolicited suggestions for schools to be supportive and inclusive of students and parents. The theme centered around the schools creating a sense of *partnership* as the parents' perceptions were that in middle school, parents are not considered part of the youth's education except when things are going very wrong and the school asks the parent do something, such as getting the youth tested. In that process, the parent participants urged schools to provide teachers with the tools and an environment that supported positive academic achievement.

Further, parent participants felt that youth with ADHD were entitled to accommodations.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the research findings. An interpretation of the findings within the context of the literature is also presented. The chapter closes with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Interpretation

Introduction

In the implementation of this case study research, I focused on the perceptions of seven parents from the South Florida area who had youth in middle school diagnosed with ADHD. I looked primarily at the transition year of middle school (6th grade) and the decisions those parents made, relative to self-efficacy and other factors, in their choice to get involved in their youth's home studies.

Although the Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2005) theoretical model of parental involvement, which I examined in my literature review, identified efficacy and school invitation as two factors in parents' decisions to get involved, this was not the case in my study. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2004) looked at parental role constructions, including the parents' belief system about their role in their youth's education, parental sense of efficacy as it relates to the idea of feeling competent enough to assist youth with schoolwork to lead to positive academic outcomes, and a parent's perception about empowerment with regards to involvement. In Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2004) model, it was identified that when the incentive comes from the school or teacher through such things as invitations, opportunities, and expectations, it was more likely that parents would participate. However, the results of my study did not reflect this decisionmaking. In fact, all of the parents in my study got involved intrinsically because they felt their youth were drowning in work and desperation due to lack of communication and interaction with the school. The parents in my study did not feel empowered by the school or teachers to get involved. Toward the end of that school year, the parents did state that they felt that they had made a difference (positive self-efficacy) once they

entered into the decision to get involved in helping their youth with school and homework, regardless of their own efficacy.

The parents' confidence and efficacy did not have an impact on their decision to get involved but was instead an afterthought. The parents in my study all stated that they just knew they had to intervene because their youth were overwhelmed and failing, and in some cases exhibiting negative behavioral and/or emotional problems, and the school was not responding—or, if there was a response, it was not in a way that the parent believed would benefit the youth. In my study, parental self-efficacy was reinforced during the process of parental participation by the youth's positive response and recovery.

The decision to get involved was almost entirely due to the fact that the parents felt that their youths' schools were not communicating, were not collaborative, and did not offer tools to help youth with school tasks such as homework (e.g., afterschool homework help) and studying (e.g., study guides). As a result, the help extended by the parents was less about empowering the youth and more about seeking assistance to recoup the losses being felt by the students, as part of a recovery process that included outside tutoring, parental instruction, and direct homework help. One parent even admitted that she did more (homework) for her child than she should have.

The qualitative interviews were used to reveal school-parent relatedness and communication, the repercussions of transitioning from elementary school to middle school, especially relative to the youth's response as well as the parent's response, and the parents' suggestions to schools, especially concerning collaborative efforts and tools to increase supportive offerings and accommodations for youth with special needs such as ADHD

As seen in the cases in my study, each youth reportedly had a highly unstable transition year. According to the parents in my study, the first year of middle school was an overwhelming, tumultuous, and, vulnerable time for both the youth and the parents. Each parent felt ignored by the school and/or the teacher(s), and all the parents noted that they had made attempts to get involved, especially relative to their youth's homework and academic progress, but had received either no response or an inadequate response from the school. Additionally, for all of these students, their issue of ADHD was previously flagged by the school, and many had been identified to receive accommodations.

Although the expectation by the parents was that the school would want to address and involve the parents of students in a risk category like these students, time passed, problems escalated, and the parents had to step in without an invitation from the school and teacher.

Although it has been well documented that parental involvement has a positive effect on youths' academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005), there is little research that looks beyond elementary school. Experts have demonstrated that youth with ADHD have unique needs when it comes to school tasks, and this uniqueness should be addressed through middle school to reduce the risk of school failure. Researchers have recommended adult support, parent coaching, school accommodations, and programs such as homework clubs, study strategies classes, and check ins (Barkley, 2006; Dawson, &Guare 2008a) for this age group.

As emphasized by Brown (2007) and Dawson and Guare (2004, 2008a), most youth with ADHD have significant difficulties with homework, and parental help is

necessary. Barkley (2006), Langberg et al. (2008), and Evans et al. (2005) stressed how youth with ADHD have transitional problems when moving from elementary to middle school. In view of that, those youth need more services and support to successfully survive the increased requirements as well as the changes from elementary school to middle school.

Each parent in my study echoed this. In fact, each parent described how, in the first year of middle school, their youth began floundering and failing. The parents also reported that there was no recognition or support put in place.

According to Evans et al. (2005), the transition to middle school is associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms for youth with ADHD, likely due to increased demands and a heavier workload. Each parent in this study acknowledged this outcome, especially with the stress of a heavy load of homework and studying (the volume of which increased considerably from elementary to middle school). Brown (2007) insisted that parental help is necessary for home tasks such as studying and homework, although he didn't define what that help should look like specifically. Schools should be prepared for transition issues and develop programs specifically around prevention, such as student orientation and parent orientation, as former middle school teacher and school psychologist Nancy recommended during the focus group.

Much-needed teacher communication, academic tools, and, parent intervention were clearly identified as essential in my study. Every parent in my study except one spent hours each day/evening helping their youth with homework and augmented their support with a tutor. The other parent hired a tutor for extra days each week. All the

parents in my study pursued outside services in the form of tutoring. Some parents additionally secured a therapist as a result of middle school stress related to overloaded schoolwork-homework and other transitional issues that resulted in meltdown for the youths described in this study. This happened because the schools did not reach out and effectively communicate with the parents and had no tools to offer them to help their youth. Moreover, the parents complained that the schools had few, if any, accommodations, and no programs to assist youth who were struggling.

Along with the gap in the current research related to parents of middle school youth with ADHD, there is limited empirical evidence defining the specific homework help that is appropriate for middle-school-age youth, and, in particular, those middle school youth with ADHD.

My literature review suggested that a parent helping their youth with homework skills is helpful to middle school youth, but it is important to insure that parents don't do the homework for the youth. Rather, parents should coach their youth on skills that will encourage academic independence such as organization skills, prioritizing, and using academic resources. Hill and Tyson's (2007) meta-analysis revealed that something called *academic socialization skills* were critical to avoid students' overdependence on adults in homework endeavors. Researchers who have studied outcomes of various levels of parental involvement have suggested that by the time a child is in middle school, monitoring activities where a parent follows a youth's performance, as well as homework completion, should be practiced, and that certain competency skills and metacognitive strategies need to be taught, such as self-monitoring.

This type of involvement is preferred and considered to be empowering for adolescents, as opposed to parents actually getting involved in a tutoring/teaching role when helping their youth with homework. Experts who have studied this issue say that the latter can be detrimental, as it encourages dependence and does not teach youth longterm strategies for success and independence. If parents take a coaching role (Dawson & Guare 2004, 2008a) wherein they teach their youth strategies for study skills and homework completion—offering less direct homework assistance and more empowerment to leverage school resources—this may help youth develop critical skills, including problem-solving skills, and actually improve homework performance. Examples of such strategies are metacognitive strategies (e.g., problem solving, decision making, and self-monitoring), which Hill and Tyson called academic socialization. However, because the parents' decisions in the cases of this study were less about efficacy and more about feeling desperate to help youth who were already in academic and emotional turmoil, a band aid approach was applied, and the parents became instructors, with some even doing homework for their youth. Given that, the type of assistance these parents provided was more the type that research says creates dependence and does not foster academic socialization and independent skills. Nevertheless, all of the youth referred to in my study managed to get through that year of middle school, recover from the crisis, and avoid academic failure, with the help of parents, tutors, and, in some cases, therapeutic counseling. Most did not return to the same school the following year and, as such, had different and improved experiences (see Table 1, Parent Demographic Chart).

The above-mentioned gaps in the research and the lack of collaborative effort and minimal communication faced by parents that appear to be inherent in middle schools, as discussed in my study, have negative consequences for middle school youth with ADHD.

I conducted a qualitative study not only to look at parent decision making and efficacy around school involvement when homework help is warranted, but also to identify factors and processes contributing to positive and fruitful collaborative efforts on the part of schools that promote parent efficacy in decisions involving home studies and tasks for a vulnerable population—middle school youth with ADHD.

Understanding the experiences and perceptions of parents of middle school youth with ADHD would benefit educators who want to address academic failure prevention and foster collaboration among the members of their school community, of which parents are an integral part. In addition, this research is a contribution to the literature regarding homework, middle school transition, and youth with disabilities including ADHD, addressing an existing gap.

Additionally, this study uncovered the negative impact of certain school practices that isolate parents once youth get to middle school and overwhelm youth with work, which is a divergence from their experiences in elementary school. This study also highlights the need for compliance with the educational law that mandates requirements for institutions to foster collaborative efforts with parents as learning partners, develop school-based initiatives to address students in need, and offer useful, research-based interventions and programs as well as appropriate accommodations so as to allow for all students to enjoy effective progress/relative academic success. Finally, this study may support evidence-based practices for school administrators and teachers so that

interventions and parent involvement are collaborative and structured, in addition to using effective practices that are developmentally appropriate and practically facilitated.

I implemented a qualitative methodology, having identified seven volunteer parents of middle school-age youth with ADHD through a recruitment process at a clinic in South Florida. These parent participants were interviewed on two occasions (once in person and once over the phone). The first meeting, a face-to-face, semi structured interview, allowed the parents to share their experiences and perceptions of their youth's transitional year in middle school, particularly in relation to homework and studying. In this process, I probed to uncover parents' decisions and to determine whether self-efficacy concerning involvement in assisting their youth came into play.

Follow-up phone calls occurred in order to allow the parents to provide additional relevant information and to verify the information that was provided in the face-to-face session. I collected the data and coded the data into concepts and ultimately themes. Four primary themes emerged:

- 1. Transition barriers
- 2. Communication breakdown
- 3. Instinctual parent involvement and confidence
- 4. Parents recommend that schools provide more collaboration and student support (see Appendix E: Emerging Themes and Subthemes).

Chapter 5 consists four distinct sections. First, I discuss the validity of the current scholarly literature on parent involvement and efficacy in relation to involvement decision making as well as the research relative to youth with ADHD, the effects of the middle school transition year, and changes such as increased homework. This is followed

by a discussion of the findings of the research in direct reference to key concepts outlined in Chapter 1. I then address the limitations of the study, followed by recommendations for future research. This chapter concludes with a summary of the implications this study has for social change.

Interpretations of the Findings

The results of this case study research corroborated themes in the existing literature concerning parent involvement and the school's role in initiating communication and collaboration (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005), as well as academic risk factors related to youth with ADHD and the need for parental involvement, supports, and homework help for youth with ADHD into middle school (Barkely, 2006; Brown, 2007; Dawson & Guare, 2008a Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Habboushe et al., 2001; Murray, Rabiner, Shulte, & Newitt, 2008; Sheridan, 2009). The four primary emerging themes were the result of 12 subthemes (Appendix E). The existing research helped to support the findings of my study as valid and reliable. Based on the central research question and the sub questions guiding this study, five themes and 12 subthemes emerged.

The themes were the following:

- 1. Transition barriers
- 2. Communication breakdown
- 3. Instinctual parent involvement and confidence
- 2. Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support
 The subthemes were as follows:
 - 1a. School-teacher-parent-youth relationship changes

- 1b. Homework increase/school support decrease
- 1c. Student overload/ Parent to the rescue
- 2a. Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration and partnership
- 2b. Negative perception of school administration policies
- 3a. Parents feeling empowered (positive self-efficacy)
- 3b. Youth struggling is impetus for involvement decision
- 4a. The youth need increased guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support
- 4b. Middle schools should increase collaboration
- 4c. Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD

The existing research helped to support the findings of my study as valid and reliable. To begin, it is important to address the initial impetus and grounded theory driving my study: self-efficacy.

Parent self-efficacy is a complex and multifaceted issue, especially when youth get to middle school and have ADHD. Analyzing the issue regarding involvement in schoolwork tasks such as homework is challenging. At the center of parent involvement models is the relationship between factors influencing parent decisions and the actual type of involvement. The parental self-efficacy paradigm is an attempt to investigate how much parental involvement depended on positive efficacy and provided insight into the way in which parents experience this in the school environment.

In my study, however, parental self-efficacy and involvement of parents related not as much to parents' past experiences as Bandura (1997b) hypothesized in his theory of self-efficacy, nor did parent involvement rely, as Hoover Dempsey, Walker, and Sandler (2005) and Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) suggested, on a school's invitation.

Instead, almost opposite factors appeared to be present for the parents and their youth in my study, in that all parents in my study complained that the school administration and/or teachers did not respond to parent requests for communication and support or were dismissive. The parents in my study felt a responsibility to step forward in the absence of the schools' involvement and communication. The parents in my study did note in their recommendations that, as Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) recommend, that schools should be overtly inviting to parents, so that they will feel their input and engagement is important. Although the initial intent of this study was to look at self-efficacy as a major factor in decision making on parental involvement, the parents in my study agreed that they all felt confident and that efficacy was a factor, but not the key factor, in their decision to get involved with their youth's home studies.

Instead, the main impetus for parent involvement in the cases in this study had to do with a parent's instinct to help and rescue their child in the face of their youth's pain and tension around feeling overloaded and overwhelmed with schoolwork and academic failure. As such, it was important that I looked back on the work of Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler & Walker (2002 & 2002 b); Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, & Green (2004), Sherida (2009); Power et al. (2006); Landberg et al. (2010) and the other researchers who addressed this.

In 2001, Johnston and Mash completed a literature review: there was a connection between parental stress with low parental self-efficacy and negative behaviors of children suffering from ADHD. Johnston and Mash stated in their conclusion that more research was needed to address parental influence and its role on academic achievement as well as the underlying development of ADHD, the influence of parental characteristics (low self-

efficacy), ADHD, and the genetic link. In this study, three out of the seven parents had themselves, experienced ADHD but I found no relationship between a parent having ADHD and lacking efficacy in helping their youth with academics such as homework, even in the cases where the ADHD parents had negative learning experiences. As seen in Chapter 4, all seven parents reported positive efficacy in their ability to help their youth and further efficacy did not appear to enter into the parents' decisions to get involved.

Regarding Theme 1 or "Transition Barriers," parents reported their youth were on overload and had meltdowns as a result of the workload and the lack of relationship with the teachers and the school administration. The youth were having problems with homework and thus, failing their classes. As notated by Cooper, Robinson, and Patall (2006), lack of homework completion affects a student's grades and contributes to overall poor academic outcomes.

Early research has documented the effects of ADHD on student outcomes and school achievement and many studies identified certain skills deficits among youth with ADHD that caused poor academic outcomes for these youth (Frazier et al., 2007; Montiel, Peña, Montiel-Barbero, Polanczyk, and Guilherme, 2008; and Barkley, 1997b). As identified earlier in this document, those skills are executive-function deficits, which include inattention, inability to focus, disorganization, lack of initiative, off-task behavior, and difficulty with time-management (Rogers et al., 2009).

Hill and Tyson (2007) documented the wide achievement gap for students who struggle, specifically youth with ADHD. Barkley's (2007) and Cooper et al.'s (2006) findings which show that there is a direct relationship between school failure and incomplete homework, rang true for the youth in my study. Considering the risk of youth

with ADHD and school dropout (over 30 percent) (Barkley, 2007; Fried et al., 2013; Rogers et al., 2009; Frazier et al., 2007, Montiel et al., 2008)), it behooves school leadership to take notice and follow the evidence based practices that assist youth with ADHD.

Barkley (2006), Langberg et al. (2008), and Evans et al. (2005) clearly noted that youth with ADHD have transitional problems when moving from elementary to middle school, and needed more recognition and support to successfully survive this change, and the increased requirements. Yet none of the schools, according to the parents in my study, made efforts to address this. Nancy, the school psychologist and former middle school teacher in the parochial school, who was part of the focus group, recognized middle school transition as a notable issue for all students, and especially for students who have ADHD, and suggested middle schools should develop customized orientation days (prior to starting the school year), for parents and then a separate orientation for the youth.

As the parents in my study discovered, middle school triggered enhanced symptoms of ADHD, as well as increased stress and even depression for their youth. According to Evans, Serpell and White (2005), the transition to middle school for adolescents with ADHD, was associated with an increase in inattention and impulsivity symptoms, likely due to increased demands and a heavier workload, as corroborated in my study.

Regarding Theme 2 or "Communication Breakdown," Shinn (2002) finds that parental involvement includes regular and effective communication from teachers. When this occurred, parents "became much more likely to be active participants in their children's education" (Shinn, 2002, p. 35). Shinn indicated parent involvement in

education unfortunately decreases as youth grow and go to middle and high school, considering the continued need for parent participation. Nevertheless, Shinn found that when parents receive regular and effective communication from teachers, they were significantly more likely to be active participants in their children's education. Shinn also pointed out that the US Department of Education statistics supported continued parental involvement through secondary school. According to those statistics, by middle school only 8 percent of parents were involved as volunteers, whereas in the first grade 33 percent of parents volunteered. Likewise, where positive home-school communication accounted for 52 percent of parent-school interactions in the first grade, only 36 percent did so for the 8th grade (US Department of Education, 1996). The 2007 statistics on parent involvement by the US Department of Education compared the lower grade parent participation to the middle school grades and saw that when children are in the lower grades, the parent participation is over 60 percent whereas by middle school, the participation level has declined to 38 percent.

The parent involvement numbers are increasing, although these numbers remain low for middle school-aged youth's parents. Davis and Lambie (2005) studied the reasons why parents withdraw and found that when they did, it was because schools had limited programs and activities that encouraged parent involvement, and in fact, discouraged parental involvement. Interestingly, those authors found that middle school was a time when parental involvement was just as important for positive academic outcomes, as when the youth were in elementary school, something my study highlighted.

Even home-based parent involvement starts with communication and an opening for collaboration on the part of the school. Hill and Tyson (2009) defined home-based parent involvement as parental strategies including communication between parents and children about school, as well as engagement with schoolwork (e.g.,, homework help), taking children to events and places that foster academic success (i.e., museums, libraries, etc.), and creating a learning environment at home such as making educational materials accessible, such as books, newspapers, educational toys (p. 742).

Hill and Tyson (2009) defined school-based involvement as including "visits to school for school events (e.g., PTA meetings, open houses, etc.), participation in school governance, volunteering at school, and communication between parents and school personnel" (p. 742). Finally, they defined academic socialization as "communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility, linking school-work to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future" (p. 742), suggesting that all types of involvement are valuable and beneficial to youth. As the reader can see, much of the research insisted that it should be the school's mission to communicate, collaborate and positively involve parents.

Regarding Theme 3 or "Instinctual Parent Involvement and Confidence," as related to self-efficacy, this was something I didn't come across in the literature specifically, except for the work by Dawson and Guare (2004, 2008a). Even as I searched post study, I have been unsuccessful at finding the literature to support this finding: that parents became empowered and instinctual to help, after seeing their youth struggle, suffer and meltdown. According to Dawson and Guare (2004), the challenges of poor

attention and disorganization of youth with ADHD often push many parents to develop support systems outside of school, such as home tutoring and parental involvement with school tasks like homework. Brown's (2007) research demonstrated that most middle school ADHD youth have significant difficulties with homework and parental help was necessary. Recognizing this may evade teachers and school administration because typical students, by middle school, are expected to have assimilated those regulatory skills.

Parental self-efficacy was researched to some extent by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues since 1995 and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) identified that self-efficacy was one of the three most significant factors in a parent's decision to get involved in their youth's education and home learning. That led me to the decision to focus on the barriers to parents' involvement, as what was identified in my study results as communication breakdown (Theme 2) and lack of collaboration and invitation on the part of the educational institutions described by the parents in this study.

These barriers led to parents jumping in and providing rescue help to their youth. In a sense, they made their decision based on different factors than self-efficacy, but efficacy is implied in that these parents had the confidence to go forward and help their youth in a time of dire need, when the school did not offer any tools or relevant communication and support. Additionally, all the parents in my study felt forced to hire tutors and in some cases, other specialists to bail out their youth and help him or her recover.

In six out of seven families in my study, there were ample financial resources to secure outside services but one family's struggle to survive (Tasha: Parent #4) had

resulted and her daughter continuing to fail. According to Anderson and Minke (2007), the circumstances of the parents of families with fewer resources may have limited opportunities to engage, as opposed to families with greater resources.

Therefore, parental involvement models are not necessarily influenced and controlled by a parent's choice but can be a function of a parent's situation and condition, which is an inequity that should be eliminated. All the parents in my study were highly frustrated with the school's lack of consideration for parents and their potential contributions. Most parents blamed the school administration and lack of effective and collaborative policies, as well as for the breakdown and subsequent failures of their youth. Several parents blamed administration for the issues that led to the teachers' lack of communication and limited solutions, seeing teachers as not being afforded the resources and small class sizes which would allow them to intervene, support, and accommodate the students properly.

Regardless of a school's collaborative policies, all parent participants in my study – based on their stories, had positive efficacy. Invitations, opportunities, and expectations of involvement certainly would increase a parents' effectiveness in the involvement, and even make possible to provision of appropriate home involvement to improve academic socialization and outcomes, but with or without invitation, these parents were getting involved and it was instinctual.

As noted in my literature review, the 2007 statistics on parent involvement by the US Department of Educationidentified that parent involvement in elementary school was more than 60 percent while participation at the middle school level declined to 38 percent. The parent involvement numbers are increasing, although these numbers remain

low for middle school aged youth's parents, which may very likely be the result of the school's lack of efforts to create welcoming environments such as what the parents identified in my study. As the reader recalls, the parents in my study got involved because the school was not addressing the problems their child was having, and these parents complained about wanting to be involved all along but were not acknowledged or even received resistance from the school. These parents also complained that at the middle school level, there was too much homework, too little teacher engagement/relationship and fewer tools as compared with the elementary grades. The literature supports this point, especially for youth with ADHD in middle school, who need help to succeed in school. It is important for a parent to be a coach and an advocate for their youth, and a partner with the educational system (Barkley, 2006; Dawson and Guare, 2004). Lower scholastic achievement by youth with ADHD, compared to youth without ADHD is revealed in the research (Barkley, 2006; DeShazo et al., 2002; Frazier et al., 2007). Dawson and Guare (2004) pointed out that parents of youth with ADHD may need to increase their homework assistance to their children, develop strong homeschool communication plans, and expand support systems by coaching their youth on attention tactics and exercises as well as instruct them on executive skills (i.e., organization, memory strategies, homework focus, and self-monitoring).

Regarding Theme 4 or "Parents Recommended Schools Provide More Collaboration and Student Support," theories and research have long promoted that families have a critical role in supporting their children and youth in gaining positive outcomes in school and identifying the relationship to educational success (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and Weiss, 2006; Fan and Chen, 2001; Hampton, Mumford, and

Bond, 1998; Hara, 1998; Hill and Chao, 2009; Hill and Tyson, 2007; Seginer, 2006). A number of studies show parent involvement is connected to higher academic success and superior attendance. According to Epstein (2001, 2008), studies demonstrated that when parents are more involved, students' grades in English and math increase, in addition to showing an improvement in their reading and writing skills. According to a survey done with secondary school teachers, 97 % indicated that the biggest challenge they grappled with was working with parents. To remedy this challenge, schools are developing decision-making activities to encourage parents to voice their views and help develop mission statements (Anderson and Minke, 2007). Parents are also able to help develop policies for the schools (Epstein, 2008). According to Shinn (2002), parental involvement includes regular and effective communication from teachers. When this has occurred, parents "became much more likely to be active participants in their children's education" (Shinn, 2002, p. 35). Shinn indicated parent involvement in education unfortunately decreases as youth grow and go to middle and high school, considering the continued need for parent participation. Nevertheless, Shinn found that when parents receive regular and effective communication from teachers, they were significantly more likely to be active participants in their children's education. Shinn also pointed out that the US Department of Education statistics supported continued parental involvement through secondary school.

The literature suggested that "in-home" parental involvement works best when teaching youth self-regulation skills, time management, and goal-setting, encouraging effort and persistence in completing difficult tasks, and promoting self-monitoring.

Ramdass and Zimmerman (2011) stated that this approach would lead to academic

success. Earlier, Hill and Tyson (2009) concurred stating that the approach of coaching is more effective for positive academic outcomes, than direct homework assistance. However, schools have to take responsibility for providing tools to parents as well as teaching them how to effectively deliver these ideas and aids at home, because unlike in the elementary grades where teachers typically spend time regulating the student to help them be academically successful, middle school does not typically provide that same level of support (Ramdass and Zimmerman, 2011, Barkley, 2010, Xu and Corno, 2003, and Dawson and Guare, 2004). They identified a way to teach parents how to provide homework coaching and monitor progress for successful homework completion. This is especially important due to self-regulation deficits in youth with ADHD (Bempechat, Li, Neier, Gillis, and Holloway, 2011). It is important to note that in the qualitative study by Bempechat et al. (2011) of 92 ninth graders, it was revealed that high-achieving students were motivated to learn, and had well-developed self-regulatory skills when they did their homework; low achieving students typically did not complete their homework and had significant difficulty with self-regulation and, as such, avoided homework responsibilities.

In my study, parents were asking for schools to get more hands-on and offer programs and accommodations, as well as increase collaboration. It is important for parents to understand the most effective type of support they can offer their youth. As noted above, Hill and Tyson's (2009) meta-analysis revealed that parental involvement must change direction once a student reaches middle school, especially with respect to homework help. As noted earlier, Hill and Tyson (2009) found that direct assistance with homework for this age group can be counter-productive and that more strategies

promoting initiative (academic socialization) on the part of the student are more appropriate, although their research was not based on any study addressing special populations, such as youth with learning disabilities or ADHD.

Key Concept Findings

Validation of my study was consistent with previous research including the authentication of the key concepts that this study was initiated. The body of ADHD research included the work of Brown, 2006; Barkley, 2006; Dawson and Guare, 2008a; Rogers, Wiener, Martin, and Tannock, 2009; Barkley, 2006; Brown, 2006; DeShazo et al., 2002; Frazier et al., 2007, who all agree with the fact that there are significant educational risk factors of ADHD youth. Those risk factors link ADHD to at-risk emotional well-being, school performance, and quality of life. Research has indicated that children with ADHD are notably at-risk of school failure and many have learning problems in addition to their attention problem. Then, I set out to look at issues around parents' involvement.

Another phase of my study's key concepts emerged out of the research on parent involvement factors, including self-efficacy in decision-making by Hoover-Dempsey and her various research partners over the years (2001- 2011). Parental self-efficacy can influence parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 2005), but it is only one of several factors. Researchers Rogers, Wiener, Martin, and Tannock (2009) saw indicators which led to identifying that parents of youth with ADHD lack self-efficacy with regards to making a difference with homework help for their youth but in the case of the parents who themselves have ADHD, did not corroborate this.

The key concepts emerging from Transition Barriers (Theme 1) and Transitional Issues (Theme 2) revolve around the previous research done on homework in that all

parents complained was overwhelming in middle school. The research identified that lack of homework completion affects a student's grades and contributes to overall poor academic outcomes (Cooper, Robinson, and Patall, 2006).

For youth with ADHD, homework and studying has been an inherent problem which, as experts in the field point out, require parental coaching, supervision, and other forms of involvement (Dawson and Guare, 2008a; Rogers, Wiener, Martin, and Tannock, 2009; Barkley, 2006; Brown, 2006; Frazier et al., 2007). In view of the unique needs for parent involvement of certain students into the middle school years, especially youth with ADHD, a conscious effort on the part of schools to partner with parents of youth with ADHD, and vice versa for the academic success of this vulnerable group is very important. This is more so considering the risk factors identified in my study and the statistics of academic failure, drop-out rates and poor outcomes for these youth if they follow the trajectory of individuals with ADHD who drop out of school.

It is important that schools reach out to parents on a regular basis and have preventative programs and strategies in place so students do not get to the point that they are frustrated and overwhelmed with homework. Developing intentional, systematic and effective approaches for student success can include supplying parents with the tools necessary to help their youth with home study. According to Dawson & Guare (2004, 2008a), some supports and tools that have been used to help parents and youth with school tasks include coaching manuals, study guides, in-school homework help, accommodations that fit students' unique needs. School administration might take responsibility to put programs in place to ensure effective communication among teachers to promote academic success. Educators can encourage student competence

through proactive activities and programs that create learning independence among youth. Also, as we learned from the parents in my study, a system of checks and balances in place can prevent problematic issues such as missing homework and poor study habits. In middle school, teachers may consider dividing up the homework workload in such a way that studying and homework doesn't interfere with family time nor cause undue stress among the youth and their families.

Achieving youth's success in academics, as well as social-emotional health and competence requires parent involvement as demonstrated in my study, validating the key concepts in Chapter 1. Certainly, there are different parental involvement models, but youth with ADHD involvement require some parent intervention (Dawson and Guare, 2008a; Rogers, Wiener, Martin, and Tannock, 2009; Barkley, 2006; Brown, 2006; Frazier et al., 2007), in view of thier unique needs. Evidence-based practices to increase parent self-efficacy by invitations intiated by schools appeared to make a notable difference in parent involvement in the literature (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003)). Although this research indicated that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, the caveat for middle and high school age youth is that the involvement should center around academic socialization (Hill & Tyson, 2007; Bishop, Duncan, & Lawrence 2004) which involves a parent or instructor teaching such skills as self-monitoring, organization, and other skills that lead to academic independence. My research did bear out that once the parents did get involved, the youth's academic and emotional crisis subsided.

Since Mbokodi et al. (2003), as well as Epstein (2011) insisted that schools can and should play a role in encouraging and empowering parents to be involved, especially

to help the parents, who have low self-confidence and poor efficacy, it is clear that schools must take a headship role in engaging parents through any means that will pull them in. It is paramount that school systems take heed and train educational leadership to understand and implement the initiatives for engaging and partnering with parents, which was the intent of the NCLB legislation. In fact NCLB Act (Section 1118), requires schools to focus on overcoming barriers to parent involvement.

The findings of my research not only concluded that collaboration among schools, teachers, and parents is crucial to the success of youth with ADHD in middle school but the research also pointed out that within the school environment, administration must take an active role in including parents, insuring manageable class sizes and making provisions for tools for parents and teachers to utilize when accommodating and coaching youth who need extra help. Moreover, there should be opportunities for teachers to coordinate homework and test assignments and for all stakeholders have representation in school advisory roles so that all are in touch with what is really going on for students that enhances learning and healthy family life rather than interferes with family life.

It is important to note that policies and educational law have endorsed the value of home-school partnerships and parent involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Chao, 2009; Seginer, 2006). The research seems to support models that promote independence in middle school.

Related to my key concepts, is the idea of nurturing academic socialization (Hill & Tyson, 2007), which Bishop, Duncan, and Lawrence (2004) also explored. They identified a link between emotional states and the ability to attend, and recommended that educators and parents work with their students—especially those with attention

problems—on building competency and a sense of responsibility. The researchers suggested that this can be accomplished by teaching attention skills, self-evaluation, and self-monitoring techniques – techniques they refer to as mindfulness techniques.

Identified the same in the research, relative to middle school parent involvement, was the idea of collaborative efforts by schools (Hill & Tyson, 2007) and intervention initiatives should involve prevention programs and coaching models that teach academic socialization especially for youth with ADHD (Dawson & Guare 2008a). Having such programs would reduce or eliminate student meltdowns such as the incidents that occurred with the youth represented in my study, according to all seven parents.

Bishop, Duncan, and Lawrence (2004) found that mindfulness promotes the regulating of attention. By using mindfulness, youth can prioritize and assign importance and awareness to relevant experiences and communication. Hill and Tyson (2009) referred to the skills as meta-cognitive strategies (e.g.,, problem-solving, decision-making and self-monitoring). By middle school, this is the preferred way for parents to get involved in home studies. Importantly, parents and their youth benefit from a partnership-type of involvement in the schools. It is recommended by NCLB that parents are considered partners when schools are involved in decision-making activities. It is vital to encourage parents to voice their views and help develop mission statements (Anderson and Minke, 2007) and policies (Epstein 2008).

Inherent within these findings of my study, is the importance of collaboration among school administration, teachers and parents, which emerged out of the research by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, and 2005) and their examination of parent involvement as a multidimensional construct. Conclusively, the findings of my research

not only identified that collaboration among schools, teachers, and parents is crucial to the success of youth with ADHD in middle school but the research showed that within the school environment, administration must take an active role in including parents, insuring manageable class sizes and making provisions for tools and research-based interventions for parents and teachers to utilize when accommodating and coaching youth who need extra help and provisions. Moreover, there should be opportunities for teachers to coordinate homework and test assignments so that students are not overloaded, which affects emotional, social and family health. Finally, stakeholders, who include teachers, parents, students, community programs, support staff such as guidance, must have representation in school advisory roles so that all are in touch with what is really going on for students and can work on developing programs that enhance learning and healthy family life rather than interfere with it.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations exist in all qualitative phenomenological research. For my study, an initial limitation was the small sample size of seven parents which is a representative sample but did include representation from various economic and ethnic groups including Hispanic and African-American. My sample of parent participants was limited to parents of middle school youth with ADHD. However, the most significant limitation was the number of the focus group participants, which were only three school psychologists. In the state of Florida, the public schools do not have building-based school psychologists. This can limit an understanding of what actually goes on at the building level. I found that the school psychologists were not very connected to the school practices and programs. It seems that in light of the school psychologists' testing caseload, they had

little time to provide consultation, collaborate with colleagues and administration, or be involved with committees, such as those working groups who review school-wide needs and establish interventions. The school psychologists in the focus group did not participate in providing direct intervention services like guidance counselors do, and as such, were not aware of the day-to-day school endeavors and activities, which may support students and families.

As a former school psychologist, who was building-based in an elementary school and then a middle school in Massachusetts, my perspective is completely different. I was involved in effecting system change, providing consultation to parents, teachers and administration, and was part of committees where school staff and parents had a voice. I had a share in the development and expansion of research-based programs and interventions both from an inception and service delivery standpoint. Because of my role, I was able to stay in touch.

However, due to my previous role as a building-based school psychologist and my knowledge of the eleven domains of school psychology (not just conducting assessments/testing), I brought some bias to this study so the bracketing I did to keep that in check was key in maintatining my objectivity. I have also been an instructor at a university, where I taught the policies regarding parental involvement and parents as educational partners and made sure my students understood the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation. I was predisposed to a specific frame of reference due to my experiences that shaped my perceptions and expectations of parents, teachers, school specialists, and school administration, who engage in parental involvement programs.

I took iterative measures to continually maintain an open mind and limit the influence of my individual biases in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data using bracketing. In this process, I set aside my personal experiences and views so that I could examine the phenomenon as objectively as possible.

I used note-taking as a bracketing method to document personal observations (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly, and Renshall, 2013). In doing memos while in the process of interviewing the parent participants, it allowed me, the researcher, to review and evaluate my feelings about the research. Prior to my data collection, I used another bracketing method known as reflexive journaling, where I wrote down my thoughts to insure my subjectivity. Member checking was also used to verify the accuracy of the participants' perspective, when I had a second contact with the parent participants to review with them, their responses and offered that they express additional input. Therefore, personal biases and experiences were set aside as much as possible, so that I could examine the data objectively.

As a former school psychologist in a public school system, I had a bias that youth with ADHD who are on 504 accommodation plans receive those accommodations without question, since the 504 plan is a legal document. However, many of the parents in my study reported that they had to keep reminding teachers about their youth's accommodations and the accommodations were not routinely provided. Bracketing my bias, I managed each interview with an open mind, which allowed me to understand that these parents' youth were at a disadvantage by not receiving the accommodations they required to be on an even playing field with typical students.

The study was limited to the suburban South Florida area, but I was able to draw parents who were not just from private schools and affluent families. Still, four of the seven were from affluent families. The results of this study may be generalized to populations of parents and families with similar background characteristics, and as I identified. Parents from various ethnic groups and economic status' were recruited. My findings are limited to qualitative interpretation rather than quantitative analysis.

Recommendations

Inherent within these findings is the importance of parents as partners in the education of children at the middle school level – not just in the elementary grades. Based on the parents' stories, school administration would strive to initiate, implement and facilitate intentional, systematic approaches around collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, school leaders and students, including all in the process. As a catalyst for change, schools can provide evidence-based programs and accommodations to bridge the gap for students who are not making effective progress. With that, program designers and service providers have a responsibility to collect progress and outcome data in order to see if programs are working and making a difference for the population they were designed for. I will refer to this as Program Evaluation. Program Evaluation is a valuable tool for leaders and practitioners to monitor progress and catch problems and effectiveness of an intervention along the way, to identify programs that are working and allowing for designers and implementers to make revisions or changes in a timely manner, if the youth served is not benefiting. In this way, providers can collect and measure outcome data. Across many fields, program evaluation is utilized to strengthen the quality of programs and improve outcomes for the children and youth being served.

Program evaluation answers questions about a program's effectiveness and evaluation data can be used to improve program services. One major overarching recommendation, which ideally must not be ignored, is the need for schools to be responsible for providing an atmosphere where students, parents and teachers feel valued and involved and do this with all-inclusive programming so all students succeed.

The results of this study indicate the need for some guidelines on the following:

- How school administration and teachers acknowledge the importance of parent involvement in light of a parents' potential contribution to the school and their child's education (fostering parental efficacy).
- Ways that schools can frame the specific homework-help options that research
 has shown to work best for middle school student learning and ongoing
 educational independence.
- 3. Positive approaches to help families by being sensitive to the best interest of youth, especially those with such challenges that affect academic achievement such as ADHD.
- 4. How educational leaders and teachers can explore various methods in order to support a parent's decisions about getting involved with their youth's home studies by having a repertoire of tools for effective learning, homework and study skills.
- 5. Collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and students which will benefit all when there are opportunities to build preventative programs and services versus waiting for students to fail which was the status quo prior to the "No Child Left Behind" legislation of January 8, 2002 which drove the

reauthorization of IDEA 2004 – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – the primary federal program that authorizes state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/tb-discipline.pdf). I saw that student meltdowns/breakdowns happened in all the cases in this study, per parent report, as a result of homework overload and a lack of communication among school administration, teachers, and parents. The above listed are specific areas in which schools can encourage parents, reinforce efficacy and support parents decisions to be involved with their youth's education in an effective way. My study indicated the best action for schools/school administration is to be intentional about initiating, building, and nurturing collaborative efforts in navigating relationships between teachers, parents, and students.

While positive parental self-efficacy was evident and had little bearing on each of the parents in my study's decision to get involved in helping their youth with homework, it became clear that parents were searching for more e from the school – from teachers and school administration, and that the parents wanted the school to reach out as well as listen to their concerns, ideas and feedback. Further, parents wanted to be acknowledged and listened to before they had to raise the red flag to save their child.

Future research could be focused on what the parents' role could be, relative to involvement at the middle school level. As Hill and Tyson (2008) concluded, a parent's role, especially in middle school and beyond, is to foster independence and competence so that the student can build on their skills and grow without being enabled. Nevertheless,

Dawson and Guare (2004) pointed out that parents of youth with ADHD may need to increase their homework assistance to their children, develop strong home-school communication plans, and develop support systems by coaching their youth on attention tactics and exercises as well as coach them on executive skills (i.e., organization, memory strategies, homework focus, and self-monitoring).

Epstein developed six types of involvement and suggests schools initiate all six.

Those are as follows:

- Parenting: Schools assisting parents in understanding their youth's
 development and providing home conditions to support their youth and viseversa.
- Communicating: Communication by schools to families regarding school
 programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to
 school communications.
- 3. *Volunteering*: To improve recruitment, training work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and attendees at school programs to support students.
- 4. *Learning at home*: Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and even course and program decisions.
- 5. *Decision making*: For schools to offer and include families as participants in school decisions through things like PTOs, school councils, committees, etc.
- 6. *Collaborating with community*: Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, local groups,

in order to provide services both ways – to the community and for the school and student body.

Implications for Social Change

Although this research indicated that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement, the caveat was that the involvement did not need to be enabling, but rather promoting certain skills and independence, such as self-regulated learning (aka self-monitoring) by the youth. In looking at Epstein's (2011) model of six types of parent involvement, it is clear that if the school systems involved in the case studies above, had practiced any of the model types, the outcomes of the emotional meltdowns and academic failures of the youth that caused the parents to jump in and rescue them, would not have occurred.

Although the federal policy-makers of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 define parent involvement as: the participation of parents as being a regular, two-way, and "meaningful" communication involving student academic learning and state that parents play an integral role in assisting their children's learning and be encouraged to be actively involved in their children's education at school, the schools in this study failed to accept and include parents as full partners in their child's education, such as in the decision-making process or involved in advisory committees relative to their child's education, as described in Section 1118 of ESEA -- Parent Involvement section in the No Child Left Behind, 2001, Section 9101(32).

Conclusion

The stories shared by the parents were rich descriptions of their experiences with their youth's homework, choices and decisions around assisting their youth with ADHD, once their youth began to tank. Clearly, the decision to become involved according to all seven parents in my study was related to saving their youth from emotional turmoil and academic failure, and not about efficacy. Interestingly, the parents in my study found that middle school was a time when parental involvement was just as important for positive academic outcomes as when the youth were in elementary school. Several studies have backed this up (Epstein 2011, Brown (2007), Barkely (2006), Dawson and Guare (2008a)

Halsey's study (2005) emphasized the critical importance of effective and consistent communication with parents by the teachers and the school. Halsey found that parent involvement was initially low, but after clear communication of the open-door school policy and the promotion of parental involvement in the academic areas, parental involvement and positive attitudes increased. Halsey's results were not as much about student outcomes but about the necessity of good communication and the importance of the school's initiative to elicit parent involvement, through such things as explicit invitations to increase effective and positive parent involvement.

My study emphasizes this very point. This study provides important guidance in how schools can be collaborative and empowering for the benefit of all students by including stakeholders, especially parents, in the policies and program decisions that shape the mission and implementation of an educational institution.

Understanding the experiences and perceptions of parents' of middle school youth with ADHD will be informative to schools that want to address academic failure prevention and foster collaboration among their school community, of which parents are an integral part. My study uncovered the negative impact of certain school practices that isolate parents, once youth get to middle school and overwhelm the youth with work.

Thus, this research is a contribution to the literature regarding homework, middle school transition, and youth with disabilities including ADHD, since there is a gap. This study also highlights the need for compliance with the educational law which legislates the requirement for institutions to foster collaborative efforts with parents for student learning and academic success.

Most the studies related to ADHD and homework have been quantitative. The implications for positive social change will assist school systems in gaining strategies to work with parents of children with ADHD, such as the coaching model of Dawson and Guare (2004, 2008a), and the importance in middle school of academic socialization described by Hill and Tyson (2007).

Since this study focuses on qualitative findings and provided an in-depth understanding about parental decisions, which in the case of the parents in my study, was more about desperation and less about efficacy, the impact of self-efficacy on these decisions was limited. My study emphasized and corroborated with the ADHD research that emphasizes the academic and emotional risks associated with youth who have ADHD, and the relationship between school failure and incomplete homework (Barkley, 1997a; Dawson and Guare, 2004; Frazier et al., 2007; Montiel, Peña, Montiel-Barbero, Polanczyk, & Guilherme, 2008; Rogers et al., 2009; Barkley 2007; and Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006).

My results add new knowledge to this neglected area of parent involvement in middle school, in that it was clear that school administrations must be collaborative in order to avoid academic failure among youth with ADHD and need to have preventative programs, teacher coordination around homework and tools to help parents and teachers

properly support students in need rather than enable them. Finally, the study built on previous research conducted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, and 2005) and Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) regarding self-efficacy, as well as other multidimensional factors that influence parent involvement.

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** Section 504 is a civil rights law - the purpose of Section 504 is to protect people from discrimination because of disabilities. Section 504 is intended to provide access and remove obstacles. Think about Section 504 as the law that requires schools add ramps and elevators to buildings if this is necessary to give disabled children access to the educational opportunities that are available to children who are not disabled: http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.idea.eligibility.htm.

Appendix A: Letter of Invitation to Parents

Questionnaire for the Parent Invitation to participate in a research study Walden University IRB approval number for this research: 01-26-16-0118597

Expiration date: January 25, 2017

RE: Study with <u>parents</u> of youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). **Instead of mailing this form, you can also call me (Diana) at** The Study interview will take place from February 15th through February 19th and I this study, and I will schedule a convenient time to come to your home to conduct the Study interview.

This <u>Study interview</u> (approximately *one hour*) and one <u>follow up phone call</u> (approximately *30 minutes*) is all that is involved in the study.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLLOWING QUESTIONS IF YOU *might be*INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING:

INTERESTED INTARTICITATING.	
Are you a parent of a middle school student with a	ttention concerns?(yes
or no)	
NAME:	
Are interested in learning more about this study? _	(yes or no)
Do you have one hour to meet with me, the research through February 19 th ?(cher, during the week of February 15 th (yes or no).
If YES, when are you available (<u>Times</u> and <u>Dates</u> 19 th ?	between February 15 and February
What is your contact information?	(phone #)
Understand that your participation is voluntary and	ad that the study site is not sponsoring
this research so, if you decide to participate or not me and learning more about the study - it will have relationship with the study site as a consumer of se	e no effect on you or your child's
information is confidential.	in the same and your two may young

Sincerely,

Diana Y. Gintner, researcher and Florida Licensed School Psychologist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Appendix B: Guiding Parent Interview Questions

<u>Parent Interview Form – Self Designed Interview Guide</u> *Instrument (Data Collection Tool)*

Interview Protocol Date:	
Location:	
Name of Interviewer:	
Name of Interviewee:	

Interview

The following interview questions will be asked of each parent in the study:

- 1. What are your past and current experiences assisting your child with homework and studying responsibilities? In what ways has this assistance influenced his/her academic outcome?
- 2. From a parent's perspective, what influenced your decision about involvement in your youth's schoolwork with specific regard to homework and studying? Describe your experiences.
- 3. How would you describe your confidence in your ability to help your youth impact the following decisions: a) to get involved in helping your child with homework b) to participate at the level you chose? As a parent of a middle school youth, can you discuss your encounters and communications with the middle school around your involvement with your youth's home studies/homework?

Appendix C: Letter of Informed Parental Consent

Parent Consent

Parental Consent Form

RE: Walden University IRB approval number: 01-26-16-0118597 Expiration date: January 25, 2017

As a parent of a middle school youth with **Attention Problems/Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**, you are invited to participate in a study being conducted by sole researcher, Diana Y. Gintner, Doctoral Candidate at Walden University.

You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as a parent of a middle school youth with attention challenges can contribute much to the understanding and knowledge of local school practices.

Background Information:

The purpose of this research study is to study parents of youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

As a parent of a middle school youth who has attention problems including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), you have been chosen to join this study. Your participation in this study will have no effect on you or your child's relationship with Child Provider Specialists as consumers of services at that clinic.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how parents of youth with ADHD make decisions on homework completion.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews: one individual interview will be face to face in your home or a location where privacy can be established. The second interview will be by telephone. Each interview will last approximately one hour. The second interview by telephone will serve to clarify previous responses as well as provide you the opportunity to revise responses and include additional information.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Walden University or

Child Provider Specialists, Weston, FL. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time later without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.

Studies like the one I am doing can have influence such as improving the existing methods and practices of how schools communicate with parents, especially regarding students with attention problems / ADHD. As a participant who is a parent of youth with ADHD, you will have an opportunity to speak out regarding your experiences. Also, the information you provide may influence what support services schools offer. In addition, information obtained from you, as a middle school parent, will address a gap in the literature around parents of middle school youth with ADHD/ attention problems.

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

The form of compensation for participation in the study is a Studies Strategies workbook.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file. Only the researcher and one Ph.D. level research assistant will have access to the records. Interviews will be recorded only by written notes/note book for purposes of providing accurate description of your experiences. Notes will be destroyed following the three year period after the completion of the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Gintner, LICSW, Licensed School Psychologist, Researcher

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Diana Y. Gintner. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Melody Richardson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Diana Y. Gintner at Diana.Gintner@waldenu.edu or Dr. Richardson at, melody.richardson@waldenu.edu. The Research Participant Advocate at

Walden University is Dr. Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at extension or email at irb@waldenu.edu if you have questions about your participation in this study.

If you decide to participate, you will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed name of parent participant	
Signature	Date
Signature of Investigator	Date

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Monalisa Gangopadhyay 711 SW 111 Way #202, Pembroke Pines, FL 33025

RE: Diana Y. Gintner, Researcher, Walden University:

During the course of the dissertation of Diana Gintner: "A Study to determine, from a parent perspective, self-efficacy as a factor influencing parental involvement with homework completion for youth in middle school with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)", I provided editing. As such, I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge/agree that:

- I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
- I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
- I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I
 understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the
 participant's name is not used.
- I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
- I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
- 6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
- I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Monalisa Gangopadhyay , Ph. D.

Printed Name, title

Signature:

Date

Dec. 27, 2016.

Appendix E: Theme Endorsements

Table E1

Theme Endorsements—Themes 1 and 2

Parent participant	Transition Barriers - (Middle school Nightmare)	Transition Barriers - (Transition maladjustment)	Communication breakdown
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement X
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X	X
Parent #3 (Loretta)	X	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	-	-	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X	X
Total	6	6	7

Table E2

Theme Endorsements—Themes 3 and 4

Parent Participant	Instinctual Parent involvement and confidence	Parents recommend schools provide more collaboration and student support
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsementX	X = endorsement X
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)		
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	X	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X
Total	7	7

Table E3

Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 1 (Transition Barriers - Middle School Nightmare)

Parent Participant	School-Teacher- parent-youth relationship challenges	Homework increase/school support decrease	Student overload
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement X
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	X	X	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X	X
Total	7	7	7

Table E4

Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 1 (Transition Barriers - Transition Maladjustment)

Parent Participant	Student Meltdown	Parent to the rescue
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	-	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X
Total	6	7

Table E5

Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 2 (Communication Breakdown)

Parent Participant	Perceived lack of school-parent collaboration & partnership	Negative perception of school administration policies
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	 $X = endorsement \ X$
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	-	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X
Total	6	7

Table E6

Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 3 (Instinctual Parent Involvement & Confidence)

Parent Participant	Parents feeling empowered (positive self- efficacy)	Youth struggling is the impetus for involvement decision
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	X	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X
Total	7	7

Table E7

Theme Endorsements—Subthemes of 4 (Parents Recommend Schools Provide More Collaboration & Student Support)

Parent Participant	The youth need guidance, extra tools, and more emotional support	Middle schools should increase collaboration	Schools should provide accommodations to youth with ADHD
Parent # 1 (Jamie)	X = endorsement X	X = endorsement X	$X = endorsement \ X$
Parent # 2 (Antonio)	X	X	X
Parent # 3 (Loretta)	X	X	X
Parent # 4 (Tasha)	X	X	X
Parent # 5 (Jeanine)	X	X	X
Parent # 6 (Rachal)	X	X	X
Parent # 7 (Nadia)	X	X	X
Total	7	7	7

Appendix F: Emailed Letter of Invitation to School Psychologists

Letter of Invitation for a Focus Group

My name is Diana Y. Gintner and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research on parents of middle school youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. In conducting my research, I would like to ask for your assistance. You are invited to participate in a 90 minute Focus Group to explore the decision making process of parents of middle school students that have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. If you would like to participate in the study, you can contact me directly; my contact information is below.

If you accept, you will be asked to take part in a discussion with 3-4 other school psychologists with similar experiences. This discussion will be guided by myself, also a certified, licensed school psychologist. Throughout the process, I will make sure that you are comfortable. I will ask you questions about the parents you may have observed in your middle school environment(s) and give you time to share your knowledge. In the week following the focus group, you will be invited to contact this student researcher if you wish to add to the discussion.

If you agree to be in this study, your role will be to participate in a focus group at the location below or by Web Conference: The physical location of the focus group will be at:

MONICA OGANES & ASSOCIATES Place, Suite 300, Maitland FL

32751 | Tel. (407) 809-5680.Monica Oganes and Monica Oganes & Associates, have no part in this research other than providing the space in which I will conduct the research.

Contacts and Ouestions:

The researcher conducting this study is Diana Y. Gintner. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Melody Richardson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Diana Y. Gintner at (617) 974-6641, <u>Diana.Gintner@waldenu.edu</u> or Dr. Richardson at 832-264-4454, <u>melody.richardson@waldenu.edu</u>. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Dr. Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368 extension 3121210 or email at <u>irb@waldenu.edu</u> if you have questions about participation in this study.

If you decide to participate, please inform me and I will provide you with the arrangements (date & time). My contact information is: email: **dgintner@aol.com** and phone # **617-974-6641.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diana Y. Gintner, NCSP

Licensed School Psychologist

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT

RE: Walden University IRB approval number: 01-26-16-0118597 Expiration date: January 25, 2017

My name is Diana Y. Gintner and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research on parents of middle school youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I am asking you to participate in a 90 minute focus group. If you accept, you will be asked to take part in a discussion with 3-4 other school psychologists with similar experiences. This discussion will be guided by myself, also a certified, licensed school psychologist. Throughout the process I will ensure that you are comfortable.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the decision making of parents of youth with ADHD.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group at the location below or by Web Conference: The physical location of the focus group will be at:

MONICA OGANES & ASSOCIATES

555 Winderley Place, Suite 300, Maitland FL 32751 | Tel. although Monica Oganes and Monica Oganes& Associates, have <u>no</u> part in this research other than providing the space in which I will conduct the research.

The focus group will last for approximately 90 minutes and will involve a series of questions. In the week following the focus group, you will be invited to contact me if you wish to add to the discussion.

No one else, but the people who take part in the focus group, and myself will be present during this discussion. I will take notes on the discussion but no-one will be identified by name on the notes. The notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked off-site office.

The information is confidential, and no one else except me and a Ph.D. level individual with experience in qualitative research will have access to the notes. This Ph.D. level individual will assist in validating themes extracted from notes from a 5-7 page sample of material to assess interrater reliability, as well as validate my coding approach. The person selected to participate in the validation procedure will adhere to the ethical protection of participants previously identified in this proposal, including signing a confidentiality agreement & adhering to IRB requirements.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Walden University or The MONICA OGANES & ASSOCIATES organization. Other than the focus group taking place at MONICA OGANES & ASSOCIATES, there is no involvement by the practice of Monica Oganes and Associates. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The potential benefit of participating in this study may come in the form of providing a better understanding about parent decision making relative to middle school youth with ADHD/ attention problems

In the event you experience stress or anxiety during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

The form of compensation for participation in the study is a \$25.00 gift certificate.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report of this study that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher and the Ph.D. level person will have access to the records. Interviews will be recorded only by written notes/note book for purposes of providing accurate description of your experiences. Notes will be destroyed following a three year period after the completion of the study.

Contacts and Ouestions:

The researcher conducting this study is Diana Y. Gintner. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Melody Richardson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Diana Y. Gintner at (617) 974-6641,

Diana. Gintner@waldenu.eduor Dr. Richardson at 832-264-

4454, melody.richardson@waldenu.edu. The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Dr. Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368 extension 3121210 or email at <u>irb@waldenu.edu</u> if you have questions about your participation in this study.

Feel free to call me with any questions before signing this consent form. If you decide to participate, please call or email me and I will provide you with the date and time). My contact information is: email: dgintner@aol.com.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

If you decide to participate, you will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of focus group participant	_	
Signature of focus group participant	Date	
Signature of Investigator, Diana Y. Gintner	Date	_

Appendix H: Guiding Focus Group Questions

<u>Focus Group Questions - Self Designed Interview Guide</u> <u>Instrument (Data Collection Tool)</u>

Interview Protocol	
Date:	_
T	
Location:	_
Name of	
Interviewer:	
Name of	
Name of	
Interviewee:	

Interview

The following discussion topics will be given to the focus group of school psychologists:

- In your opinion, regarding homework and studying, what can parents do to positively influence their youth's academic achievement? What kinds of things does your school do to partner with parents in order for them to get involved effectively with home tasks? What, if any, are the differences in the school approach and offerings, among parents of typical youth versus parents of youth with attention problems/ADHD? How do you think these school behaviors affect the efficacy of parents to partner with the school in order to positively influence their youth's academic achievement?
- Discuss your specific experiences, with parent involvement in your middle school?
- Explain how your middle school reaches out to parents? Please discuss any services, programs or initiatives that encourage parent partnership & participation, especially relative to homework and studying tasks?

- Think about the behaviors, school climate and other factors (e.g., cultural factors) in your school community that may influence parental school involvement. Please discuss?
- In your experience how do you think these factors affect the efficacy and decision of a parent of a typical youth, to become involved with helping their youth with homework and studying? Now, discuss these factors and parental efficacy and decision-making relative to parents of youth with ADHD? What are the differences (if any)?
- Discuss how, as a middle school psychologist, you understand parental selfefficacy and how a parent's sense of efficacy relates to parental decisions about participation in their youth's school-related tasks?
- Tell me about your thoughts relative to parental self-efficacy and in what ways parental efficacy might have an impact on a parent's motivation to assist their youth with home-school tasks like homework. How do you think a parent's efficacy may differ if they have a youth with attention problems/ADHD versus a typically developing student?