

2017

Improving Parental Involvement in an Inner-City Elementary School

Veronica D. Marion
Walden University

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Veronica Marion

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Dr. Jeanne Sorrell, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Robert Hogan, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Paul Englesberg, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2017

Abstract

Improving Parental Involvement in an Inner-City Elementary School

by

Veronica D. Marion

MA, University of New Haven, 1999

BS, Albertus Magnus College, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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December 2017

Abstract

A pattern of low parental involvement exists at in an inner-city school in the northeast region of the United States, where 90% of the students are students of color and fewer than 10% of parents attend school-based activities. Low parental involvement at the local school may lead to decreased student achievement and limited access to needed resources and information. A qualitative case study design was used to explore the problem. Epstein's typology, which includes the traditional definition of parental involvement and acknowledges the parents' role in the home, provided the conceptual framework for the study. Research questions focused on perceived challenges that prevent parent participation, specific types of parental involvement strategies that are most effective when working with inner-city families, and potential solutions to the problems. Data collection included reviewing reports and conducting individual interviews with 5 elementary school parents, 5 teachers, and the principal at the research site. Inductive data analysis included organizing and categorizing data to develop themes related to the problem and perceived solutions. Findings revealed ineffective home-school communication, language differences, and a lack of shared meaning regarding parental involvement between parents and teachers. Identification of these challenges led to development of a 3-day professional learning series for parents, teachers, and administrators that focused on benefits of parental involvement. Implementation of the program may help to facilitate building of school-family community partnerships to empower parents to support their children's learning at home and at school.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my parents Philip and Delores Marion, who always believed in me and encouraged me to follow my dream of one day becoming a doctor! Thank you for cheering me on, praying for me, and listening when no one else would. Mom although you are no longer with me on earth; you were with me every step along this journey. I promised you that I would not stop until I completed my education, and I know for you that meant earning my doctoral degree. For God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind, II Timothy 1:7.

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To my sisters, Althea, Phyllis, Leatrice, Cheryl, and Kristal; you believed in me even when I could not see it for myself. When I cried you cried and when I wanted to give up you told me all of the reasons why I had to keep going, I am forever grateful and ready to return the favor. To my extended family especially my cousins, thank you for I would not be here without the years of encouragement. To my chair, Dr. Sorrell, you were Godsent. You entered my life when I needed you the most. Thank you for using your personal time to assist me in accomplishing my dreams. Dr. Hogan, Dr. Miller, and Dr. Englesberg thank you for being a member of my team! I appreciate your wisdom, knowledge, and attention to details. To my dear friend, Dr. David R. Grice, thank you for all of the articles, guidance and laughter when I felt like crying. Last but not least to Pastor Alfred Watts and my Cornerstone Family thank you for the cheers, the tears and those Wednesday night prayer circles!

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Section 1: The Problem

Definition of the Problem

The local problem that I addressed in this study was a pattern of low parental involvement at school-based events, such as parent teacher conferences, annual open houses, parent workshops, and parent-teacher association meetings at Brownville Public School (pseudonym). Fewer than 50% of the parents attended the parent-teacher conference and fewer than 10% attended the annual open house/meet the teacher night during the 2012–2013 school year, as highlighted in a 2013 state assessment and school monthly report (HSC Monthly Report, 2013). Not only is the school characterized by low parental involvement, but it also has high disciplinary offenses and low test scores (District Strategic Profile, 2011, 2012). During the 2009–2010 school year, there were 310 disciplinary offenses, such as bullying and fighting (Strategic School Profile, 2010–2011).

Brownville Public School is one of the lowest performing schools in the state. For the past several years, students attending Brownville Public School have not met the state standards in both reading and math. Only 9.4% of the third-grade students were reading on grade level in comparison with 58.4% of third graders throughout the state (Strategic School Profile, 2010–2011). These numbers of high disciplinary offenses and low test scores are significant because when parents are actively involved in their child's education, students perform and behave better in school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 1995a, 1987; Grant & Ray, 2010; Jeynes, 2010, 2014).

Brownville Public School is a K–8 school located in an inner-city setting in the northeast region of the United States. The school has a population of approximately 770 students: 47% Black or African American, 43% Latino or Hispanic, 5% White, 4% Asian, and 0.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native. Currently, 15% of the students are English language learners and 11% have been identified as students with special needs. More than 95% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Like many inner-city schools throughout the United States, the school is located in an area of high crime and poverty (District Strategic Profile, 2011). The area where the school is located was once known for its manufacturing and thriving downtown but is now known for the abandoned buildings and low-performing schools.

Low parental involvement in children’s education is associated with low student achievement (Barnard, 2004; Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Bower & Griffen, 2011; Desimone, 1999; Hill & Craft, 2003; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). This is especially true for students of color and students with low socioeconomic status (Jeynes, 2010). A lack of parental involvement may also limit effective communication between the school and the home. Miscommunication may lead to decreased student motivation, high suspension rates, and high dropout rates (Flynn & Nolan, 2008). Therefore, schools throughout the United States have included increasing parental involvement as one of their improvement strategies.

Parental involvement encompasses an extensive list of activities that may involve parents, grandparents, siblings, and other members of students’ extended families to support student learning either in the school or at home (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Grant &

Ray, 2010, 2015; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). For more than 40 years, educational leaders have focused on the need for increased parental involvement (Castro et al., 2015; Epstein, 1987, 1995, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al., 1998; Wilder, 2014). These studies provided evidence that parental involvement in education positively affects student achievement (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Keane, 2007; Vukovic, Roberts, & Green Wright, 2013). Epstein (1987) defined *parental involvement* as an ongoing process to support student achievement.

Parental involvement is a significant factor in a child's academic achievement, because students perform better when their parents are involved in their education (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013; Parcel, Dufur, & Zito, 2010). Indeed, the relationship between the parent and the child is important (Cristofaro, Rodriguez, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2010; Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Therefore, students whose parents are not actively involved may not perform as well in their studies and their behavior as those students whose parents participate on a regular basis (Calzada, Huang, Soriano, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2014; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Powell, 1989).

Rationale

I selected low parental involvement as the research problem because of its relationship to low student achievement at Brownville Public School. A 2013 state assessment and school report showed that in the 2012–2013 school year, fewer than 50% of parents attended parent-teacher conferences (HSC Monthly Report, 2013). More than 90% of parents at the school did not attend the annual open house/meet the teacher night. The problem of low parental involvement has been a concern within this district for

several years. According to several reports, increasing parental involvement is often listed as a goal for the district and the school (District Strategic Profile, 2011, 2012; School Improvement Report, 2012).

I considered the following factors in selecting this problem to study: (a) the research site is located in an area of high crime and poverty, (b) 95% of the students receive free or reduced lunch, (c) the research site is one of the lowest performing schools in the state, and (d) 9.4% of third graders are reading on grade level in comparison with 58.4% of third graders throughout the state. Increasing parental involvement at the research site becomes an issue of morality.

Fiester (2010, 2013) noted that lower income students and students of color who are not reading on grade level at the end of third grade often struggle to compete academically with their peers. Parents play a significant role in preparing their child to be a successful reader. If children are reading on grade level at the end of third grade, they are prepared for the learning opportunities that they will encounter throughout their schooling (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003). When children do not read at grade level at the end of the third grade, their ability to learn, thrive, and succeed in this environment is negatively affected.

Beginning in 2016, the state in which Brownville Public School is located required all low-performing districts to include a specific goal to address K–3 literacy. Studies have shown that students who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade have a more significant likelihood of not graduating from high school with their original class (Hernandez, 2011). Other states, such as Massachusetts and Florida, have drafted

legislation to support this effort. Massachusetts has convened an Early Literacy Expert panel charged with aligning, coordinating, and implementing a plan ensuring all students are reading on grade level at the end of third grade. The State of Florida has aligned third grade reading levels with teacher evaluations and student retention. If students fail to master reading by the end of third grade, they are required to repeat the third grade; retention can occur twice before being promoted to the fourth grade (Jones, 2014).

Jeynes (2005, 2007) demonstrated that students of color and students with low socioeconomic status are negatively affected when parents are not involved in their education. Brownville Public School is one of the lowest performing schools in the state (District Strategic Profile, 2012). As noted with details presented earlier, parental involvement is low (District Strategic Profile, 2011, 2012; HSC Monthly Report, 2013; School Improvement Report, 2012). Low parental involvement is significant, because parents receive most of their information regarding their child's progress and academic expectations during the parent-teacher conferences or the scheduled meet the teacher event (Paredes, 2011). Educators and educational psychologists expressed the importance of parental involvement and the improved learning environment where students and parents are engaged (Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Suizzo, Pahlke, Yamell, Chen, & Romero, 2014; Zellman & Waterman, 1998).

Jeynes (2005, 2007) stated that all children benefit from parental involvement; however, his meta-analysis revealed that students from lower-socioeconomic communities benefitted the most. Therefore, I based my rationale for selecting low parental involvement on four primary positions. First, students with involved parents are

more likely to perform better in school, adapt well and attend school on a regular basis, be promoted, and attend postsecondary education (Bailey, 2006; Barnard, 2004; Haines, Gross, Blue-Banning, Francis, & Turnbull, 2015; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Second, parents living in urban communities who are involved and set high expectations often have students who perform well in school (Jeynes, 2005, 2007, 2010). Third, schools that are inviting to families and willing to collaborate can positively influence parents' decisions regarding their involvement (Martinez & Wizer-Vecchi, 2016; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Fourth, when parents feel welcomed and are personally invited to participate in their child's education, they become advocates and often find ways to become involved despite limited resources and experience a sense of increased self-efficacy (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Durand & Perez, 2013; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014; Strieb, 2010).

In 2012, this inner-city district was selected to apply to be a member of the Commissioner's Network, an initiative developed by the State Department of Education to increase student achievement in the lowest performing schools in the State (CDSE, 2012). Both schools and districts received additional state funding and technical assistance. To receive the funds, schools were required to submit the Commissioner's Network Turn Around Plan Application, which included a section on family/community engagement. The application spearheaded my relationship with the research site.

The majority of research on parental involvement in the United States has focused on members of the dominant community: middle-class European American families (Young, Austin, & Grow, 2013). In the 1940s, researchers in the field of education

described parental involvement as parents, mainly mothers, actively attending the Parent-Teacher Association meetings (Hiatt, 1994). This type of involvement is important and necessary; however, the definition of *parental involvement* has evolved to include additional activities on behalf of the parents and more accountability with regard to schools and districts.

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, provided the field of education with a definition of *parental involvement*. ESEA is a federal law that focuses on the educational needs of students who are both low income and low performing. In the early 2000s, a small amount of research surfaced to include families of color. The topic of parental involvement resurfaced on a national level when President George W. Bush signed ESEA into law. The law required schools receiving Title I funds to develop an annual written parent involvement policy and plan that should be approved by parents. The No Child Left Behind act was designed to involve parents in the decision-making process through the educational choice program; this program provided parents the opportunity to send their child to a higher performing school. Despite years of federal legislation and some new studies (Cristofaro et al., 2010; Rodriguez, 2016) related to parental involvement, however, the standard for measuring parental involvement practices continued to be that of the dominant culture within the United States, with limited studies of parental involvement with families of color or in inner-city schools (Johnson, 2015).

In summary, although federal and state mandates to involve parents were implemented more than a decade ago, parental involvement is still unacceptably low in

Brownville Public School. In addition, parental involvement in the United States is often measured by the experiences of members from the dominant culture, reflecting a middle class or suburban school setting. Research within the field of education, however, has shifted to include the perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse families (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). I examined the local problem of low parental involvement by using a qualitative study, because this type of study provided me the opportunity to understand the problem of low parental involvement in the natural setting of the research site. The purpose of this study was to explore factors contributing to the problem of low parental involvement in school-based activities. The results of this study provide a better understanding of the causes of low parental involvement and a potential solution that I developed in the form of a project.

Definitions

For the purpose of this project study, I used the following terms and definitions. Because I used Epstein's (2002) work as the theoretical framework for this study, I used the primary definitions from that study for the six types of parental involvement: "parenting; communication; volunteering; learning at home; decision making; and collaborating with the community" (p. 12).

Barriers to parental involvement: Roadblocks put up by educators, schools/districts and families that hinder effective parental involvement (Grant & Ray, 2010; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Collaborating with the community: Epstein's (2002) final component is an opportunity for schools to outreach to local businesses by coordinating community resources and services for the entire school.

Communication: Epstein (2002) describes communication as a vital component of the home-school relationship.

Decision making: Epstein (2002) defined this component as parents participating in the choices regarding their child's education through committees, governance councils, and PTA/PTO.

Family involvement: A mutually collaborative working relationship with the family that serves the best interest of the student, either in the school or home setting for the primary purpose of increasing student achievement (Epstein et al., 2002; Grant & Ray, 2010).

Home-school coordinator: Act as a family liaison, able to cross boundaries into differing cultural environments and promote open communication between home and school (Grant & Ray, 2010).

Inner city: Location near the center of a city often described as having social and economic problems (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Inner-city schools: Often public schools that serve largely poor students and students of color (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Learning at home: Epstein (2002) described this fourth component as an opportunity for parents to become involved in their child's academics at home.

Parental involvement: Parents having the opportunity to participate and receive communication regarding their child's academic learning and are viewed as full partners in decision making activities (ESEA, 2001)

Parenting: Epstein's (2002) parenting component is defined as schools supporting families with parenting and child-rearing skills, assisting families with understanding child and adolescent development, and establishing a home learning environment.

Student achievement: The display of increased performance. The amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time (McLaughlin, 2010).

Volunteering: Epstein's framework (2002) is described as an opportunity to build relationships with families through the act of volunteering.

Significance

The lack of parental involvement at Brownville Public School is a significant problem for several reasons. First, the lack of parental involvement affects students' ability to excel academically (Jeynes, 2010); this is especially true for students of color and of low socioeconomic status (Jeynes, 2010). Studies have shown that students of color benefit greatly when their parents are involved in their education (Johnson, 2015). Currently, 90% of the students attending the research site are students of color. Therefore, the need to increase parental involvement is significant. Second, the lack of parental involvement leads to miscommunication between the school and the home, which could result in low student motivation, high suspension rates, and high dropout rates (Flynn & Nolan, 2008). Third, fewer than 10% of parents attend school-based activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, open houses, or meet the teacher night; such school-based

activities are scheduled to connect the parent with the school, establish relationships, and provide parents with useful information and resources. The severity of this problem may negatively affect students' ability to learn, thrive, and succeed in this environment.

The usefulness of increased parental involvement to the local educational setting was limitless, from the development of trusted relationships to implementing effective partnerships between parents and teachers. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) asserted that partnerships between parents and teachers work well when both parties are open to learning from each other. Jacobbe, Ross, and Hensberry (2012) found that when teachers receive professional development around engaging families, their confidence increases and parents responded favorably to their outreach. Therefore, studying this problem supported the educational reform efforts of increasing learning at the research site and highlighted specific types of parental involvement that are most effective when working with inner-city families.

Guiding/Research Questions

The overarching question that I addressed in this project study was: What factors contribute to the problem and solution of low parental involvement in school-based activities? School-based activities such as the open house and parent-teacher conferences are opportunities for parents to receive resources and information regarding their child's education. Informed parents will come to understand that the learning environment changes as students develop (Fiester, 2010, 2013). Parents who are not informed may struggle to support their child academically. In this study, I investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about factors that contribute to low parental involvement?
2. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about reasons and ways that inner-city parents are currently involved in third-grade school activities?
3. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about types and outcomes of strategies that have been used to increase parental involvement?
4. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about solutions to the low parental involvement problem?

Review of the Literature

For more than 4 decades, the concept of parental involvement has been a topic of discussion as a means of supporting student learning. In 2014, this topic expanded to the national stage with the creation of the National Family & Community Engagement Conference. Still in its infancy, the conference attracted more than 1,600 participants representing 47 states, suggesting the importance of engaging families in the education of their children.

My purpose in this literature review was to describe the research relating to the overarching question of this project study, identify factors that contribute to the problem, and discover solutions to improve low parental involvement in school-based activities. I used the following keywords in my literature search: *parental involvement, family involvement, family engagement, low participation, barriers to involvement, inner-city,*

and *urban school*. I used the following databases in the Walden Library: ERIC, Google Scholar, Booleans, SAGE and ProQuest to support the literature review. In this section, I review Epstein's research on parental involvement and provide the conceptual framework for the study. I focus primarily on articles published from 2011 to 2017. This information is followed by a review of the broader problem, including a discussion of reasons for low parental involvement, parental involvement and student achievement, parental involvement and inner-city schools, and parents' perceptions of parental involvement. I conclude with a discussion of literature related to strategies for enhancing parental involvement.

Conceptual Framework

I used Epstein's (1987) typology as the conceptual framework for this study. The six types of involvement, together with the overlapping spheres of influence, act as a guide for establishing roles and actions of the school, family, and community to increase parental involvement and support student learning (Epstein, 1992, 1997, 2001). I used Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and six types of involvement (Epstein, 2002) as a framework to better understand parental involvement at Brownville Public School. It is important to define each type to better understand the usefulness of the framework and possible challenges. Descriptions for each type of parental involvement are included below:

Parenting. Epstein's (2002) parenting component is defined as schools supporting families with parenting and child-rearing skills, assisting families with understanding child and adolescent development, and establishing a home learning

environment. The goal of the parenting component is for schools to design activities that will support parents in their role as parents (Epstein, 2009). Epstein's framework informs schools of possible challenges when implementing one of the six keys of parental involvement. Therefore, when implementing the parenting component, the recommendation is to provide information that is meaningful to families and information that supports student learning. Cultural differences also need to be considered when implementing and designing parenting activities.

Communicating. Epstein (2002) described communication as a vital component of the home-school relationship. The goal of this component is to provide parents with information and resources on a regular basis, which will allow them to make informed decisions. Epstein recommended implementing communication practices that are two-way in nature: school-to-home and home-to-school. This component involves creating and implementing effective agreed-upon forms of communication that informs parents of their child's progress and other educational resources that are available to improve student learning. The challenge when implementing this component is being aware of the many languages being spoken by families, as well as understanding the educational levels of families within the school (Epstein, 2009).

Volunteering. The third component offered in Epstein's framework (2002) is described as an opportunity to build relationships with families through the act of volunteering. The goal of this component is to provide parents with the opportunity to become involved in their child's school by offering their time, talents, and resources. According to Epstein, volunteering can take place inside or outside of the school

building. For example, parents can volunteer and support their child's school by attending sport activities and student performances. The challenge when implementing the volunteering component is making sure schools reach out to all families, as well as making sure programs are in place to support the number of parents who are interested in supporting the school (Epstein, 2009).

Learning at home. Epstein (2002) described this fourth component as an opportunity for parents to become involved in their child's academics at home. The goal of this component is for schools to develop interactive family-friendly activities that are aligned with students' classroom assignments (Epstein, 2008). Epstein recommended involving families in their child's learning at home through homework and other curriculum related activities (Epstein, 1990). However, the educational level of the parents, social-economic status of the family, and resources within the community may need to be considered when assigning selected learning at home activities (Epstein, 2008).

Decision making. Epstein (2002) defined this component as providing parents with opportunities to participate in the decision-making process through committees, governance councils, and PTA/PTO. Epstein suggested that schools encourage parents to participate in this type of involvement that may extend beyond their child's school and consider supporting education at the district level as well. The goal of the decision-making component is to allow for parents' voice and to provide opportunities for family members to support the efforts of the school through the decision-making process. As with the other components, Epstein (2009) noted a possible challenge to consider when

implementing the decision-making dimension. Schools must be careful to ensure outreach to all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds when recruiting parent leaders. Additionally, the school, being the larger more established entity, should make a concerted effort to help families feel like welcomed members of the school community.

Collaborating with the community. Epstein's (2002) final component is an opportunity for schools to outreach to local businesses by coordinating community resources and services for the entire school. The goal of this component is to build relationships with local businesses, colleges, and cultural organizations. Schools have the opportunity to organize community resources for students and families, and provide services back to the community in return (Epstein, 2009). This component is successful when the school builds relationships with local partners and organizations to support student achievement. Often school administrators and the home-school coordinator may take on the role of establishing new community partners. Therefore, one of the challenges to consider when implementing this dimension of parental involvement is the importance of understanding the needs of the families when seeking new partnerships.

Epstein's theory (1987) of overlapping spheres of influence suggests that the work of the school and the family and the community overlaps with the students at the center of the relationship. Epstein has suggested that the spheres in which a child learns and grows can come together or move further apart depending on the attention to internal and external influences. The theory of the overlapping spheres supports the interest of both the school and the family through the implementation of policies and programs. Through these policies, teachers support parental involvement through building

relationships with the parents (Epstein, 1987). As a result of this relationship, the parents increase their involvement at home with their children and they are empowered to continue supporting their child academically (Hoover-Dempsey, 1997). This increased confidence is demonstrated through increased parental involvement at home, increased parental involvement at school, and a positive assessment of the teacher (Lemmer, 2012; Vukovic et al., 2013).

Review of the Broader Problem

This review presented here focused on parental involvement and student achievement, parental involvement and inner-city schools, and parents' perceptions of parental involvement. Parental involvement in school activities may be related to a variety of factors, such as cultural influences, socioeconomic status, and perceived role of the parent. Watson, Lawson, and McNeal (2012) pointed to changes within the family, negative experiences, and role perception as reasons for low parental involvement. The makeup of the family has changed to include both parents working outside of the home; thus, working hours may conflict with the hours that schools have made available for families. Single parents and grandparents raising children alone have also contributed to the changes within the family unit. These changes may affect the schools' ability to engage the family on a regular basis.

Baker, Wise, Kelley, and Skiba (2016) conducted a qualitative study at six schools in a midwestern state. Schools were selected based on their willingness to implement culturally responsive practices. The participants, parents, and school staff participated in focus groups. The researchers identified similar barriers to parental

involvement at the six schools: poor communication and language barriers. Parents in the study offered social media and clarity of the communication as recommendations for improving communication between home and school.

The lack of trust may also contribute to the problem of low parental involvement. Oakes and Lipton (1999) emphasized that families living in urban communities are often disconnected from the school for several reasons, such as racism, poverty, language and cultural differences. Additional challenges such as less-than-welcoming schools, lack of leadership, and the lack of parent education or parenting skills may contribute to the issue of low parental involvement (Grant & Ray, 2010; Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

Parents who have negative educational experiences are less likely to become involved at their child's school (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). Disengagement can be rooted in poverty, such as when a parent has to prioritize providing for the family or attending a function at school (Hoglund, Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2015). Low parental involvement is also affected by inconsistencies among educators and families regarding the definition of *parental involvement* and the role of the parent (Newman, Arthur, Staples & Woodrow, 2016). For example, Watson et al. (2012) highlighted cultural narratives, personal sacrifices, and the sharing of lessons learned as forms of parental involvement. However, such forms may not be recognized or valued by those unfamiliar with the culture (Watson et al., 2012).

Parental involvement and student achievement. Parental involvement is a significant factor in a child's academic achievement as it relates to social capital (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013). Researchers have confirmed that academic achievement

increases when parental involvement was implemented early and maintained throughout the child's life (Epstein, 2002, 2009; Grant & Ray, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011).

Active parental involvement supports student learning; this involvement may vary from being an informed parent to partnering with the school (Kirkbride, 2014). Suizzo and Stapleton (2007) found that on average, students whose parents attended parent-teacher conferences and sustained ongoing communication with the school benefitted more academically than their peers. Harris and Goodall (2008) found learning at home significantly affects student learning. Parents interacting with their child (e.g., singing, playing, and reading books) has positively affected their literacy development skills (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Parents also may influence math achievement by creating home learning environments (Vukovic et al., 2013). In addition, students' academic achievement, school engagement, and their ability to adjust to school have been linked to parental involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Grant & Ray, 2010; Wilder, 2014).

Henderson and Mapp (2002) examined 51 studies focusing on the effect of parental involvement. Twelve of these studies focused on parental involvement in an urban school district. The researchers support previous findings that students with involved parents are more likely to experience social and academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) arrived at a similar conclusion in a longitudinal study conducted in Chicago. Findings demonstrated that family engagement was one of five essential components needed to

increase student achievement along with strong leadership, instructional guidance, school climate, and teacher capacity. Flynn and Nolan (2008) found similar results, in that parental involvement resulted in improved school readiness, higher academic achievement, better attendance, confidence, motivation to learn, and better self-control.

The benefits of parental involvement are experienced beyond the student and the classroom setting; all constituents—children, families, and educators—are positively influenced by increased parental involvement (Grant & Ray, 2010). Often, this effect has led to parents increasing their skills and their confidence regarding their involvement in schools. Some parents have continued their education and have taken on leadership roles within schools and their communities (Grant & Ray, 2010).

The literature demonstrates that students improve, both socially and academically, when parents are involved early and throughout students' educational experiences. It is not necessary for parents to be subject experts in order to support their child academically. When parents have high expectations, communicate with the teacher, and create a learning environment at home, students achieve (Durand, 2013; Wilder, 2013).

Parental involvement in inner-city schools. Although much of the literature tends to focus on parental involvement within the dominant culture (Christianakis, 2011; Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013), it is vital to look at parental involvement within diverse communities. Some researchers have suggested that although all students benefit from parental involvement, students living in urban areas benefit more than their peers when their parents are involved (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007, 2010).

Jeynes (2005, 2007) studied parental involvement in urban schools and determined that students attending urban schools, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, race, or gender, benefit from having involved parents. In his 2005 meta-analysis he revealed one of the key components of parental involvement for urban students is parents having high expectations for their children. Jeynes (2005) examined 41 studies that looked at the relationship between parental involvement and the achievement of urban elementary students. Parental involvement was found to have a positive influence on student learning despite the presence of a particular program. The findings suggested when parental involvement included having high expectations for their children, the children performed better in school.

Therefore, to increase parental involvement, we must first understand why and how inner-city parents are currently involved. Mapp (2003) conducted a three-year qualitative study at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts. Despite the urban/low socioeconomic setting, 90% of the parents participated in at least one home or school-based activity. Parental involvement increased as staff reached out to parents, honored parents for their contributions, and connected parents to the school community. The increase was associated with the establishment of sustained meaningful relationships. This study is relevant to the project study for several reasons, from the urban setting to the diverse population. Understanding the role that the school plays in influencing parents' involvement may prove to be a significant factor (Mapp, 2003).

Parents' perceptions of parental involvement. According to Grant and Ray (2010), families listed the following as reasons for their lack of trust with inner-city

schools: limited/no follow-up after a meeting; no actions as a result of voicing concerns; scheduling meetings at inconvenient times; resources are not available for parents to attend the meeting; and not all parents are welcomed to the school. Several districts across the country have had similar experiences. Brewster and Ralisback (2003) described ways in which schools and districts in the northwest have built trusting school-family relationships through a parent mentoring program, family workshops to assist in providing educational enrichment at home, and an advocacy group for parents of African American students. Notably, the district sought to meet the needs and the concerns of all parents and not just members of the dominant culture. Therefore, their efforts resulted in increased parent participation throughout the entire district. Tran (2014) suggested being intentional when attempting to engage parents. He offered strategies such as identifying one person in the school who parents can consistently contact for questions or concerns.

Other studies have looked at parental involvement and self-image (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). They discovered parents' sense of self-efficacy was one of the factors to parental involvement. Parents believed that through their participation they could positively support their child's learning. Likewise, school invitingness was another contributing factor for involvement. According to the study, when parents were personally invited by a teacher to participate involvement would increase. The authors stressed the importance of schools recognizing their ability to positively influence parents' decisions regarding their involvement by creating a welcoming environment. Parents' role construction, i.e. if parents believed that

supporting their child's educational efforts were part of their role as being a parent, was also an important factor in parental involvement.

Anderson and Minke (2007) also observed how parents decided to become involved in their child's education. The majority of the participants in this study were African Americans living in extreme poverty. The researchers studied four areas: role construction, sense of efficacy, resources, and perceptions of teacher invitingness. The researchers discovered that invitations from teachers had the greatest effect in increasing parental involvement. The study revealed when parents were personally invited to participate, they found ways to become involved despite limited resources. Robbins and Searby (2013) found schools that take the time to develop relationships with their families and create a welcoming environment have successfully increased parent participation. The literature clearly indicates that both schools and families play a critical role in educating children. Therefore, schools have the capacity to influence parents' perceptions of their self-efficacy and their parent-role construction as a vehicle for increasing parental involvement.

Strategies for enhancing parental involvement. The research site is often home to new immigrant families. These families have been characterized by their district as highly mobile (CSDE, 2012) with 95% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. Considering these facts, it was important to solicit current studies with similar demographics.

Miedel and Reynolds (1999) conducted a quantitative study where they interviewed 704 low-income middle-school parents regarding their involvement when

their children were in preschool and kindergarten. Both parents and teachers participated in the study. As a result of the parents becoming involved, their children performed better in reading, were more likely to be promoted, and were less likely to be referred to receive special educational services.

Aligning with the previous study, Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) agreed that it is necessary to look beyond the school to find effective parental involvement practices for inner-city families. In their study, Abdul-Adil and Farmer proposed three practices to consider when implementing parental involvement in urban areas, empowering families to become involved, developing a plan to outreach to families, and soliciting resources from within the community. Frew, Zhou, Duran, Kwok and Benz (2013) found school-initiated parent outreach programs are vital to increasing parental involvement.

Grant and Ray (2010) agreed that parental involvement must be intentional. It is important to develop and implement a systematic approach when designing a plan to outreach to families. Weiss et al. (2009) concurred that parental involvement is a successful strategy when it is included in the district/school improvement plan. Additionally, successful districts not only connect parental involvement to their improvement plans, they also provide leadership and adequate resources from implementing the work to sustaining the work.

Williams and Sanchez (2011) noted challenges often faced by low income families living in urban areas, such as time constraints, opportunity gaps, and lack of financial resources. Based on the literature, parental involvement in urban schools requires nontraditional resources and support (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006). According to

the research, (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) parents responded positively when schools were welcoming to families, respected their contributions, and honored their cultural differences. In addition, when schools encouraged families to participate parents found a way to become involved regardless of limited resources. This involvement has resulted in increased student learning for all students, especially students in urban schools (Jeynes, 2005, 2007).

Parents may not have the skills or the resources to help their children succeed in school and life. This may be harder to achieve for some families living within urban communities. Often inner-city families speak of the lack of trust when referring to their child's school (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). This perception may be the result of their former schooling or their current relationship with their child's school (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013) relationships of trust and respect can exist when student achievement and school improvement is the responsibility of both the school and the families. However, assumptions cannot be made that schools and families have the knowledge/resources to implement and sustain these relationships. To address this, Mapp and Kuttner introduced the dual-capacity building framework for family and school partnerships. The framework focuses on building the capacity of parents and educators to work together to support student learning and can be used as a compass to determine a school or district readiness to implement the framework.

The research on parental involvement extends back to the early eighties. However, much of the research focused on the dominant culture of the United States.

There are limited studies on parental involvement in inner-city or urban schools (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013).

Implications

Identifying a potential solution to low parent involvement could result in an improved school climate for learning and children's academic performance (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996; Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013). Epstein's typology provided the conceptual framework to better understand the problem and to develop a potential solution to the lack of parental involvement at the research school. Findings from the project study guided the development of the final project, which may lead to improved student achievement through increased parent participation. Other considerations were a school curriculum project for parent empowerment, the development of a leadership curriculum to assist school leaders with the implementation of culturally relevant parental involvement activities, and the creation of curriculum for pre-service teachers entering the field of education. Such projects provide a continuum of educational resources and strategies for parents that enhance their skills to participate as informed partners.

Summary

Section 1 focused on the research problem of low parental involvement in one inner city public school and the importance of addressing this issue. The literature review revealed that students, school leaders, teachers, and families experience shortcomings when parents are not involved in their child's educational process. In fact, the responsibility for a child's success is more of the schools' challenge because as the larger

entity, they are responsible for initiating relationships with parents. Therefore, the goal of this project study was to investigate school challenges, specifically in the third grade, that hampered parental involvement, and to explore solutions for increasing parental participation. As a result of this research, the needs of school personnel and parents were identified. Future projects to address these needs include the development of a professional learning series for parents, school staff, and the community. Section 2 will describe the proposed methodology for the project study including the following sections: (a) qualitative research and approach, (b) participants, (c) data collection and sources, (d) data analysis strategies, and (e) strategies for evidence of quality.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The problem that I researched was a pattern of low parental involvement at school-based events, such as parent-teacher conferences, annual open houses, parent workshops, and parent-teacher association meetings at the research site (HSC Monthly Report, 2012, 2013). Parent-teacher conferences (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003) and the annual open house are often used by schools to share academic information, school goals, and how parents can support their child's learning. In general, schools place a high importance on these events because they provide an opportunity to involve parents in their child's educational process early in the school year. This helps to build shared responsibility for each child's success between the school and its families. For many families, the annual open house and the biannual parent-teacher conference are the only opportunities that they have to receive information that is directly connected to student achievement (Paredes, 2011).

The overarching question addressed in this project study was: What factors contribute to the problem and solution of low parental involvement in school-based activities? There were limited data at the research site and in the literature to provide evidence related to these factors. Therefore, to understand perceptions of parents, teachers, and school principal about reasons for lack of parental involvement, I used a qualitative case study design to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about factors that contribute to low parental involvement?

2. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about reasons and ways that inner-city parents are currently involved in third-grade school activities?
3. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about types and outcomes of strategies that have been used to increase parental involvement?
4. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third-grade students, and teachers about solutions to the low parental involvement problem?

Research Design

I used a qualitative approach for this project study to explore factors contributing to low parental involvement in school-based activities. Creswell (2012) described qualitative research as an opportunity to learn about a problem by engaging the participants and obtaining a deeper understanding of the problem. Maxwell (2012) noted that the qualitative approach is flexible and inductive in nature; it can support a researcher in obtaining personal, practical, and intellectual goals. Cypress (2015) summarized the following characteristics of the qualitative approach: (a) occurs in a natural setting, (b) uses face to face data collection, (c) offers access to multiple sources of data, and (d) follows an inductive data analysis format.

The rationale for adopting the qualitative approach is based on the work of Patton (2001), Merriam (2009), and Glesne (2011). Patton described qualitative research as a naturalistic approach that is used to understand a problem or phenomena beyond a focus on frequency. In this study, I sought to understand the patterns of low parental

involvement from the perspectives of the school administrator, teachers, and parents. Recent attendance data have provided the number of parents attending school-based events (HSC Monthly Report, 2012, 2013). However, the reports did not investigate why most parents were not attending school-based activities. Implementing a qualitative approach to studying the problem helped to identify reasons why parents are not involved in the activities.

Glesne (2011) defined qualitative research as the method to use when problems are not easily explained quantifiably. Glesne noted that qualitative research may be especially effective when seeking culturally specific information of a particular population. I sought to better understand the perceptions of parents of third grade students in an inner-city school, as well as perceptions of teachers and administrator of the school. Because the qualitative approach is often used to capture the human component of a problem or phenomenon in its natural context, it was the best approach for this project study (Glesne, 2011; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Noble & Smith, 2014, 2015).

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) noted that in implementing a qualitative research method, it is important to ensure that the researcher has the time needed to conduct the study and has access to the people who can participate. As an education consultant currently working throughout the state, I had the time and access to the participants to conduct this study.

Merriam (2009) referred to qualitative research as a tool for practitioners in the field of education, health, and social sciences to make a difference in the lives of those

being studied. Practitioners may use qualitative research methods to learn more about one's professional practice (Maxwell, 2005). This was my hope for conducting the study. I wanted to learn more about my professional practice, to share the perspectives of those being studied, and to develop a project with the potential to increase parental involvement of third grade students within the research site.

According to Yin (2015), five features exist when conducting qualitative research: (a) study people in their role, in this project study the real life roles of the parents, teachers, and the administrator who participated; (b) describe the views of the participants, a significant component for understanding low parental involvement in the current study; (c) embrace the context of the participants to ensure that the perspectives of participants and culture of the research site are captured; (d) include new and existing information that may assist in the interpretation; and (e) understand the benefit of having access to more than one source of evidence (p. 9). The five features supported the logical choice of conducting a qualitative study to better understand low parental involvement at Brownville Public School.

Case Study Design

For the current research, implementing a qualitative case study was the most logical approach. I used the case study design to explore participants' perceptions of the challenges that prevented parent participation and specific types of involvement that were most effective when working with inner-city families. The parents, teachers, and administrator who had experience with third grade students at Brownville Public School served as the participants for this study. Case studies are often used when the researchers'

focus is obtaining an in-depth understanding of a person, group, or situation (Miles, 2015). The case study design allowed me to be the primary instrument during the data collection and the analysis (Merriam, 2009). I was able to formulate an in-depth description and analysis of the phenomenon of low parental involvement in this inner-city school.

Justification for Selection of Design

A quantitative approach could have been selected for this study, but it would have been less effective. For example, I could have surveyed the parents to gather their reasons for not participating or to measure their preferences for options that would encourage them to participate more actively. This approach, however, would not allow for collection of the type of rich data that a qualitative approach provides in order to understand perceptions of the school administrator, teachers, and parents about the problem of low parental involvement. Also, in using a quantitative approach, there was the likelihood that parents would not complete the surveys. A qualitative approach allowed data collection through interviews, which allowed me to dig down deeply to understand the reasons why parents were not participating. Quantitative research could have been used to provide the frequencies of events and summarize results numerically, but it does not employ data collection methods that encourage open-ended responses, provide flexibility, or, perhaps most important, reflect participants' voices.

Additional qualitative traditions were considered for this project study, including grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology. According to Creswell (2012), grounded theory supports the development of a theory based on the experiences of the

participants; this approach acts as a vehicle that allows the researcher to move beyond a mere description of the study to the generation of a theory. Creswell described it as a systematic procedure for generating a theory about a topic. Merriam (2009) described it as an approach designed to assist researchers in building a theory that is grounded in data. McKenna and Millen (2013) used this approach to test their theory of parent voice and parent presence as a form of parental involvement. The researchers concluded that their findings aligned with current literature calling for a more inclusive understanding of parent engagement. I did not select the grounded theory approach for this project study because I did not aim to build a theory related to parental involvement.

Ethnography was also considered but not selected, as it focuses on matters of culture. Ethnography allows the researcher to study the patterns of behavior for a particular group. When using this approach, the researcher is immersed in the culture by becoming a member of the population being studied (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, when conducting an ethnographic study, the researcher acts as an observer and a participant.

Another common qualitative approach is the phenomenological study, which captures the essence of the phenomenon (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Researchers using this approach focus on the essence of a human experience. The phenomenologist's role is to describe the individual perspective of each of the participants. A phenomenological study often includes interviews as its primary form of data collection but focuses primarily on individual experiences, rather than factors related to a concept such as parental involvement. I did not consider conducting a

phenomenological study because the issue of low parental involvement is not a shared experience of a single life event; it is ongoing and has many factors.

Given the above explanation for why other quantitative and qualitative traditions were not used and given the nature of this study, I used a qualitative case study approach. Case studies are also described as intensive analyses of a single unit or system confined by space and time; they are also referred to as a bounded system (Creswell, 2009; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Miles, 2015). This study is characterized as a bounded system because the research focused on a specific problem, the lack of parental involvement, within the confines of one school. The single-case study design was used to better investigate the causes contributing to low parental involvement at the research site. This research design was also selected because it is flexible in nature, allowing for changes to occur after entering the field (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Maxwell (2012) described this process as occurring simultaneously as each component, such as developing the research questions, collecting and analyzing the data, and addressing validity concerns are affecting each other at all times.

Participants

Criteria for Selecting Participants

Lodico et al. (2010) described participants as key informants with unique information or knowledge. Creswell (2009) stated that when selecting participants, attention must be made to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomena and will be able to contribute to the study. The sample for this study was selected with the use of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select

participants with key knowledge or experience regarding the topic of study (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). The goal of this project study was to explore the challenges within the school environment, specifically in the third grade, that resulted in low parental involvement at the research site. Thus, participants were selected for their unique knowledge or experience related to this focus, including parents of third grade students; teachers of second, third, and fourth grades; and the school principal. These data are extremely important, as parents play a significant role in preparing their child to be a successful reader and connections have been made to students not reading at the end of third grade and students not graduating from high school with their peers (Fiester, 2010, 2012; Roehrig, Petscher, Nettles, Hudson, & Torgesen, 2008).

The criteria for selecting the participants were: (a) parents with a third-grade student currently enrolled at the research site; (b) second, third and fourth grade general education teachers with more than one year of teaching experience; (c) the current principal. The race/ethnicity of the participant was documented to share the perspectives of a diverse sample. Participants were offered the opportunity to provide demographic data.

The principal and all second, third and fourth grade teachers with more than 1 year of teaching experience currently employed at the research site were invited to participate in the study. Likewise, parents with students currently enrolled in third grade received an invitation to participate in the study. I selected the first five teachers that met the criteria and agreed to participate in the study. Likewise, I selected the first five

parents who agreed to participate in the study. Descriptive information included the gender and race/ethnicity for each participant.

Justification for the Number of Participants

There were three teachers in each of the second, third and fourth grade classes and one principal employed at the research site; offering a total of nine potential teacher participants. The population of parents with students in third grade is approximately 75. The targeted number of parent participants was 10-12; however, only five parents and five teachers agreed to participate. Mindful consideration was at the forefront when considering the sample size, as too few or too many participants may jeopardize the study (Cleary et al., 2014). In this case five parents were sufficient because of the diversity of the parents. Although I anticipated having between 14-18 participants in this study, a total of 11 participants offered a unique perspective. This sample size aligned with that for qualitative research studies, which traditionally have smaller samples than quantitative studies (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, these were reasonable numbers to represent the case.

Access to Participants

I gained initial contact with potential participants with the approval of the school principal. The principal participated in the project study and provided me with documents. He provided me with the names and email addresses of each of the second, third, and fourth grade teachers. He also sent emails to the teachers on my behalf. I contacted each participant via their email address. The principal, teachers, and parents received information regarding the project study prior to the data collection. The

principal also allowed me to greet parents and disseminate informational packets. During this time, I gave a brief overview of the project study and answered any questions.

Participants signed consent forms prior to participating. I contacted each of the participants to schedule a time and place that was convenient for them to conduct the interviews.

Establishing Working Relationship

According to Lodico et al. (2010), researchers can develop positive working relationships at the research site by being immersed in the culture. This allows the researcher to be seen as a member of the community and not as an outsider. Glesne (2011) offered the following steps for establishing the researcher/participant working relationship: (1) gain access to the participants, (2) create a rapport with the participants, (3) develop trust, and (4) conduct the study ethically at all times. It is important to remember that the purpose of the study is to learn from the participants. Therefore, to establish a researcher-participant working relationship, and build trust I started each interview by providing a brief overview of the study and answered any questions the participants had. I established a rapport with each participant by creating a safe/welcoming atmosphere by being transparent and ensuring the participants of the confidentiality of the study.

Measures for Ethical Protection

Several literature-based strategies were used to ensure the ethical treatment of participants in the study, such as obtaining informed consent, protection from harm, and confidentiality (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2011). Data were only collected after approval

from the institutional review board (IRB). The purpose of the IRB is to safeguard the participants while ensuring ethical concerns have been addressed (Creswell, 2009). IRB approval number for the study is 06-17-16-0250817.

Interviews were not conducted until I received informed consent from each of the participants. To obtain informed consent, each participant received a cover page including a thorough description of the study, my personal contact information, and a consent form that explained the purpose, voluntary nature, the procedures, and any potential risk associated with the study. Participation was completely voluntary and I shared with the participants that they had the right to stop the interview at any time. Participants could have refused to answer a particular question. Participants' identities were kept confidential at all times.

As an education consultant, I did not have access to the students, only the adults within the school. During the study I was not under contract with the school or the district. Therefore, no conflict of interest existed and I had no supervisory power that would have affected my relationships with the participants.

In conducting a qualitative study, participants must be protected from physical and emotional harm (Lodico et al., 2010). Protection from harm was implemented by participants receiving honest and detailed information. There were no foreseen risks for participating in this study. However, I understood questions could have elicited an emotional response from a participant. Therefore, participants were given the opportunity to stop the study at any time.

Confidentiality, an important component of ethical practice, was achieved by protecting the identity of the participants. I did not use the real names of the participants. The data were secured on my password-protected personal computer. I kept the data in a locked cabinet at my home. It will remain for a minimum of 5 years after degree completion and then destroyed.

Data Collection and Sources

In case studies, researchers have access to different methods of data collection; including interviews and the examination of documents (Lodico et al., 2010). This case study was bound by time and grade level; data from documents related to the 2015-16 school year and interviews included teachers and parents at one inner-city K-8 school in the northeast region of the United States. Currently, this school is listed as one of the lowest performing schools in the State.

Document Review

Review of documents provided a way to better understand the school setting and the culture of the building prior to conducting the interviews (Lodico et al., 2010). For this case study, documents pertaining to school-based activities, such as attendance records of the parental involvement activities and monthly parental involvement reports that contain qualitative data about parent experiences were examined to gain an overall picture of parental involvement within the school. This information provided a context for the primary data collection, which consisted of semi structured interviews with the principal, second, third and fourth grade teachers, and parents of third grade students.

The review of the monthly reports and attendance records occurred before conducting the interviews with the participants. The attendance records of the parental involvement activities during the 2015-16 school year and monthly parental involvement reports of the 15-16 school year were provided to me by the school administrator and the district facilitator. The home school coordinator was responsible for completing and maintaining the attendance records and monthly parental involvement reports. These reports were copied and shared with the school principal and a copy is forwarded to the district facilitator. These documents assisted me in creating a comprehensive description of parental involvement at the research site. I was able to determine which of the parental involvement activities had the highest attendance of parents and by which grade level. Documents supplemented the data gathered during the interviews. For the purpose of confidentiality, no personal information was recorded related to the document analysis. The Document Data Recording Form shown in Appendix E was used to organize the data from the documents, such as number of parental involvement activities offered throughout the year, number of parents of third grade students in attendance, and the type of parental involvement activities being offered.

Interviews

Data collection consisted of recording the individual face-to-face interviews. Interviews were used to describe the perceptions of both the parents and the school staff regarding the reasons for the lack of parental involvement at school-based activities. I developed in consultation with my research committee two interview protocols: one was used with the school administrator and teachers (Appendix B) and one was used with

parents of third grade students (Appendix C). Interviews were used as the primary form of data collection, as they assisted my understanding of the patterns of low parental involvement at the research site.

The interview questions were developed to specifically address the research questions. Epstein's framework was used as a guide to support the construction of the interview protocol. Epstein has identified six areas for parents to become involved: (1) parenting; (2) communication; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision making and (6) collaborating with the community.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested that questions should be designed to answer the fundamental questions guiding the study. In this study, questions focused on the perceived challenges that prevented parent participation, specific types of parental involvement strategies that are most effective when working with inner-city families and a potential solution to the problem. The one-to-one interviews were scheduled to last approximately 60 minutes.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) offered the following suggestions for conducting successful interviews (a) select key participants who have knowledge regarding the research questions, (b) develop an interview guide, (c) select a location that is comfortable and free of distractions, (d) audio-record when possible, and (e) protect participants at all times. All of the interviews were held at the most convenient location for the participant. I ensured confidentiality by not including identifiable information regarding each of the participants. Each participant's interview received a code. For example, "parent 1" was used to identify the first parent interview and "teacher 1" was

used to identify the first teacher interview and so on. I obtained permission from each of the participants to audio-record the entire interview to support the accuracy of the findings. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. I took detailed field notes capturing the mood, personality and disposition of the participant. Prior to the start of each interview I asked participants to complete a brief demographic informational sheet (Appendix D). Immediately after each interview I transcribed the findings.

Plan for Securing Data

The data were secure at all times. Data collected from the interviews and document observations were confidential. No personally identifiable information was recorded. Data were safely stored on my password protected personal computer located in my home office. I retained an electronic copy of the data until the completion of the study to assist with any possible discrepancies. The data were transcribed and then erased at the end of the study. I assured the participants that all data collected were dated, filed, and stored. Each participant received a numerical code for use during the interview.

After compiling the data, it was transferred to a flash drive. No one other than me had access to the data. During the data collection phase the audio recorder was placed in a locked drawer when not in use. I will retain the data for a minimum of 5 years after degree completion; after which the data will be deleted.

Plan for Keeping Track of Data

As the sole researcher, I read, reread, and examined all of the data (Lodico et al., 2010). In qualitative research the process of coding allowed me to identify different parts of the data that best described the researched phenomena (Merriam, 2009). Information

from the interviews and documents was saved on my personal flash drive. During the data collection phase, the flash drive was placed in a locked drawer. To keep track of the data, I used a research log and a reflective journal. A reflective journal is another methodological strategy used by qualitative researchers (Noble & Smith, 2015). I used the reflective journal as an opportunity to share my feelings regarding conducting research in an inner-city school. I highlighted my reactions, bias, and assumptions about the research process.

Role of the Researcher

I have worked as an education consultant within the school/district where the research was being conducted. However, I did not have personal relationships with any of the participants. As a consultant working in the field of family engagement and a parent of a student attending an inner-city public school, I had a vested interest in improving parental involvement in schools with similar demographics. Several years ago I supported the school's efforts of increasing parental involvement by conducting professional learning on the benefit of partnering with families.

My relationship with this inner-city district began during the 2007-2008 school year. The district agreed to participate in a 3-year district project dedicated to implementing school-family-community partnerships. As a consultant within the district, I spent 3 years working with the District Facilitator to increase parental involvement through the establishment of "Action Teams" for partnership. During my time working with this district all of the schools participated in the training and implemented the team approach except for the research site.

This project ended after the third year. However, during the 2012-2013 school year, I was contacted to return to the district to support Brownville Public School in its goal of increasing parental involvement. Due to inclement weather and constant rescheduling of training days, this support was limited to only 2 full days of training. The sessions were, *How Welcoming Is Your School* and *Culturally Relevant Family Engagement*. These sessions were designed to increase parental involvement by assessing how inviting the school is to new/diverse families and community members. This former relationship did not affect the outcome of the study, as, (1) several staffing changes have occurred as this school has been characterized as serving an extreme transient population, and (2) peer debriefing was used to limit any personal bias as I have a child attending an inner-city school within this State.

As a parent of a child who had attended an inner-city school and a practitioner in the field of family engagement, I was aware of my personal biases regarding parental involvement within inner-city schools. I was also aware that my feelings as a parent could have influenced the data analysis. As the sole researcher for this project, I did not have contact with students. I conducted all of the interviews with each of the participants. This method provided a level of consistency throughout the study.

Data Analysis Strategies

Both Merriam (2009) and Maxwell (2005, 2012) suggested that data collection and data analysis should be a simultaneous process when conducting qualitative research in order to support the validity of the study and assist a novice researcher from feeling overwhelmed. After generating the data from the interviews and the documents, the data

were displayed in a table to assist in the organization and analysis process (Noble & Smith, 2014, 2015). The steps included (1) preparing and organizing the data: I used a recording device as well as a journal during each of the interviews to gain general understanding of the phenomenon, (2) reviewing the data; I extracted significant phrases connected to the phenomenon; (3) coding the data; I used a color-coded system to highlight themes, and (4) interpreted the data; a preliminary analysis was conducted. I excluded data that did not provide evidence of the central phenomenon.

Immediately after each interview I developed detailed descriptions of each participant and transcribed the findings. All data sources were read line by line, the codes were added to the left margin and memos on the right side, and later organized into piles with similar codes. Next, cross-case analysis was implemented to demonstrate similarities and differences across cases. Lastly, the results of the first two levels of analysis were identified and supported thematic development.

In qualitative research, analyzing the data may consist of transcribing the data, labeling of the data (dates or groups), and organizing the data (Lodico et al., 2010). I transcribed the data and identified themes. I used a recording form to organize the data from the documents and upload information from the interviews (Appendix E). To support the organization and analysis of the data, all data were uploaded and highlighted in the following categories; (a) participants, (b) responses to questions, and (c) information from documents. For example, a colored dot was used when a participant referenced one of the identified categories. This process supported the analytical process. This display offered assistance with organizing the data into categories. The identification

of themes assisted me with the analytic process. I used Epstein's six types of involvement: parenting; communicating; volunteering; learning at home; decision making and collaborating with the community as a guide for identifying parental involvement at the research site and to assist in identifying categories.

Inductive Approach

Thoughtful consideration was taken into account regarding the analysis for this study, as the decisions I made influenced the outcome of the design. The qualitative data analysis followed the inductive approach; this approach formulated into a general picture while I organized and analyzed the findings (Cypress, 2015; Lodico et al., 2010). This approach provided a straightforward efficient way of analyzing qualitative data by allowing the themes/categories to emerge simultaneously.

Maxwell (2005) offered the following three main types of strategies to consider when conducting a qualitative analysis: categorizing, connecting, and memos and displays, suggesting that the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research is coding. Coding by hand, cross-case analysis, and thematic development were the preferred strategies for this project study. Coding by hand allowed the opportunity to abstract information from the data using broad categories as the first level of analysis (Creswell, 2012).

Sorting and Classification Using Conceptual Framework

The information was uploaded and recorded in the appropriate category using the table (Appendix E). However, the data were reorganized after the initial data analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). Each category was reviewed according to Epstein's (2002) six types

of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. There was minimum evidence highlighting the implementation of Epstein's six types of involvement.

Strategies for Evidence of Quality

Researched-based strategies were used to ensure the validity of the findings and increase credibility. Merriam (2009) noted that validity and reliability can be achieved depending on the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Creswell (2012) and Maxwell (2005) offered the following strategies; (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) inclusion of discrepant evidence and negative cases, and (d) peer debriefing. For this study I employed triangulation, member checks, consideration of discrepant evidence and negative cases, and peer debriefing as four primary strategies.

Triangulation

Triangulation was used to add credibility to the study (Merriam, 2009). This process allowed me to collect data from multiple sources (Glesne, 2011; Lodico et al., 2010). I triangulated the interview responses across three different groups of participants, the principal, the teachers, and the parents, to show patterns, robustness of data, and rival explanations. I used information from the document review to provide a context for findings from the interviews. The documents provided the date of the event/activity, type of participants attending the activity, type of activities that was scheduled for parents, and outcome of the event.

Member Checks

Merriam (2009) described member checks as the, “second common strategy for ensuring internal validity” (p.217). The purpose of this approach is to confirm that the researchers' interpretation aligns with the perspectives of the participants. Member checks allow the researcher the opportunity to validate quality of the data analysis by returning the interview transcription and initial interpretation to the participants. For this study, participants were offered the opportunity to review a copy of their interview and my interpretation of their responses and to provide clarification. I contacted each participant by phone and email. All participants declined the opportunity to make changes to the transcription; they were satisfied with their responses. Although the participants declined the opportunity to change their comments; some teachers stated that they wanted to make sure the information would be used in a productive manner.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

In qualitative research, it is not uncommon for different perspectives to surface or for participants to offer conflicting views (Lodico et al., 2010). However, when this occurred it was my responsibility to revise the initial findings or explain why the data did not fit with other categories. There were no discrepant cases in this study. All of the findings aligned with the identified themes.

Peer Debriefing

The final strategy was to identify and secure a peer debriefer. I solicited a colleague whom I could meet with on a regular basis, someone who could offer an alternative way of looking at the data. My colleague is an anthropologist and a research

practitioner working in the field of family engagement. We have a close respectful working relationship that allowed us the opportunity to discuss the data in great detail. My colleague assisted me in looking at the data from a different perspective. A confidentiality agreement form was completed and signed by my peer debriefer to ensure confidentiality.

Research Findings

A qualitative approach was used for this project study to explore factors contributing to low parental involvement in school-based activities. Responses to face-to-face interviews and a review of documents were used to highlight the perceptions of the participants. I interviewed five parents, five teachers, and the school principal. Each participant received a numerical code for use during the interview. I also reviewed documents pertaining to parental involvement in school-based activities.

Description of Participants

Brief background descriptions are presented here of the five parents, five teachers, and principal who were interviewed. Interviews were used to gather the responses of the participants related to the research questions. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants.

Parents. Demographic information was obtained from the five parents who were interviewed as described below.

Parent #1: Tasha, an African American mother with three boys, was 29 with a high school diploma. She worked full-time and stated that she spent a lot of time at her child's school. She agreed that low parental involvement was a problem. Tasha stated

that she had taken the time to invite other parents: "Parents are busy. Sometimes they don't have the time to come to the school. Tasha was very familiar with the school and what it had to offer. She had attended various meetings, literacy nights, and conferences with the teachers. She stated, "I am very active in my child's life. I am raising three African American boys by myself. I have to be involved."

Parent #2: Carlos, a Latino step-father with one child in third grade, was 42 years old and very proud of the relationship that he had with his step-daughter's biological dad. Regarding this relationship, Carlos stated, "We don't argue, we respect each other and get along." On the day of our interview he was scheduled to pick the student up from school. Carlos stated that whenever his step-daughter performed at school, he would be there. Carlos noted, "I did not graduate from high school, I got my GED. But she will graduate. I will do all I can to make sure she graduates from school." Carlos stated that more parents should participate. He felt more parents would participate if their schedules would permit and if the school offered opportunities for fathers.

Parent #3: Keith was an African American father of two boys. He was 28 years old, had a high school diploma, worked full-time, had ambitions to become an entrepreneur, and took care of his sons most of the time because his wife worked in the next town as a live-in caretaker. Keith offered that often he felt as if he were a single dad juggling work and taking care of his sons. Keith stated, "I didn't have my father growing up; this will not happen to my sons. I wish I had someone to tell me how important school was." Keith also agreed there was a problem with parents not participating at the school:

The school didn't encourage me to get involved. These are my sons. I know I have to be involved. That's why I ask their teachers for extra homework and we have books at home. They don't just play video games. I make them read and do extra work.

Parent #4: Crystal was an African American mother of three children. She was 40 years old, graduated from high school, and working part-time while her daughters were in school. Crystal considered herself to be an involved parent. She also felt that parent participation at the school was a problem. However, she felt that in previous years, parents were not invited into the school; the school did not welcome or partner with parents. Crystal offered, "Things changed with the new principal; he came outside and invited us into the school. I remember I use to be one of those parents." Crystal has also held parent leadership roles in the past.

Parent #5: Julia was a Latino mother, married with three children, and one child in third grade. Julia did not work outside of her home. Although initially she stated that she did not understand the concept of the term *parental involvement*, she was very willing to participate in the study. However, she felt the need to warn me of her limited English. She also stated that she often did not know what was happening at the school because most of the information was in English only. Julia told me she did not have the opportunity to complete high school because she had to get a job to help support her family. She wanted more for her children, noting that "I want my daughter to finish school and become a teacher or a doctor."

Teachers and principal. Data collection also included semi structured interviews with five teachers and the principal. To preserve confidentiality, the teacher participants were not identified by grade level. All teachers had taught at the research site for more than a year. All teachers self-identified as white females and their ages ranged between 26 through 60 years of age. Three of the five teachers received their master's degrees. All teachers lived outside of the neighborhood where the school was located.

Teacher #1: Olivia had been teaching at the research school for many years and stated that she understood the importance of engaging families. Although she did not feel comfortable reaching out to parents, she forced herself to connect with families, from giving out her personal cell number to attending evening events. Olivia stated, "One year the teachers came together to offer a workshop for parents and only five families attended." She also explained that teachers were disappointed regarding the attendance because they were not paid to stay after school. Olivia was also concerned about safety and attending events during the evening.

Teacher #2: Simone enjoyed teaching at this inner-city school, often using technology to enhance her lessons or to reteach a concept. However, she agreed that low parental involvement related to low student achievement. She suggested ways to increase parental participation, including having translators available at all family events, offering sessions for parents at various times, and translating documents into languages other than English.

Teacher #3: Donna said that she was having a difficult year. She had a large class with 26 students and had a hard time connecting with her male students that year. She

was having student behavior problems and described how she experienced it personally. Donna stated, “They were rude to me.” However, Donna attempted to connect with their parents by using technology, noting “I can send out a text to all of my parents at the same time, or I can text a parent if a child is misbehaving.” She had not attended any family events that year and did not see the benefit of staying after school. She stated:

One year I stayed and participated in several family events and my end of the year performance evaluation was the same as the teachers that did not participate, so now I only attend the required ones; parent-teacher conferences and open house.

Donna had been teaching at this location for a number of years and shared the following regarding the new administration: “There has been some improvement since the hiring of the new principal. I see more parents in the building.” However, she agreed more parental involvement was needed.

Teacher #4: Jo-Anne’s perception of parental involvement was that parents did not participate in school-based activities but they were active in their child’s life outside of school. She believed parents would participate more often if activities offered a balance between academics and having fun. She attended family events at school when possible; however, because of her commute and other commitments, it was hard to stay for evening sessions.

Teacher #5: Ellen was a veteran in the field of education. Ellen portrayed a positive attitude when describing her relationship with her students and their parents. She said that her first priority each day was to make sure her students were safe. Ellen stated that she often attended the family events during the evening because “I want my students

to see me outside of the classroom; they get to see me in a different way, so I attend events when I can.” However, Ellen felt that low attendance may be due to parents not feeling welcomed in the school, and noted that “We need to do a better job with advertising the events.” Ellen described that year as being her toughest but stated, “My students are my students, forever, even after they leave my class-- they are still my students.” She was very interested in understanding why more parents were not attending sessions.

Principal: The principal accepted the administrative position in 2012. Previously, he was the principal of a K-5 school in a neighboring state. He stated that he believed in the power of engaging parents. During his first year at the research site, he implemented “Family Fridays.” Every Friday parents have the opportunity to visit their child’s classroom to better understand what is happening in school. Currently, more parents attended Family Fridays than any other school-based activity.

Thematic Analysis

A qualitative approach was implemented to answer the following over-arching question: What factors contribute to the problem and solution of low parental involvement in school-based activities? The data analysis began immediately after conducting the first interview and continued until completion. According to Merriam (2009), it is most useful to apply a data analysis process that is simultaneous with data collection. I generated data from reviewing documents and individual interviews. After each interview, I developed a detailed description of the participant. This information was uploaded to a Microsoft document and stored for future use. Next, I organized the data

with the use of the recording form (Appendix E) that was designed with Epstein's six types of parental involvement (i.e., parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community). Lastly, I used cross-case analysis after conducting the interviews with the parents, teachers, and the principal. The themes began to evolve as I searched for common patterns in the data.

The data analysis returned the following overarching themes as factors contributing to low parental involvement: (a) language differences between parents and teachers, (b) ineffective home-school communication, and (c) lack of a shared definition of parental involvement between parents and teachers. A language barrier may exist for parents when their native language is different from the dominant language spoken at the school. Home-school communication consists of current procedures and practices the school implements to connect with parents. Shared definition of parental involvement consists of both home and school knowing and understanding the role and the purpose of the other.

Language barrier. Language differences between home and school surfaced as the most common factor contributing to low parental involvement. Participants in this study identified the language difference as a reason why more parents were not participating in school-based events. This was evident during the document review as well as during the interviews. Participants stated that there was a significant need for translated documents, Spanish-speaking staff, and a comprehensive plan for engaging non-English-speaking parents.

Parents emphasized how language had been a barrier to their involvement in school activities. Julia, whose first language was Spanish, stated that she would attend school events more often if they had a translator: “I attended the parent-teacher conference once with my daughter. The teacher could not speak Spanish and none of the forms were translated into Spanish. I did not return.” Julia added that she would participate in an activity that was bilingual and suggested a bilingual family literacy night. She said that she and other Latino mothers would like this activity and it would allow them to teach their culture to their children. “I don’t want my children to forget their heritage.” Findings indicated that teachers at the research school needed to connect with Julia and the other parents to better understand and use their cultural knowledge to enhance their instruction. By doing so teachers are connecting with parents and capturing their funds of knowledge (Moll & Ruiz, 2002).

English-speaking parents also perceived language to be a factor in low parental involvement. Tasha stated:

I attend the meetings at school and I don’t see the Spanish speaking parents there. I believe they are not coming because they can’t communicate with the group; I did see one or two at the beginning of the school year but they did not come back.

Crystal clearly believed that language was a barrier to parental involvement. She stated: “Parents shy away and are not involved when they don’t understand the language and the culture of the school. We could reach out to parents and assist them with translation.”

Schools districts are changing how they support parents who are English language learners, such as offering volunteer hours to bilingual students, providing stipends to parents and bilingual staff, and collaborating with local cultural agencies. The parents at Brownville Public School may increase their participation if such efforts were offered at their school.

Parents also spoke of the documents that needed to be translated. Tasha, a parent in the school and former member of the school governance committee, spoke of not seeing many documents that were translated into Spanish:

I have worked on committees and many of our documents were in English.

Sometimes the school secretary would help us out and translate a flyer for us. I know there are websites that can translate the documents; maybe this is something that we can do.

Teachers shared similar experiences regarding the language difference between the home and the school. Olivia shared her perception of the problem: “I know there is a language barrier. Maybe the information about what’s happening in school isn’t making its way home. When you do not speak the same language, it is very difficult to communicate.” Jo-Anne suggested that families would benefit from having a staff member who could connect with families culturally:

I do my best to connect with parents for whom English is not their first language.

Sometimes I work with the home-school coordinator, but she does not speak Spanish either. When parents attend the parent-teacher conference most of the time the student is the translator.

Several teachers gave the example of using their students as the translators for their parents. Some parents would invite a friend or family member to attend the meeting. Other teachers expressed the need for translation support when communicating with parents. Ellen offered:

I find communication with parents whose primary language is not English can be a challenge at times. I have several parents who speak very little English. This has been an issue in our school for years. I have noticed that as the students get older, the parent is more dependent upon the student to translate.

Teachers spoke of using technology such as Google translator to translate their documents. The school did not have a designated person to handle all of the translation. However, there were several staff members who were bilingual.

Donna also explained, “It’s extremely difficult to conduct a parent-teacher conference when the parent does not speak English; most of the time my students translate for me. I am very surprised how much and how long they can translate.” The principal spoke of the language difference in forms of economics, “I would love to hire someone to do our translations for us but when you have to make a decision between hiring a teacher and hiring a support staff, I have to hire the teacher.” Most participants expressed the language difference as a barrier to increasing parental involvement at the research site.

Ineffective home-school communication. Current communication strategies have not been successful at the research site. Teachers stated that they were communicating with parents through the school calendar, the classroom calendar,

newsletters, and their students as translators. Some teachers spoke of feeling uncomfortable with calling parents from their cell phones. Donna offered, “So that I don’t have to give parents my cell phone, I found a service called Class Dojo; it’s an interactive system that allows me to send a group message to all the parents at the same time.”

Olivia believed that it is important to speak with parents in person. However, she noted that their classrooms were not equipped with telephones and if a teacher wanted to call a parent, they would have to go to the office where there is no privacy or use their personal cell phone. She stated:

Sometimes I have a few minutes to speak with a parent during dismissal. I know this isn’t the best way to talk to parents but when I see them, I invite them to my class. I also use my students to share information with the parents. Just the other day I was having a mini-parent workshop in my classroom after school and one little girl begged her father to stay and create picture frames for Mother’s Day. I sort of felt bad for the dad because he said he didn’t know about the event but I had been reminding my class to tell their parents for the past week.

Simone believed that important information was going home to parents but that they may not understand it. She noted, “I expect my students to tell their parents about upcoming events. Sometimes parents don’t understand what we are inviting them to.” Simone stated that she sometimes invited parents during dismissal.

Ellen suggested one approach:

We need to improve communication across the board of informing families and

staff about upcoming events early in the school year. We all receive the school calendar. I post it outside my door. Sometimes I forget about the upcoming events. Maybe the school could put a system in place to remind us.

Other teachers spoke of using calendars and class newsletters to share information with parents. Teachers agreed that the current methods for communicating with parents could be improved. Jo-Anne said, "I believe some of our flyers are translated. I don't pay that much attention to the flyers I just send them home. Once the kids learn to speak English, usually the kids will translate and read the document to the parent."

Several teachers stated that beyond the school calendar there was no system in place to inform teachers of upcoming activities; often they did not know who was planning an event and when it was scheduled to take place. Olivia noted that sometimes the teachers did not even know about upcoming events and also that the timing of the events in the evening was a problem:

The family literacy nights were not scheduled/coordinated well, and sometimes teachers did not know the events were happening. If we did we could assist with the outreach. Maybe the parents are coming for the food. I don't feel comfortable returning to school at night.

Currently the school used the white board in the main office to inform staff and parents of upcoming events. Also, the home-school coordinator developed a monthly calendar of events. However, calendars were not translated into Spanish.

The lack of communication, not receiving flyers of upcoming family engagement events, not being a part of the planning, and not being able to share accurate information

with parents often frustrated teachers and prevented them from supporting the events. Teachers revealed that often they were not aware of what was happening at the school; therefore, they did not share this information with parents. It appeared that most teachers were using their students to communicate with the parents regarding upcoming events.

The principal provided a similar description of informing parents as the teachers that were interviewed. The principal described a variety of family engagement opportunities for parents. In addition to the traditional parent-teacher conference, he noted that Family Friday, monthly academic nights, award ceremonies, and concerts were held throughout the year in an effort to increase family engagement. The principal stated, “Even with this variety of offerings, attendance continues to be a problem.” Thus, even with an increase in the variety of parent and family opportunities at the school, the administration of this school noted challenges to sustainable engagement.

Parents also spoke of the lack of communication between the home and the school. They communicated that teachers did not provide information and resources with families and the information that was shared did not address the needs of the parents. Parents spoke of the need for improved communication, such as a message board outside of the school building. Tasha thought the school could do more to reach parents by offering sessions that were meaningful to them, such as assisting families with the basic living essentials:

This would support working parents. Sometimes I’m rushing and I don’t have time to go into the school. It would be great if we could post all the information outside. Also in our school we have a large number of parents who don’t speak

English, that's why they aren't coming.

It was clear that parents needed better communication and awareness of resources to participate more effectively in their children's school activities. Julia spoke of her experience during a parent-teacher conference, feeling uncomfortable and not wanting to return. Julia stated, "I would participate more if the information was in Spanish." She explained that she did not want her young daughter to have to translate for her during the parent-teacher conferences; as a result, Julia invited a community liaison to the school to assist her with understanding the communication. As a recent immigrant, she had discovered community resources that could assist her in communicating with her child's teacher and navigating the school system.

Parents stated that they wanted to hear from the teachers and spoke of not receiving invitations from the teachers to participate in school-based events. Crystal, mother of three, expressed that some parents may not consider receiving a flyer from the school as the teacher inviting them to participate. She stated, "I believe this is something that parents have to learn. In the past other parents have asked me why I attended something at school. I just told them it's because I saw the flyer in my daughter's backpack." Crystal did not wait for a personal invitation from her child's teacher; she took the initiative to participate on her own but other parents may need more a more direct invitation.

Carlos spoke of the lack of communication between him and his child's teacher and the need for timely notice of problems. He stated, "I want to hear from my child's teacher early, as soon as something happens. Maybe she call me after one or two times

but I don't want her to wait until the parent teacher conference." He stated that he wasn't aware his child was struggling in math.

The document review revealed that flyers that were sent home to parents, including the school calendar, permission slips, newsletters, and announcements, were written in English only. This practice may create a barrier for parents to partner with the school and support their child's learning. Although the documents received were in English, a couple of teachers expressed that they remember seeing flyers and other documents like the school report card in both English and Spanish. Olivia stated, "I just remembered about the Spanish version of the report card, I didn't think about that I have to remember that the next time." Olivia was the only teacher to mention the Spanish version of the report card. Interviews and review of documents revealed the need for increased communication at all levels.

Lack of shared definition of parental involvement between parents and teachers. The parents in this study saw themselves as supporters when attending school performances, award ceremonies, and field day. Some of them did not see their major role of being their child's parent as an academic teacher/educator, especially not at school.

When asked how they supported their child's learning, parents' comments did not align with the data collected from teachers. Teachers defined parental involvement as parents attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the school, joining the PTA or PTO, and attending a curriculum night. Teachers were clear regarding their expectations for parents who volunteered. They considered volunteering as actively

assisting with an activity or event. Teachers did not consider bringing in snacks or attending field day as a form of volunteering. Olivia shared, “The problem is what parents decide to participate in. They will attend the talent show and performances but will not attend workshops that are based on academics.” This concern was raised by additional teachers who noted that parents attended non-academic events more frequently. Simone stated:

Every Friday, we have *Family Friday*. Parents can visit the classrooms. Most parents sit and watch from the back of the room, some are watching because their child has been misbehaving, some volunteer to read aloud to class. But these parents will not attend math or literacy workshops.

Similarly, Jo-Anne noted, “My parents come to Field Day, but they do not participate. They stand along the fence in the yard talking to other parents.”

No shared meaning was evident regarding the definition of school-based parental involvement. However, one teacher believed that parents were involved at home and that their involvement in school was in addition to how they are supporting their child. Ellen offered a slightly different perspective from her fellow teachers. She stated, “I try to empower my parents and give them the resources and strategies they can use at home.” Ellen stated that providing resources to parents to use at home had been a strategy she used for several years. She felt that it would minimize reading loss over the summer.

The principal provided several examples of parental involvement activities being offered at the school, such as academic nights, talent shows, award assemblies, and opportunities for parents to volunteer. The principal stated, “We try to offer new ways of

engaging our parents; we are changing our mindset.” It appeared that the principal was prepared to make significant changes with regard to engaging parents.

Parents offered a different description of their involvement. Keith, married father of two, stated that he was involved in his sons’ education: “Every day I drop them off and pick them up from school. I volunteer in their class by bringing in snacks when I can.” Carlos also described his involvement as parenting. He stated, “I attend the student of the month. When my step-daughter receives an award, her mom and I are right here. We are very involved; sometimes all three of us are here for her.”

Crystal, although well-versed in the traditional description of parental involvement, offered a somewhat different portrayal of her involvement. In addition to attending school-based events, Crystal stated, “I teach my girls at home. Sometimes I take them to work with me, teaching them how to be independent.” When asked if she was involved in her child’s life, she offered a long list of things she was currently doing with her daughters at home to support their education, such as monitoring their homework, attending events at school, going to the library, teaching them how to shop for groceries, and modeling how to keep their room clean.

Julia also described her involvement by what she is currently doing for her family at home. She shared, “I take care of my children and husband to make sure they have what they need for school and work. I help my niece while she is working I take care of her baby.” Julia also explained how during the one parent-teacher conference she attended the teacher provided her with a website for her daughter. She clarified that

although the site is not in Spanish she still allowed her daughter on the site. She was concerned that she did not understand what her child was doing.

Although teachers in this study did not always consider parents bringing their child to school, attending an event, or volunteering in the classroom as forms of involvement, it was clear that parents saw these activities as important ways to support their child's learning.

Relationship of Themes to Research Questions

This study was conducted in an inner-city elementary school where findings revealed that parents and school staff desired an increase in parental involvement. Data analysis addressed the guiding research questions and revealed a lack of connection between home and school. The interviews with participants and the review of documents identified reasons for low parental involvement in this school. Findings highlighted the need to address language barriers, ineffective home-school communication, and differing perceptions of the meaning of parental involvement between parents and teachers.

Themes are discussed here in relation to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third grade students, and teachers about factors that contribute to low parental involvement?
2. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third grade students, and teachers about reasons and ways that inner-city parents are currently involved in third-grade school activities?

3. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third grade students, and teachers about types and outcomes of strategies that have been used to increase parental involvement?
4. What are the perceptions of the school administrator, parents of third grade students, and teachers about solutions to the low parental involvement problem?

The identified themes helped to address each of the research questions. Research questions focused on perceptions of the participants regarding reasons for low parental involvement and potential solutions. Participants provided several reasons the school was experiencing low parental involvement, such as, teachers not being aware of upcoming events, poor communication between home and school, differing role expectations for both parents and teachers, and minimum support for Spanish speaking parents. Data analysis revealed that Brownville Public School had experienced limited parental involvement as a result of language barriers, ineffective home-school communication, and the lack of a shared meaning between parents and teachers regarding the definition of parental involvement.

Research question 1 sought to identify factors that contributed to low parental involvement at the research site. Perceptions of the staff and parents were similar. Themes of ineffective home-school communication and language differences were identified as major factors for low parental involvement, thereby creating a culture of isolation. Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) suggested that teachers identify ways in which parents would like to receive information, as the pattern of communication varies among parents.

Research question 2 centered on ways parents are involved in their child's education. The data analysis revealed the theme of differing definitions of parental involvement between parents and teachers; this lack of understanding has limited the school's ability to partner with parents. Parents described visiting the classroom, attending student performances, and conferencing with the teacher as forms of school-based participation. Parents were also eager to share how they were involved in their child's learning at home. However, teachers provided different responses regarding school-based parental involvement. One teacher explained that some of her students' parents would visit the classroom but they did not have an active role in their child's learning. This teacher did not consider a visit to the classroom as a form of involvement. Parents and teachers in this school did not agree on what constitutes parental involvement, thus making it difficult to support school-based activities.

Research questions 3 and 4 focused on solutions for increasing involvement; these directly align with the three identified themes, as they have limited the school's ability to increase parental involvement. The parents, teachers, and principal all agreed that the current strategies to partner with parents have not been successful. All participants were engaged and committed to sharing solutions for improving parental involvement at the research site. Proposed solutions were reflective of the three themes identified in data analysis. Parents spoke of improving the modes of communication, receiving information in a timely manner, and building relationships with teachers. Similarly, the principal and teachers offered potential solutions for increasing communication with parents; the need for a community liaison that is bilingual and familiar with the community, and having

translation services available. These were considered vital to increasing parental involvement. The proposed solutions offered by the participants focused on a comprehensive plan to support Spanish-speaking parents, a recommendation to bring parents and teachers together in hope of understanding the role of the other, and strategies to improve the communication between home and school.

Interpretation of Findings

Epstein's typology, which includes the traditional definition of parental involvement and acknowledges the parents' role in the home, provided the conceptual framework for this study. Although there was some evidence of Epstein's six types of involvement at this school, parents' perceptions of their involvement aligned primarily with three of the six types: parenting, volunteering, and learning at home, with minimum mention of the remaining three types: (a) communication, (b) decision making, and (c) collaborating with the community.

In contrast, teachers' perceptions of parental involvement within this inner-city school aligned mostly with type 2 communication. Teachers spoke of their attempt to communicate with parents; one teacher offered her personal cell phone to parents, while others used communication apps such as Class Dojo and Remind to send a message to the entire class or to an individual parent. Teachers also spoke of their attempt to have sporadic face-to-face conversations with parents to increase parental involvement. Specific aspects of Epstein's typology surfaced when parents and staff offered solutions for low parent participation.

Type 1- parenting: This type aligned with the findings offered by parents in this study. Parents often described their involvement as part of their role as being a parent; bringing their child to school and providing food and shelter were seen as ways of being an involved parent. The research school may see some improvements as it begins to recognize and build on the contributions of parents.

Type 2- communication. This was prevalent throughout the study as being identified as a barrier to involvement, as well as a solution. Parents understood the significance of ongoing communication between home and school. Teachers were clear regarding the importance of ongoing communication with parents; often using personal devices to communicate with parents.

Type 3- volunteering. Findings suggest that parents volunteered by attending various performances at the research site, visiting their child's classroom, and observing recreational activities. In this study, teachers did not recognize parents visiting their child's class or performance as a form of involvement.

Type 4- learning at home. This type aligned with findings from the parents in this study; all of the parents provided examples of supporting their child's learning at home. However, in addition to homework, teachers provided little evidence of this type, suggesting the absence of relationships between teachers and parents.

Types 5 and 6, decision making and collaborating with the community did not surface with tangible examples. Participants, however, offered types 5 and 6 as means for increasing parental involvement. Parents and teachers recognized the need for increased parental voice and stronger connections with community partners.

According to Epstein (2002), the six types of parental involvement are to be seen as six different ways to define parental involvement; no one parent is expected to demonstrate all of the types of involvement. However, schools and districts have the potential to experience an increase in their involvement efforts when they implement the framework and acknowledge and respect the efforts of their parents. Seattle Public Schools, a district serving over 45,000 students, has implemented and sustained parental involvement using Epstein's six types to develop programming and action teams in each of their schools (Hanover, 2014).

Practitioners who work and teach in the field of family engagement often begin the conversation about parental involvement and family engagement by introducing Epstein's six types of involvement (Edwards, 2009; Grant & Ray, 2010; Houston, Blankstein, & Cole, 2010; Sanders, 2010). Epstein (2001, 2002) and others (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007) have moved beyond just sharing the types to define parental involvement; they have offered the framework as a catalyst to build the capacity of teachers and school leaders to partner with families by implementing school-family-community action teams. Teams are comprised of six members; teachers, parents, administrator, counselor and possibly a student work together toward a goal of developing and implementing a 3-year comprehensive partnership plan.

Additionally, practitioners are using the framework to support families and students when students are transitioning to high school; the six keys have been instrumental when developing high-quality partnership programs (Iver, Epstein, Sheldon, & Fonseca, 2015). Although more schools are implementing the Epstein framework, the

teachers at the research site did not recognize how parents were supporting their child's education through activities such as bringing a child to school, attending an event or performance, or requesting additional homework for students, examples that are associated with types 1-4. According to Epstein, the child will experience success when the parents, teachers, and the community are active participants. Dunst (2002), similar to the Epstein model, offered the family empowerment model that encourages parents to participate in the decision making process.

Different from the Epstein model, the Chicago framework focuses on the entire school and recommended that schools include all five components: (a) strong leadership, (b) instructional guidance, (c) school climate, (d) teacher capacity and (e) family-school-community ties as a model for increasing student and family engagement (Bryk et al., 2010). The Chicago model may be useful at the research site, as this model offers a holistic approach to student achievement. The Epstein model focuses solely on increasing parental involvement to influence the other areas of the school.

Epstein's theory (1987) of overlapping spheres of influence suggests that the work of the school and the family and the community overlaps with the students at the center of the relationship. Therefore, the suggestion would be to implement school-family and community programming as a strategy to support parent participation. Based on the findings, teachers were not aware of the many ways parents at the research site were involved in their child's learning.

This study's findings add to the body of research, from identifying factors for low parental involvement to highlighting potential solutions for increasing parental

involvement. The literature in this study focused on Epstein's framework, reasons for low involvement, student achievement, involvement in inner-city schools, and parents' perceptions of parental involvement. Both school staff and parents understand the importance of ongoing communication, yet it continues to be a factor for why parents are not involved at school. Epstein (2002), when developing the six keys of parental involvement, included communicating as the second type, describing communication as a vital component of the home-school relationship. This component involves creating and implementing effective agreed-upon forms of communication that allow parents the opportunity to share how they are involved in their child's learning at home and in the community.

Findings in this study also aligned with the literature review in Section 1, such as how the definition of parental involvement differs among parents and teachers, how ineffective communication limits parents' ability to support their child's learning (Flynn & Nolan, 2008), and how students benefit when parents are involved (Henderson & Mapp, 2007). Watson et al. (2012) shared that schools often experience low parental involvement when stakeholders have differing expectations regarding their roles. This perception surfaced at the research site as well; teachers described feeling frustrated when parents selected to observe and not participate in classroom activities or field day. However, parents voiced not being aware of their expected participation in certain activities, such as Family Fridays. Every Friday parents are invited to visit their child's classroom; however they do not receive guidance regarding their role during this visit. Therefore, most parents attend and sit at the back of the classroom. To support schools

and families in this area, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) offered the dual capacity framework that described roles parents can engage in such as: (a) supporters, (b) encouragers, (c) monitors, (d) advocates; (e) models of lifelong learning, (f) decision makers, and (g) collaborators. Similar to the experiences of participants in this study, Baker et al. (2016) noted that schools focused more on school-based involvement and less on what parents were doing at home. This study's findings indicate that even when parents described themselves as being involved, this involvement was not always acknowledged or recognized by the school.

Another connection to the body of research is the relation to the recommended solutions for increasing parental involvement. Baker et al. (2016) noted that changing the way that schools perceive what is appropriate for parent involvement can help move toward greater parent engagement. Researchers have offered several best practices for engaging parents, emphasizing the need to be intentional in plans for family engagement (Grant & Ray, 2016, ensuring that the school offers a welcoming family-oriented environment (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), and communicating to parents the demonstrated value of high expectations, especially for students of color and low socioeconomic students (Jeynes, 2010). All of these best practices are contingent upon first having a respectful relationship with parents. This suggests that to increase parental involvement, schools must first identify those barriers that are preventing parents from becoming involved, communicate effectively with parents by keeping them informed, and lastly, honor and respect parents' knowledge (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

Summary

This qualitative case study was conducted to identify factors contributing to the pattern of low parental involvement at the research site. Findings indicated that language barriers and ineffective home-school communication were important factors in contributing to low parental involvement. Parents and teachers were not aware that family engagement activities and language difference was a huge barrier. The lack of a shared definition of parental involvement between parents and teachers appeared to create misunderstandings about how parents were involved in their children's learning. Parents and school staff have the potential to increase parental involvement by understanding how the home culture affects perceptions of what families bring to schools and how the school culture affects what teachers are expecting from parents.

Using the findings of this project study, a professional development workshop was designed for parents and teachers to increase parental involvement. The series is based on the six types of involvement as defined by Epstein (2002; 2009), and the dual capacity framework defined by Mapp and Kuttner (2013). A detailed description of this workshop is explained in Section 3.

Section 3: The Project

As a result of the research findings, I developed a 3-day professional-development training workshop, *Partners in Learning*, that will inform the stakeholders—school leader, teachers, and parents—of the challenges that contributed to low parental involvement in this inner-city school, and techniques to improve parental involvement. Parents will engage in training activities highlighting the importance of their role as the child’s first teacher. The scheduled activities will also assist teachers in their capacity to increase parental involvement. I designed this project to increase parental involvement and school-family relationships by defining parental involvement and building the capacity of the stakeholders to work together on the behalf of students.

Day 1 will consist of 3 days of learning and relationship building. The first session will bring all of the stakeholders together to discuss the benefits of parental involvement, the importance of building meaningful relationships, and the significance of learning from each other. Often, parental involvement assists with homework or attending a parent-teacher meeting. Houston et al. (2010) described the positive effect parental involvement can have on parents and teachers.

Day 2 is designed to assist parents in their role construction. This session is for parents only. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) offered three areas that influenced parents’ decision to become involved: (a) parental role construction—when parents see being involved is a part of their role as being a parent; (b) parental efficacy when assisting their children—when parents are successful in supporting their children, their involvement will continue; and (c) welcoming family-like environments, where

invitations for parents to become involved would come directly from the teacher. Deslandes, Barma, and Morin (2015) also recognized the essential role of the parent in educational success. Olender, Elias, and Mastroleo (2010) noted that when parents are involved, not only does the relationship between parents and teachers improve, but students' academics and behavior improves as well.

Day 3, which is for teachers only, is designed to build their capacity to effectively partner with parents, and understand that trust should be at the center of these relationships for the partnerships to be successful (Deslandes et al., 2015; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). However, the voice of the parents will be included in the session through the use of technology. Teachers will have the opportunity to plan relevant parental involvement opportunities for parents that are linked to learning.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this 3-day professional development training is to assist stakeholders—parents, school staff, and the community—with developing the skills necessary to increase parental involvement and to assist parents in becoming more involved in their child's education. According to findings of the project study, stakeholders agreed that the school would benefit from increased parent participation. They also described the need or desire to improve communication at the research site. Therefore, the goal of this learning series is to develop capacity-building programs for this inner-city school. In the course of 3 full days, stakeholders will have the opportunity to work individually and as a full group.

A key component of this initiative is the emphasis on recognizing the benefits, talents, skills, understandings, and beliefs of diverse families (Soutullo, Smith-Bonahue, Sanders-Smith, & Navia, 2016). Currently, the majority of the staff does not share the same cultural backgrounds of the students and parents. Therefore, the training will provide teachers and school staff with the opportunity to increase their content knowledge regarding Latino and African American culture, about cultural diversity (Gay, 2013) and how to communicate with parents effectively. According to Gay, teachers can gain a better understanding of diverse families by simply making personal connections and expanding their reading.

All stakeholders at the research site will have the opportunity to discuss any barriers hindering the increase of parental involvement. Approaches for the workshops are based on the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), which recommends grounding the work on three core principles; (a) using Epstein's six types of involvement, (b) implementing a team approach at the school level to support the work, and (c) ongoing research and evaluation. The Partners in Learning training series is an opportunity to establish and sustain trusting relationships across cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences that currently exist between school and home.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of attending this professional learning series, participants will:

- Become familiar with the findings of the project study.
- Build meaningful connections and learn from each other.

- Identify specific types of parental involvement strategies that are most effective when working with inner-city families.
- Learn about the challenges that contribute to low parental involvement at an inner-city school.

Target Audience

The target audience for this workshop will include parents of third grade students, second, third- and fourth-grade teachers, the home-school coordinator, the principal, the district parental involvement coordinator, and community partners. The total number of participants will be approximately 25. One primary partner is the local after-school program. The research site has a long and successful relationship with this agency, which manages the after-school and summer programs at Brownville Public School. Students who are participating in these programs have additional adult interactions, access to new experiences/field trips, and assistance with homework. Additional partners include the local cultural center and a nearby faith-based organization. According to Epstein (2009), when implementing school-family-community partnerships, it is important to implement reciprocal relationships with community partners, because schools have much to offer through collaboration.

I will extend invitations to participate in the workshop to all parents of third-grade students (approximately 75 parents). The goal is to have between 10 to 15 parents participate. Parents will participate during Day 1 and Day 2. The second-, third-, and fourth-grade teachers will participate during Day 1 along with parents and other stakeholders. Day 3 is a day designed solely for teachers.

Rationale

I selected a 3-day professional development training as the project to address the parental involvement concerns in this inner-city school. I will use the workshops as a catalyst to increase the communication between home and school. School demographics portray a diverse student body with the majority of the students being students of color. Edwards (2016) suggested that when working with diverse families, schools are more successful when schools (a) reach out to parents in different ways, (b) understand the needs of the parents and connect parents to community resources, (c) create a welcoming environment for parents, and (d) provide a number of ways for parents to participate. The findings of the project study revealed the need to build the capacity of parents and teachers to work together, to understand the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, to minimize barriers, and to improve the communication between home and school. In response to these realities, I will implement the professional development training, on the benefits of a comprehensive program of school-family-community partnerships to assist in increasing parent participation. Implementing this professional development training will provide the opportunity to hear the voices of both the teachers and parents regarding the best ways to increase parental involvement.

Additionally, parents and teachers defined parental involvement differently; parents often provided home-learning examples of their involvement; whereas teachers gave examples of school-based events, like a family literacy night. Teachers also indicated that their efforts to engage families in workshops about academics did not attract the numbers that would justify the effort expended. They felt that too often they

received no communication about events that were planned to include families. It seemed clear that significant challenges exist in the areas of meaningful two-way communication between school and home regarding student learning and progress as well as with respect to family access to accurate, understandable written and electronic information. Both parents and teachers expressed the need to increase the school's connection with the community. This connection will assist the school in limiting the barriers parents face when attempting to become involved (e.g., the need for translation). On a daily basis parents successfully navigate their community using resources to support their family. This same experience can be part of a parents' experience at their child's school through community partnerships (Louque & Latunde, 2014). Implementing the Partners in Learning workshops will send a message to parents and educators of the importance of improving the home-school connection.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the factors contributing to the problem of low parental involvement in school-based activities. Based on the findings, professional development training was the genre selected to best support the school, parents, and the community to understand the benefits of establishing a partnership as a strategy to increase parent participation (Epstein et al., 2009). This approach is based on the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), which consists of three core principles. The first principle is the definition of parental involvement based on Epstein's (1995, 2002, 2009) framework of six types of involvement (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5)

decision-making, and (6) collaborating with the community. The results of the project study revealed the lack of shared meaning regarding parental involvement. Introducing this model will eliminate this concern. The second core principle is the importance of using a team approach to designing school-based activities. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to connect, learn, and develop strategies that support school improvement goals. The last principle is the research-driven approach that will guide the development and ongoing program evaluation. The implementation and ongoing efforts of Partners in Learning will be based on research.

A literature review focusing on parental involvement, home-school communication, school-family-community partnerships, and professional development guided the creation of this project. The following keywords were used during my search: *home-school communication, effective communication between teachers and parents, parent-teacher relationships, and school-family-community partnerships*. I used Walden University library education databases: ERIC, SAGE, and Education Source to access peer-reviewed and scholarly articles. The following topics are included in this review: parental involvement, school-family-community partnerships, home-school communication and language barriers, conducting workshops, and team training.

Parental Involvement

Although the term parental involvement was not familiar to all parents, I felt it was important to include it in the literature review because of the lack of shared meaning that exists between parents and teachers in this study. Young et al. (2013) suggested that parents and teachers have a different perspective regarding the term parental

involvement. Often teachers described involvement as curriculum-based activities and assisting with homework; whereas parents defined their involvement as ensuring that their child is prepared for school.

Parental involvement has also been defined as what parents are doing at school, volunteering, assisting with fundraising, assisting teachers and joining the PTA (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). For teachers, this definition was broadened to include attending curriculum nights, parent-teacher conferences, back- to- school nights, assisting with homework and reading nightly to their children (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Edwards, 2009; Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013). Schools across the country have found some success with increasing parental involvement by implementing different researched-based programs and frameworks (Hamlin & Flessa, 2016; Ma, Shen, & Krenn, 2014). Epstein (2002) offered the six types of parental involvement as an approach schools can use to identify how parents can support their child's learning. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) extended the definition of parental involvement by adding seven additional roles parents can engage in:

- *Supporters* of their child's learning in the home and school;
- *Encouragers* of their children regarding school and self-image;
- *Monitors* of their child's schedule, friends and future;
- *Models* of the value of education beyond high school;
- *Advocates* for better opportunities for their child/school;
- *Decision makers* of improved educational options;
- *Collaborators* with school/community to support school improvement.

Looking beyond the role of the parents, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) also implemented the dual capacity framework. This resource was created to offer tools and resources for schools and parents. However, to be successful, certain process conditions should be in place for adult participants to contribute and apply their new learning. The five process conditions are: (a) Linked to learning - the scheduled activity or event must be linked to the improvement goals of the district, school or students; (b) Relational - key component of the work is to reciprocal relationships between home and school; (c) Developmental - the initiative is beneficial to the participant through increased knowledge and social/human capital; (d) Collaborative - offering a group setting for learning and building networks; and (e) Interactive - participants will have the opportunity to apply and share their new knowledge. These concepts will be shared during the professional learning series as a tool the schools can use when partnering with parents. Parental involvement programs have better success when there is a partnership between home and school (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013) and when schools consider the barriers to engagement experienced by parents (Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

Home-School Communication and Language Barriers

Keeping parents informed is pivotal to student success. Edwards (2016) suggested that schools reach out to parents and connect with them to find out the best mode of communication. Understanding how busy parents are, it is best to identify the preferred method of communication; face to face, phone calls, emails, newsletters, class website or texting. It is also important to provide translators when needed.

Edwards (2016) described communication with parents as one-way or two-way, which is illustrated in Table 1. Examples of one-way communication include newsletters, report cards, and bulletin boards. These examples do not provide parents with an opportunity to respond. Mitchell, Foulger, and Wetzel (2009) offered two-way communication as an effective way to engage diverse parents; providing opportunities for parents to participate in their child's learning beyond receiving information. Two-way communication may consist of face-to-face conversations, parent-teacher conferences, emails, text messages, and personal phone calls.

Table 1

Examples of One- and Two-Way Communication

One-way communication	Two-way communication
Bulletin boards	Personal notes inviting a response
Teacher/school website	Face-to-face conversations Phone calls
Newsletter	Parent surveys
Report card/progress report	Phone calls
School handbook	Emails
Automated phone calls	Text messages

Note. Adapted from Edwards (2016).

Language Barrier

According to Hunter (2012), there are several reasons why some parents are not involved at school, such as demanding work schedules, other children to care for, and the increasingly common reason of experiencing a language barrier (Michael-Luna & Marri, 2011). Currently, 43% of the students in this inner-city school identify as Latino, and

therefore may potentially live with a parent who had a negative experience because of a language difference.

Patel and Stevens (2010) found that English-speaking parents experience more parental involvement opportunities than non-English-speaking parents; they receive personal contact from the school; and they are aware of the opportunities to volunteer. Unfortunately, because of the language difference, non-English-speaking parents often are not provided the same opportunities (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014) and because of this they are prone to being involved at home and not at school (Rodriguez, 2016). Ma et al. (2014) found that schools were more successful when they translated materials for families and shared information in a way that families could understand. Schools can support parents by sending home announcements, lunch menus, the school calendar, or newsletters translated into different languages.

Professional Development

Professional development may assist with building relationships between the home, school and the community (Houston et al., 2010). According to Alves (2014), companies that provide ongoing professional development create a culture of skilled and motivated employees. Alves suggested the following topics when designing professional development for parents and teachers: (1) technology-sessions should encourage the use of technology to engage parents in the learning, (2) case studies-adult learners will appreciate discussing real life examples, and (3) suitable methods-providing the learner with strong examples of best practices. Epstein (1995) emphasized the importance of creating an active learning environment when partnering with parents and teachers.

Oostdam and Hooge (2013) stressed what to consider when forming partnerships between parents and teachers. They identified three types of partnerships for school-based efforts: (1) social partnerships-consist of cooperation between parents and schools regarding out-of-school activities, (2) formal partnerships-parents taking an active role in many aspects of the school; including decision making, and (3) educational partnerships-includes active parenting where the efforts of both focuses on improving the learning process for students. Based on the findings of this study, educational partnerships would align with the expected outcomes for this project.

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) expressed the need for the professional development to be collaborative in nature, providing participants with the opportunity to apply the new content. Smith (2010) agreed, noting that when schools encourage collaborative practice, teachers can discuss and apply their new learning after participating in the learning activity. Stewart (2014) described a shift when implementing professional development from an individual approach to one of collaboration, with a focus on creating a professional learning community. This positive transformation among teachers can have a positive effect with the inclusion of parents and community members in the learning environment, as intentional efforts should be made to build the capacity of all stakeholders to work together (Wood, Shankland, Jordan, & Pollard, 2014). According to Mapp and Kuttner, schools that were successful in providing professional development to teachers and parents often focused on parents' knowledge and community resources.

It is important to consider the cultural backgrounds of participants when designing a training or professional development learning activity. Several studies

showed positive results when the professional development was designed well and was developed through a cultural lens (O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). Latino families that participated in the professional development received the following support: (1) in-home education strategies, (2) parenting education, (3) family literacy, and (4) community leadership and advocacy. O'Donnell and Kirkner saw the participation of parents increase as a result of their cultural awareness. Whyte and Karabon (2016) offered the benefits of tapping parents' knowledge as an essential ingredient to establishing a collaborative relationship between teachers and parents. In their study, early childhood teachers were given tools to assist them in identifying parents' funds of knowledge. Parents can highlight their knowledge through a project or discussion (Subero, Vujasinović, & Esteban-Guitart, 2017).

Developing meaningful activities is important when planning professional development for parents and teachers. *Collegial Circles*, a professional development activity for parents and teachers, was designed to shift the learning environment from teachers leading the workshop to parents and teachers teaching side by side (St. George, 2011). During this process both parents and teachers share personal experiences and connect learning that is occurring in the classroom with the learning that is happening in the home. Zepeda (2015) emphasized that the ultimate goal should be to design professional development so that it supports student learning.

Project Description

Based on the literature and findings of the project study, I designed a 3-day workshop learning series that is intended to meet the needs of the stakeholders, through

the development of a culturally sensitive learning community. The purpose of the project is to gain a better understanding of the reasons for low parental involvement at Brownville Public School. The study findings revealed the lack of shared meaning regarding parental involvement between parents and teachers. Both parents and teachers defined involvement differently; parents described their involvement as taking their child to school, attending performances, and meeting with the teacher. However, teachers defined parental involvement as parents attending PTO meetings, parent-teacher conferences and participating in academic workshops such as a literacy or math night.

The study also highlighted several barriers that are indirectly imposed on both parents and teachers and their ability to communicate effectively, such as language barriers, teachers not having access to a telephone and a quiet area to call parents, inconsistent forms of communication to parents, and teachers not being aware of upcoming events. Such challenges supported the need to design a learning series focusing on the benefits of parental involvement and implementing school-family - community partnerships.

These collaborative relationships create the processes and conditions necessary for recognizing and appreciating one another's strengths. Stakeholders participating in this professional learning series will learn about the concept of parental involvement including the research and the benefits. They will be introduced to two models: dual capacity framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) and Epstein's six types of parental involvement. The target audience for this workshop will include parents of third grade students, second, third and fourth grade teachers, the home-school coordinator, the

principal, the district parental involvement coordinator, and community partners. The total number of participants is anticipated to be about 25.

Parents will participate during Day 1 and Day 2. The second, third, and fourth grade teachers will participate during Day 1 along with parents and other stakeholders. Day 3 is a day designed exclusively for teachers. The structure of the training will consist of 3 full days of learning and relationship building. Each session will commence at 8:00 a.m. All stakeholders will participate in the session on Day 1. However, Day 2 was designed for parents and Day 3 for teachers. Sessions are interactive, collaborative, and relational. Participants will engage in learning activities that are linked to the content. Participants will receive a copy of books by Edwards (2009) and Henderson et al. (2007). They will learn about current tools to support school-to-home communication. Areas covered will include:

- Exploration of the school-family and community partnership framework;
- Overview of parental involvement;
- Examination of effective home-school communication strategies;
- Analysis of school strengths and areas for development in home-school community relationships.

Needed Resources

Like many inner-city schools throughout the United States, this school is located in an area of high crime and poverty (District Strategic Profile, 2011). Harmon and Dickens (2007) suggested that in order to encourage participation from all stakeholders, one should create a welcoming relaxed environment; doing so will allow participants to

view each other as equal partners. Therefore, initial support would include beautification support from the district or the city. The school could request partnership support to improve the curb appeal of the school to create a warm, welcoming environment. Improvement to the school grounds would include updating the signage to welcome families and community partners, adding mulch and shrubs to the front of the school to create an inviting entrance, and adding a designated area for parents to congregate to encourage social networks among parents.

Additional support would include resources to hire a part-time translator/interpreter who could assist with translating documents and assisting parents when needed. This person could also assist with interpretation during the session and would also be responsible for recording the schoolwide message being sent to parents. Needed materials include general office supplies such as: name tags, chart paper and markers. Materials needed to complete activities include: handouts for all sessions, presentations both printed and included on a flash drive, bingo cards, parent video and quiet space for filming. The school has access to a screen, LCD projector, and speakers for use during the workshops. Lastly, the school would benefit from a welcoming room to host the workshops. The recommended space would include ample parking, access to the internet and catering options. Currently, all staff professional development and parent meetings are held in the library. I would recommend hosting the training in this space.

Existing Supports

Several years ago, the district where the research school is located opened a district-wide parent center and hired a coordinator to oversee parental involvement

throughout within the district. This position is centrally located and has the capacity to assist schools with hosting events, keeping parents informed, and providing professional development. The research school would benefit from a renewed relationship with this office.

Project study findings revealed that both teachers and parents expressed a need for increased parent participation. Therefore, a strengths-based approach will be implemented. The school also has an active School Governance Council. An invitation to participate in the training will be extended to this group of engaged teachers, parents, and community members. An additional support includes the home-school coordinator, who could assist with registration and parent outreach. The coordinator has been in the district and this school in particular for many years. As a former parent at the research school, the coordinator will be able to connect with parents. The school also has several community partners who would be willing to host resource tables at each of the sessions. Having community partners at the sessions will inform both parents and teachers of resources within the community.

Potential Barriers

A potential barrier to the success of this workshop is low parent and teacher participation in the workshops. Although the project study findings revealed parents wanted to participate more at their child's school, unforeseen challenges may arise that prevent parents from participating in the scheduled workshops (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Such challenges would not allow parents the opportunity to share their hopes and dreams for their child's education; information that is needed to assist teachers with in their

ability to partner with parents. According to Hoglund et al. (2015), parents' inability to participate could be caused by poverty. Therefore, parents within this community may have to choose a necessity for their family over attending an event or workshop at school. Some parents may not have the benefit of using a vacation day to participate in the training or parents may not have the additional resources to pay for transportation. However, including parents in the training is a pivotal component. Therefore, provisions will be made available for parents to share their stories through the use of technology.

Solutions to Barriers

The principal can assist with the potential barrier of low parent and teacher participation (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Parents shared that it was the principal who invited them into the school and made them feel welcomed. Additionally, several teachers provided examples of increased parental involvement under the latest administration. As the leader in the building, the principal can include increasing parental involvement as a goal in the school improvement plan. Therefore, teachers would see the Partners in Learning training as a strategy for accomplishing their expected goal of engaging parents. School leaders can model the importance of engaging families by making parental involvement the responsibility of the entire school and not just the home-school coordinator, by building relationships with parents and by making resources available. Another possible solution would be to minimize known obstacles preventing parents from attending, such as, transportation and missing time from work. The school could provide resources for transportation like gas cards or bus passes. Also, if funds are available the school could offer parent stipends. Parents or teachers who were not in

attendance, the sessions would be filmed for future viewing.

Implementation

Partners in Learning will consist of 3 full days of learning and relationship building. The training will develop the skills of teachers, the principal, staff, and parents to promote parental involvement. Teachers will increase their knowledge regarding the Latino culture, learn how to communicate with parents effectively and apply strategies to develop and implement meaningful parental involvement activities for parents.

The sessions will be held at the beginning of the academic school year. However, in June of the previous school year, teachers will receive training dates and information about the project study. Parents will receive personal invitations inviting them to participate in the training. They will have the opportunity to be a part of the decision making at Brownville Public School.

The results of the project study indicated both teachers and parents offered strategies for increasing parental involvement at the research school. Offering professional development and providing an opportunity for parents and teachers to learn side by side are two examples that were suggested by the participants as ways of increasing parental involvement. In this northeastern state, the school year begins at the end of the summer. Most schools refer to this week as “back-to-school” week; it typically includes a full week of professional development for the entire school staff and will serve as a logical time for implementation of the project.

Role/Responsibilities

The success of Partners in Learning will be the result of the entire team working

together. As the facilitator, I will work closely with the school principal, the home school coordinator and the district parental involvement coordinator. I will build their capacity to develop and conduct similar sessions in the future. I will be responsible for all training materials/handouts, securing the space, creating a welcoming environment and contacting any additional speakers. As the leader of the school, the principal will lead by example and share the excitement about the learning opportunity. The principal will also ensure flyers are sent home in English and Spanish. He will make sure the entire school is aware of the upcoming training sessions. Results of the project study indicated the need for the school to increase the level of communication regarding upcoming events between home and school and among the staff. Teachers will also take on the role of personally inviting parents to attend the training. The home-school coordinator will be responsible for ordering the food and beverages for each of the three days of training, inviting community partners to host resource tables, and ensuring technology is in place each day. To support any parents needing translation/interpretation, I will contact the district office to ensure these services are available for parents.

Project Evaluation Plan

The purpose of the Partners in Learning workshop is to increase parental involvement and school-family relationships at the research site by building the capacity of the stakeholders to work together. Key stakeholders include parents, teachers, the principal, the home-school coordinator, the district parental involvement coordinator, and the primary community partner. The principal will approve the project evaluation plan prior to implementation. This professional learning series will be evaluated using an

outcome-based evaluation, with an overarching goal of increasing parent participation at school-based events. The outcome-based evaluation will be used to determine the effectiveness of the Partners in Learning workshop. Royse, Thyer, and Padgett (2015) described outcome-based evaluations as a systematic way to determine if the desired results were achieved. As a result of attending this three-day professional development training, participants will have the opportunity to better understand parental involvement and the implementation of school-family-community partnerships.

Participation data as well as implementation data will be collected. Each participant will be expected to complete an end-of-workshop evaluation (Appendix A). The facilitator will disseminate workshop evaluations at the end of each session. Participants will be encouraged to complete the evaluation. Session evaluation forms translated into Spanish will be offered to parents who prefer to communicate in Spanish.

Formative and summative assessments will be used to assist with meeting the expected outcomes. According to Caffarella (2002), formative assessments inform of necessary changes for future sessions. In contrast, the summative assessment will assess the extent to which the Partners in Learning workshop achieved the intended outcomes. Implementing these assessments will provide useful feedback throughout the learning process. Three months after the training, teachers will receive a follow-up survey from the facilitator to assess the level of implementation.

Project Implications

This professional learning series, Partners in Learning, offers opportunities for increased parental involvement for parents at this inner-city school; as well as improved

home-school relationships. The results of this project study indicated the need for better relationships between teachers and parents. Results also specified the need for additional community partners. The success of this program will not only support this school and the surrounding community; it has the ability to influence social change within this community and other school districts with similar needs/demographics. Potential areas of social change for this school include: empowering parents to increase their participation at school and within the community; encouraging teachers to partner more effectively with parents; and inspiring community partners to increase their support of students and families.

Conclusion

The Partners in Learning workshop is designed for parents, teachers, the principal, the home-school coordinator, the district parental involvement coordinator, and the primary community partner. The workshop was developed based on the results of the project study identifying the need for improved family-school relationships, an increase in parental involvement, and effective communication between home and school. Therefore, this section included the rationale, literature review, project description, evaluation plan, and social change implications. Last, in Section 4, I conclude with the strengths of the project, application, and implications for social change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

When I started this journey, I was interested in understanding the pattern of low parental involvement at Brownville Public School, a K–8 inner-city school located in the northeast region of the United States. The findings indicated that school-based parental involvement was low because the language difference was a significant barrier. This created a strong need for improved communication. However, parents and teachers were also not aware of parental involvement activities.

The Partners in Learning workshop was designed to build the capacity between stakeholders—parents, teachers, and community partners—working together. I created a 3-day workshop to address the themes that emerged from the findings, such as ineffective communication, defining parental involvement, and language difference between home and school. In this section, I will describe the strengths and limitations of the project, recommendations, self-reflections, and implications of social change. I will conclude with direction for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strength of this project is that it is grounded in research. In Sections 1 and 3 the literature surrounding parental involvement is clear: Low parental involvement is a problem, and increased direct parental involvement will benefit students, parents, and teachers. Epstein (2009) suggested that students are more successful when the three major influences in their lives—family, school, and community—work together to support student achievement. In this study, parents and teachers expressed the need for improved communication and relationships between home and school. Therefore, I

designed Partners in Learning to bring the stakeholders together in one room. This allows for all stakeholders to (a) build capacities to work together, (b) establish networks through making connections, (c) understand individual values and beliefs, and (d) increase the confidence of all stakeholders (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). An additional strength of this project study is that the district has included parental involvement in their teacher evaluation process.

One limitation of the project is implementation and follow-up. After the completion of the workshop, stakeholders may find it difficult to implement the new content knowledge, especially if they are not supported by their peers. To enhance peer acceptance, 3 months after participating in the workshop, teachers will receive a survey inquiring whether they have implemented the new content knowledge and changed their own practice based on this new knowledge. I will share this information with the principal and the district parental involvement coordinator.

For several years, I have supported numerous districts in their efforts to implement school-family-community partnerships. In my experience, the districts that demonstrated the most success were those that provided staff with ongoing resources and technical assistance. Therefore, it is my recommendation that the district parental involvement coordinator support the implementation efforts by meeting regularly with the principal and the home school coordinator. This reciprocal partnership would act as a model for building relationships with parents.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative approach to the project would be to first focus on building the leadership capacity of parents to partner with teachers. Parents who are involved in their child's education have a positive relationship with both students and teachers (Grant & Ray, 2010). Often, this involvement has led to parents increasing their own skills and confidence surrounding their involvement in schools (Grant & Ray, 2010).

All of the parents in this study provided examples of how they are active in their child's education at home. For the involvement to be recognized, teachers must first become aware of what is happening in the home. Therefore, an alternative approach would be for the district to create a parent university. This approach would focus on increasing the efficacy of the parent, offering such topics as child development, effective communication, advocacy skills, grade level expectations, and parenting skills. The parent university approach would provide parents with the knowledge and the confidence to partner with their child's teacher. It is through these relationships that parents and teachers begin to learn and respect the role of the other.

Scholarship

As a doctoral student, the journey to scholarship evolved as I progressed through the required stages of transitioning from a dependent learner to an independent learner. I gained a great deal of knowledge while conducting my study—this included analyzing the data and developing the project. As the researcher conducting this qualitative study, I took on the primary role of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). My vocation and interest for empowering parents led me to research and understand the patterns for low

parental involvement in one inner-city school. For me, this process of gradual growth and understanding centered on the word *respect* for the learning community, the learning process, the research, and the faculty student relationship.

Project Development

I developed this project as a strategy for increasing parental involvement at one inner-city school. The results from the findings demonstrated the integral need for improved relationships and communication between home and school. Therefore, I made the decision, in consultation with my committee, that the best way to address the needs of this school was to design and implement parental involvement workshops. I have gained knowledge of the different phases of project development from the foundational phase of investigating the literature to the final phase of implementation, all key necessary components to the success of the project.

I have also learned the importance of understanding and considering the individual perspectives of all stakeholders. Within this study, the teachers described the need for increased parental involvement. However, many were not able to provide tangible examples of how they had attempted to connect with parents in the past. This difference between desired outcome and expected outcome may be associated with teachers' capacity to partner with parents. In Section 1, Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres supports the interest of both the school and the family through the implementation of policies and programs. It is through these same policies that teachers are encouraged to support parental involvement.

Leadership and Change

The design of this project study will assist stakeholders from an inner-city community to work together to support student achievement. This change will only be accomplished with the support of district and school leadership. Grant and Ray (2010) agreed that to increase parental involvement, schools must be intentional in their efforts to engage families. The Partnership in Achievement workshops will act as the catalyst for implementing change within this school by empowering parents to speak up and question the status quo, by encouraging and recognizing teacher leaders, and by identifying potential community partners.

Self as Scholar

The journey to becoming a scholar was more than coursework and writing papers. It was about my role as the researcher, it was about my role of identifying the right problem, it was about analyzing data and continuing to explore until there were no more new answers. As a scholar, I have a deeper understanding of data collection and data analysis playing a concurrent role in the conduct of qualitative research. Also as a parent of a child who had attended an inner-city school, I become more aware of my personal biases regarding parental involvement within inner-city schools. I was also aware that my feelings as a parent could influence the data analysis. Therefore, I knew I had to conduct my investigation in an unbiased manner.

Self as Practitioner

My goal as a practitioner is to assist others in solving educational problems. I began working in the field of education in 1999. My career began as an elementary

school teacher, followed by a counseling manager at a vocational high school, years later as an education consultant, and now as a central office administrator for a local board of education. I have noticed that as I progressed through each of these positions that I received more autonomy and authority to make decisions. This is an enormous responsibility that I respect and take very seriously. As a practitioner, I understand that others will look to me for answers.

Self as Project Developer

This is the one area that I felt the most comfortable when I embarked on this doctoral journey. For the past 9 years I have been working with schools and communities as an education consultant. I have conducted assessments to identify the problem, consulted with school/district administrators, as well as designed, offered, and implemented the prescribed intervention. In contrast, my role as a project developer evolved from seeing myself as a member of a collaborative team, to seeing myself as leading the team. Because I worked for an education state agency, most resources and materials were designed based on the needs of the individual state. From this project I have gained and developed a greater sense of responsibility and professional competence. I chose to develop the workshop Partners in Learning, as the catalyst to build and enhance relationships between the home, the school, and the community.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

As I reflect on the importance of this work I am reminded of how the dynamics of the actual overall learning environment changes when parental involvement increases. This effect is especially true for students from lower-socioeconomic communities. The

importance of this project study surpasses the immediate needs of the individual family; but affects the entire school and the greater community. This project may influence other schools as it gives voice to a segment of the population that has a history of marginalization.

I interviewed five parents at Brownville Public School to better understand the patterns of low parental involvement. Every parent provided examples of their involvement at home; from assisting with homework to assigning chores. Parents understood the importance of being involved in their child's learning; however, many did not know how to transfer what they were doing at home directly into the classroom.

Implications

Potential positive social change would be the empowerment of parents to actively participate in the decision-making at their child's school and the added dimension of reciprocal relationships with community partners. Currently, the community that surrounds Brownville Public School is home to many new immigrant parents, who may not yet be familiar with the educational system in the United States. Therefore, parents may also benefit from additional support from their school as it relates to new immigration legislation. According to the literature, schools that foster a welcoming environment are also aware of societal concerns affecting students and families (Epstein, 2009). This sensitivity could lead to new resources and community partnerships for families with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ma et al., 2014). When schools take the time to seek/offer additional resources through the school, parents begin to see the school as a trusted member of the community. As a result, parents are informed of

grade level expectations and have access to resources that can support their child's learning.

Applications and Directions for Future Research

The essence of the project is the introduction and implementation of Epstein's (2009) six types of involvement as a tool for defining parental involvement and Mapp's (2013) dual capacity framework as a tool for designing the work. A recommended future research study would examine the effect of home-school coordinators; addressing the over-arching question of whether schools with home-school coordinators are more successful than those without. Additional studies would include examining the benefits of including the topic of parental involvement in teacher preparation training programs and teacher evaluations.

Conclusion

This qualitative project study explored the patterns of low parental involvement in one inner-city school. Stakeholders who participated in this study were adamant regarding the need for better communication between home and school and the need for increased parent participation to increase student achievement. Both parents and school staff offered culturally responsive suggestions for increasing parental involvement, from family-centered events to improved communication tools. Findings of the study have the potential to guide parents, teachers, and staff of Brownville Public School in identifying ways to support the lives of the students and the local community by developing reciprocal relationships among the stakeholders and implementing school-family and community partnerships.

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Appendix A: Partners in Learning

Purpose and Goals

The Partners in Learning workshop is designed to improve home-school relationships. According to the findings, stakeholders agreed that the school would benefit from increased parent participation. They also shared the need and the desire to improve communication at the research site. Therefore, the goal of this learning series is to develop the capacity of the stakeholders to work together. Over the course of 3-full days, stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage in the content and work individually and as a full group through the interactive activities. The professional development activities will consist of stakeholders learning and applying effective strategies for increasing parental involvement in an inner-city school. Such activities will include exploring the Latino culture, using data to work collaboratively to develop solutions, parents and teachers increasing their social capital, and parents learning and applying the many ways they can support their child as a student at home and at school.

A key component of this initiative is to offer a workshop that will provide school personnel with the skills to promote great parent participation and to empower parents to embrace the many roles available to them to support their child's education. All stakeholders will have the opportunity to discuss any barriers hindering the increase of parental involvement at the research site. Approaches for this 3-day professional development workshop are based on the results of this study, the current literature, and the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The results of the

project identified the need for improved family-school relationships, which aligned with the current literature recognizing how schools, parents and students all benefit from increased involvement (Delandes et al., 2015). This training will also implement the three NNPS three core principles; (a) use Epstein's six types of parental involvement, (b) implement a team approach at the school level to support the work, and (c) ensure ongoing research and evaluation. Stakeholders will also be introduced to the dual capacity framework. This model suggests building the capacity of parents and teachers to work together through meaningful engagement: (a) capabilities-human capital skills and knowledge, (b) connections-social capital, (c) confidence-self efficacy, and (d) cognition-beliefs and worldview. The Partners in Learning workshop is an opportunity for stakeholders to make connections and make a difference in their community.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of attending this three-day professional development training, participants will have the opportunity to:

- Become familiar with the findings of the project study;
- Build meaningful connections and learn from each other;
- Identify specific types of parental involvement strategies that are most effective when working with inner-city families and
- Learn of the challenges that contribute to low parental involvement at an inner-city school

Target Audience

The target audience for this workshop will include parents of third grade students, second, third and fourth grade teachers, the home-school coordinator, the principal, the district parental involvement coordinator, and community partners. The total number of participants will be about 25. Invitations to participate in the workshop will be extended to all parents of third grade students, which includes approximately 75 parents. The goal is to have between 10 to 15 parents participate. Parents will participate during day one and day two. The second, third, and fourth grade teachers will participate during day one along with parents and other stakeholders. Day three is a day designed precisely for just teachers. Additional partners may include the local cultural center and nearby faith-based organization. According to Epstein (2009), when implementing school-family-community partnerships it is vitally important to implement reciprocal relationships with community partners, as schools have much to offer by way of collaboration.

Partners in Learning

Day 1

Target audience: parents, teachers, the home-school coordinator, the principal, the district parental involvement coordinator, and community partners.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with the findings of the project study;
- Learn new terms for defining parental involvement and the multiple roles parents can play;
- Learn new techniques to overcome barriers that prevent parental involvement;
- Identify tools and resources to improve parental involvement at this inner-city school;
- Develop cross cultural communication skills and techniques that promote parental involvement and build mutually respectful and trusting relationships; and Brainstorm new parental involvement activities that are meaningful and linked to learning.

Schedule

8:00-8:30	Registration and Refreshments
8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introductions
8:45-9:00	Latino Cultural Bingo (Group Activity)
9:00-9:45	A Look at the Research (See presentation)
9:45-10:30	Defining Parental Involvement (See presentation)
10:30-10:45	BREAK

- 10:45-11:00 Barriers to Parental Involvement (See presentation)
- 11:00-11:30 Apply the Data (Group Activity)
- 11:30-12:00 Introduce Dual Capacity Framework (See presentation)
- 12:00-12:45 LUNCH
- 12:45-1:30 Action Plan for Partnerships
- 1:30-3:30 Team work- Write Draft Action Plan
- 3:30-4:00 Wrap-up, Questions and Evaluations

Name tags	Chart pack, post-it notes
Dual Capacity Framework	Timer, clipboard, prize
Six Type of Involvement	Bingo cards/answer sheet
Action Plan Template	Colored stickers

Suggested reading: Edwards, P. (2016). Tapping the Potential of Parents: A Strategic Guide to Boosting Student Achievement through Family Involvement.

Parents as Partners

Day 2

Target audience: parents of third grade students

Objectives:

- Become familiar with their role as the child's first teacher;
- Understand grade level expectations;
- Learn new techniques to overcome barriers that prevent parental involvement;

Schedule

8:00-8:30	Registration and Refreshments
8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introductions
8:45-9:00	Find Someone Who! (Group Activity)
9:00-9:45	Data/Goals (Presentation)
9:45-10:30	World Cafe (Group Activity)
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-11:30	Collaboration & Communication for Partnerships (Presentation)
11:30-12:00	Filming Parents Hopes and Dreams
12:00-12:45	LUNCH
12:45-1:30	Building Mutual Trust and Respect (Presentation)
1:30-3:00	Better Together Community Fair
3:00-3:30	Wrap-up, Questions and Evaluations

Name tags	Chart pack & chime
District/school data	Timer, clipboard, prize
Guest speakers	Bingo cards/answer sheet
Quiet space for filming	Colored stickers, selected books

Suggested reading: Edwards, P. (2015). Tapping the Potential of Parents: A Strategic Guide to Boosting Student Achievement through Family Involvement.

Teachers as Partners

Day 3

Target audience: second, third and fourth grade teachers

Objectives:

- Learn new strategies for engaging parents;
- Learn new techniques to overcome barriers that prevent parental involvement;
- Identify the roles parents can play to support educational achievement;

Schedule

8:00-8:30	Registration and Refreshments
8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introductions
8:45-9:00	Hopes and Dreams (Group Activity)
9:00-9:45	Video, What Parents What
9:45-10:30	A Look at the Research (Presentation)
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-11:30	Best Practices for Engaging Parents (Presentation)
11:30-12:00	Wagon Wheel (Group Activity)
12:00-12:45	LUNCH
12:45-1:30	Effective Communication (Presentation)
1:30-2:00	Applying the Dual Capacity Framework
2:00-3:30	Teachers Write Draft Action Plans
3:30-4:00	Wrap-up, Questions and Evaluations

Materials

Name tags	Chart pack
Dual Capacity Framework	Timer, clipboard, prize
Six Type of Involvement	Bingo cards/answer sheet
Action Plan Template	Colored stickers, selected books

Suggested reading: Henderson, A.T., Mapp, K.L., Johnson, V.R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school-partnerships.*



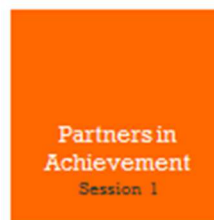
Partners in Achievement

Session 1

Training for Teachers, Parents
and Community Members

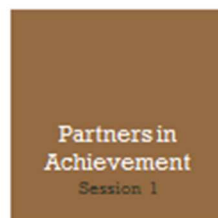
+ Session Outcomes

- Become familiar with the findings of the project study;
- Learn new terms for defining parental involvement and the multiple roles parents can play;
- Learn new techniques to overcome barriers that prevent parental involvement;
- Identify tools and resources to improve parental involvement at this inner-city school;
- Develop cross cultural communication skills and techniques that promote parental involvement and build mutually respectful and trusting relationships; and
- Brainstorm new parental involvement activities that are meaningful and linked to learning.



Latino Cultural Bingo

- 1st-Count off 1-7 depending on the size of the group. All one's, two's, etc. will now form a team. Once teams are formed, each member will introduce him/herself.
- 2nd -After personal introductions, the team will come up with a "team" name.
- 3rd-Teams will have 10 minutes to complete their bingo card. Team with most correct answers will win a small prize!
- 4th -Give out answer sheet and have teams review their responses. Provide time for teams to provide feedback.



Project Study Overview

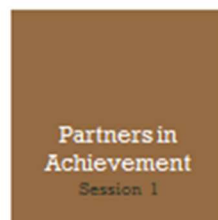
The purpose of this study was to explore factors contributing to the problem of low parental involvement in school-based activities.

+ Participants

- 5 Parents
- 5 Teachers
- 1 Principal

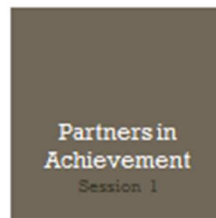
+ Data Collection

- Face to Face Interviews
- Document Reviews



Project Results (School)

- Most examples of parental involvement were school-based
- Teachers did not have advance notice of parental involvement activities
- Parental involvement activities lacked collaboration
- Minimum structures in place for parents to get involved
- School listed language as a factor for low parent participation



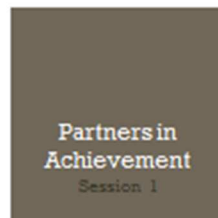
Project Results (Parents)

- Parents listed language barrier as reason for low parent participation
- Parents are actively involved at home
- Parents want to connect with the school
- Parents are not receiving personal invitations from teachers
- School-based involvement does not include parent role/expectations



Project Results (Both)

- Parents and teachers listed language barrier as reason for low parent participation
- Parents and teachers listed improved efforts are a direct result of the new principal
- Family Friday-successful school-based parental involvement activity
- Parents and teachers were not aware of the home-school coordinator



+

Turn To Your Neighbor



1. Write down 3 ah-ah's
2. Write down 3 solutions
3. Share with your neighbor



+ Solutions for Increasing Parental Involvement

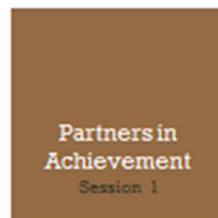
- Develop simple flyers to send home to parents
- Share events with parents in advance
- Inform teachers and other school staff of upcoming events
- Flyers should be in English and Spanish
- Offer events at different times to accommodate parents
- Have translators available at events
- Provide space for parents to congregate when they visit the school
- Create a family resource center with 1 or 2 computers
- Make the school a hub for the community



Benefits of Parental Involvement

When their parents are involved, STUDENTS gain:

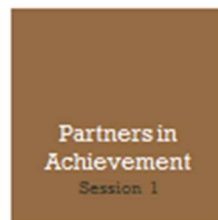
- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and more homework done
- Fewer placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in post-secondary education



Benefits cont...

Benefits of parent involvement for PARENTS:

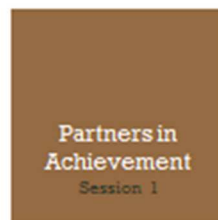
- More confidence in the school
- Higher teacher expectations of their children
- Higher teacher opinion of them as parents
- More self-confidence
- More likely to continue their own education



Benefits cont...

Benefits of parent involvement for
SCHOOLS:

- Improves teacher morale
- Higher ratings from families
- More support from families
- Higher student achievement
- Better reputations in the community



Defining Parental Involvement

Please take a post-it note
and write down your
definition of parental
involvement.



Defining Parental Involvement

- Participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities ensuring–
 - That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
 - That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
 - That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child



Six Keys of Involvement

PARENTING: Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

LEARNING AT HOME: Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions

DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Coordinate resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.





Dual Capacity Framework

Process Conditions	Organizational Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Linked to learning ■ Relational ■ Development ■ Collaborative ■ Interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Systemic: across the school ■ Integrated: embedded in all programs ■ Sustained with resources and infrastructure



Effective Family-School Partnerships

Schools who can	Parents are
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge ■ Connect family engagement to student learning ■ Create welcoming inviting cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supporters ■ Encouragers ■ Monitors ■ Advocates ■ Decision Makers ■ Collaborators



Action Steps



+

Wrap up, Questions & Evaluations



1. Wrap up session
2. Answer questions
3. Complete evaluations





Partners in Achievement Session 2

Parents as Partners Workshop

Opening Activity

Find someone who BINGO!

- a. Take game card from the middle of the table
- b. Answer as many questions as possible
- c. Receive signatures
- d. Completed cards will be added to the raffle
- e. HAVE FUN!



Responses to Session 1

+ Given the information and data provided at Session 1, what district/school strengths impressed you most? What challenges concerned you most?

+ What meaningful connections did you see among the data, district/school goals, and the activities of the Office of Family and Community Partners?

+ Since Session 1, what ideas, concerns, questions, and suggestions for the future success of students have you considered?



Individual School and District Data Examined by School-based Teams

+ Individually, examine the data source(s) for the district and your school.

+ Do they reflect your experience of BPS and your child's/children's school(s)?

+ Individually, decide on the three greatest strengths demonstrated by the data sources. Then decide on the three greatest challenges.

+ As a team, review each member's priority strengths and challenges found in the data.



Agreement on Challenge and Goals

(for families and community members)

+ With this more focused look at school data, decide as a team the areas of strength that deserve continued support and the challenges that need to be met. This will give you your goal(s).

+ Come to consensus as a team on the three (3) greatest strength priorities and three (3) greatest challenges that need to be addressed to arrive at the desired reality – your goal(s).



Dual Capacity-Building Framework (5) Process Conditions

- + Linked to Learning
- + Relational
- + Development-vs-service orientation
- + Collaborative
- + Interactive



World Cafe

1st-Participants will hear from two teachers and two parent volunteers and the home school coordinator regarding the different ways parents may increase their participation.

2nd-Begin the activity by allowing each guest speaker to introduce themselves. Next, participants will have the opportunity to participate in a world café conversation.

3rd-Parents will select their first mini-presentation. They will receive resources and may ask questions of the presenters.

4th-After 10 minutes ring the bell and the parents will move to another table. They will continue this process until they have visited all three tables.



Collaboration for Family-School Partnerships

(How we organize to get the job done)

We act jointly to:

- + Communicate Effectively
- + Set the goal(s)
- + Establish ground rules (how we treat one another)
- + Develop roles & responsibilities
- + Plan integrated programs of activity
- + Implement planned programs
- + Monitor the implementation of programs
- + Evaluate effectiveness of implemented programs





+
What Parents
Want for Their
Children

Communication for Family-
School Partnerships

Components of *Effective* Communication

+Verbal

+Non-Verbal

+Listening



Deeper Examination of Building Mutual Respect and Trust

Roles and responsibilities of all parties:

- ✓ Respect one another
- ✓ Demonstrate and Assume Competence
- ✓ Act with Integrity
- ✓ Display Personal Regard
- ✓ Welcome all Members
- ✓ Honor all Participation
- ✓ Focus on connecting to student learning

Better Together: A Look at Community Partnerships Guest Speaker



After School Program



+

Wrap up, Questions & Evaluations



1. Wrap up session
2. Answer questions
3. Complete evaluations





Partners in Achievement Session 3

Teachers as Partners Workshop

Opening Activity

Hopes and Dreams of your Children:

1. On the paper provided in the middle of your tables-think of a child in your personal life. Once a name comes to mind
2. Write down your hopes and dreams for this child

Hopes and Dreams of your Students:

1. Take another piece of paper. Now think of a child in your professional life. Once a name comes to mind
2. Write down the parents' hopes and dreams for this child

TTYN- now turn to your neighbor and share your answers





What Parents Want for Their Children

+

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Increased confidence is demonstrated through increased parental involvement at home, increased parental involvement at school, and a positive assessment of the teacher (Lemmer, 2012; Vukovic, 2013).

Academic achievement increased when parental involvement was implemented early and maintained throughout the child's life (Epstein, 2002, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Grant & Ray, 2010; LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011).

School engagement, and their ability to adjust to school have all been linked to parental involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Grant & Ray, 2010; Wilder, 2014).

High expectations for their children, the children performed better in school. (Jeynes, 2005).



Partners in
Achievement
Session 3

Why Parents Get Involved

Parent role construction- when parents see getting involved in their child's education is a part of their role as being a parent.

Parent efficacy- when parents notice that their involvement is making a positive difference for their child they will continue their involvement.

Welcoming Schools-parents will continue their involvement if the school is inviting and if their child welcomes this involvement.

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997)

Essential Role of Parents

- Supporters** of their child's learning in the home and school;
- Encouragers** of their children regarding school and self-image;
- Monitors** of their child's schedule, friends and future;
- Models** of the value of education beyond high school;
- Advocates** for better opportunities for their child/school;
- Decision makers** of improved educational options;
- Collaborators** with school/community to support school improvement.

Mapp & Kuttner, 2013



The Joining Process

Welcoming: **Develops Relationships**

- Put out the welcome mat (reserved parking spots, welcome signs, directions)
- Enroll the whole family – tours of the school, home visits, and a buddy system
- Create a warm, friendly building with lots of student work on display
- Make sure people are accessible, such as open office hours for the principal
- Set customer service standards for office staff and others
- Put on the personal touch – small meetings, one-to-one talks, a family center

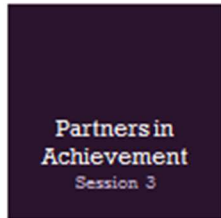
Honoring: **Deepens Relationships**

- Show respect at all times. Ask parents for their advice -- and take it
- Give parents a voice in major decisions about their children and the school
- Recognize families' contributions and thank them for their help
- Respect families' circumstances – offer translators, convenient times, childcare
- Set ground rules together – such as procedure for classroom observations
- Accentuate the positive – apply no negative labels to anyone

Connecting: **Links Families to Student Learning and Sustains Relationships**

- Link parent activities to what students are learning and doing in class
- Exhibit student work and send graded work home every week
- Make home visits to find out child's talents and interests, explain what's going on in class, and leave learning materials families can use with children
- Show parents how much staff care by keeping parents informed about what their kids are learning and doing in class
- Invite parents to observe in class and learn how teachers teach
- Open a Family Center – create a warm place to gather and lend learning materials and games

Mapp, 2003



Response to Sessions 1 and 2

✓ Six Types of Parental Involvement

✓ Findings from project study

✓ Barriers to Involvement



Wagon Wheel

1st-Prior to the session, participants will receive the Dual Capacity Framework. After reading the framework they will bring two artifacts to the session, one positive example from their school on one of the 4 components outlined in the framework, and one example of where their school could use support on one of the 4 components outlined in the article.

2nd-All participants will stand during the activity. The participants will create an inner and outer circle with both groups looking at each other.

3rd. Each person should be facing another person. Each group will have about 4 minutes to share their homework with their partner.

4th- Once completed the circle rotates so everyone is with another person and will discuss their homework.



Effective Communication

One-way Communication	Two-way Communication
Bulletin Boards	Personal notes inviting a response
Teacher/School website	Face-to-face conversation
Newsletter	Website with ability for parental response
Report card/progress report	Parent surveys
School handbook	Phone calls
Automated phone calls	Emails



In-Depth Examination of Dual Capacity-Building Framework

Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships



Partners in Achievement
Session 3

Better Together: A Look at Community Partnerships Guest Speaker After School Program



Partners in Achievement
Session 3

Action Plans

1. **Read through school improvement plan. Highlight school goals for increasing parental involvement**
2. **Write a professional goal that supports the school improvement plan**
3. **Complete the action plan template**
4. **Share out!**

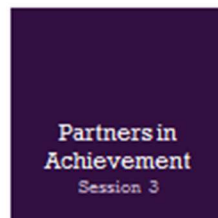


Questions/Evaluations

Thank you for your active participation

Please update the sign-in sheet with your correct contact information

In 3 months following this session you will receive an brief survey



Have a great year!

Activity 1: Latino Cultural Bingo

Background-Brownville Public School (BPS) is a K-8 school located in an inner-city setting in the northeast region of the United States. The school has a population of approximately 770 students, with 43% Latino or Hispanic. This activity will support the recommendation of improving relationships between home and school. According to Gay (2000), one of the best ways to understand students' families and cultural backgrounds is to have teachers and parents come together through personal connections. This activity will provide parents and teachers with the opportunity to share their knowledge of the Latino cultures.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will encourage participants to begin thinking about the diverse families in this school and the goal of increasing parental involvement and understanding you cannot reach who you do not know!
2. Interactive way to think about BPS second largest populations



Day 1 Activity 1

sheet and have teams review their responses. Provide time for teams to provide feedback. Closing, ask participants to share how this activity connects to increasing parental involvement at BPS.

Material -Timer, Cultural Bingo Cards/Answer sheets, pen, clipboards and small prize for the winning team!

Activity-Participants will work in teams to complete this activity. Have participants count off 1-7 depending on the size of the group. All one's, two's, etc. will now form a team. Once teams are formed, each member will introduce him/herself. After personal introductions, the team will come up with a "team" name. Encourage teams to be creative! Teams will have 10 minutes to complete their bingo card. Team with most correct answers will win a small prize! Give out answer

Activity 2: Applying the Data

Background-Findings from the project study revealed there were several reasons why parental involvement was low at this inner-city school, such as: language barrier, flyers sent home were in English only; parents were unclear regarding their role at school; parental involvement activities lacked collaboration, and often teachers felt that they received no communication about events that were planned to include families.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will provide participants with the opportunity to develop solutions to low parental involvement
2. Interactive way to continue to make connections and build community among the stakeholders

Activity –After learning about the challenges revealed in the project study, participants will work in large groups to complete this activity. Have participants count off 1-3. All one's, two's, etc. will form a group. Each group brainstorms the answer to two questions: (1) What do we want parental involvement to look like at our school (these are wishes). (2) What do we need to do to get what we want? (these are actions). Everyone return to the large group. Review and categorize similar responses by topic. Next the entire group will vote to prioritize the work. Each participate will be given (5) round stickers to be used during voting. After looking at the list that was generated by voting the whole group discusses what stakeholders can do to make these happen. Closing, results of this activity will be used to develop action plans.

Day 1 Activity 2

Material –Different color stickers, chart pack, markers.

Activity 1: Find Someone Who!

Background-Parents that participated in the project study, agreed the school would benefit from increased parent participation. Currently Brownville Public School (BPS) has over 700 students. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013) developing trusting relationships between stakeholders are vital to increasing parental involvement. This activity will give parents the opportunity to connect with other parents and increase their social capital.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will encourage participants to connect, have fun, and discover similarities and differences among parents.
2. Interactive way for a BPS parent to meet other parents

Activity description-Participants will work individually to complete the Who's In the Room Bingo card. Each parent will receive a card. They will have 10 minutes to complete the bingo card. Participants must canvas the room meeting other participants and asking questions. If they meet someone who can answer

the question, the other person may sign their card. Participants continue this process until their card is complete or the timer has stopped. The facilitator will identify those with the most signatures. These names will be entered into a raffle. After winners have been identified the facilitator will debrief the activity by providing the correct answers through a call and response process with the entire group. Closing, ask participants to share if they have met a new parent or



Day 2 Activity 1

learned something new about an existing parent. Ask how this activity connects to increasing parental involvement at BPS.

Material -Timer, Find Someone Who Cards/Answer sheets, pens, and small prizes for the top (3) winners!

Activity 2: World Café

Background-According to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997), parents are motivated to get involved in their child's education when they see this involvement as part of their role construction. This activity will assist parents in identifying ways to support their child as a student and opportunities for them to become more involved at home and at school.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will highlight the many ways parents can support their child's learning at school, at home and in the community
2. Parents will have the opportunity to register for upcoming events

Activity-Participants will hear from two teachers and two parent volunteers and the home school coordinator regarding the different ways parents may increase their participation. Begin the activity by allowing each guest speaker to introduce themselves. Next, participants will have the opportunity to participate in a world café conversation. Parents will select their first mini-presentation. They will



receive resources and may ask questions of the presenters. After 10 minutes ring the bell and the parents will move to another table. They will continue this process until they have visited all three tables. Debrief activity by asking parents to share examples of new information they received as a result of this activity. Closing, ask how this activity connects to increasing parental involvement at BPS.

Day 2 Activity 2

pens, chime, paper

Material -Timer, guest speakers,

Activity 1: Hopes and Dreams

Background-According to Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies (2007) in order for teachers to build respectful partnerships with parents, they must first believe it is necessary and that it can be done. They offered the following core belief; that all parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will highlight the many ways parents can support their child's learning at school, at home and in the community
2. Parents will have the opportunity to register for upcoming events

Activity-Participants will take a piece of paper and a pen from the middle of the table. They will fold the paper in half. On the top left side of the paper participants will write the question, **What are the hopes and dreams of my students?** Participants will have about 3 minutes to compile their list. Writing down what they believe parents would say about their children. Next they will

write, **What are the hopes and dreams of the children in my personal life?** Participants will have 3 minutes to compile this list. Once completed, participants will personally compare/reflect on the two compiled list. Facilitator will allow participants the opportunity to share their thoughts. Next, the facilitator will play the video of parents sharing their hopes and dreams for their children. Debrief activity by asking teachers to write a personal reflection



Day 3 Activity 1

after hearing from the parents. Closing, ask how this activity connects to increasing parental involvement at BPS.

Material -Timer, pens, chime, paper and video

Activity 2: Wagon Wheel

Background-Schools across the United States have been charged with increasing parental involvement. However, many have not received the pre-service training or professional development to build their capacity in this area. The Dual Capacity Framework was designed to support schools in implementing school-family partnerships. This activity will assist teachers with applying the Dual Capacity Framework in their effort to engage parents.

Goal/Connection

1. This activity will assist teachers in understanding and applying the (4) components needed to increase parental involvement when partnering with families: Capabilities (skills and knowledge) • Connections (networks) • Cognition (beliefs, values) • Confidence (self-efficacy) highlight the many ways parents can support their child’s learning at school, at home and in the community.

Activity- Prior to the session, participants will receive the Dual Capacity Framework. After reading the framework they will bring two artifacts to the session, one positive example from their school on one of the 4 components outlined in the framework, and one example of where their school could use support on one of the 4 components outlined in the article. All participants will stand during the activity. The participants will create an inner and outer circle with both groups looking at each other. Each person should be

Day 3 Activity 2

facing another person. Each group will have about 4 minutes to share their homework with their partner. Once completed the circle rotates so everyone is with another person and will discuss their homework. Closing, ask how this activity connects to increasing parental involvement at BPS.

Material -Timer, Dual Capacity article, chime



Partners in Learning Evaluation

1. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Place a check in the appropriate box.)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I learned new information about parental involvement				
b. I plan to use the information from this session in my work or personal life				
c. I am interested in continuing to support parental involvement at this school				

2. Rate the quality of this workshop:	Very Low Quality	Low Quality	Moderate Quality	High Quality	Exceptional Quality	N/A
a. Content of information						
b. Format of information						

3. Rate the usefulness of this workshop	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	N/A
a. How the information was provided						
b. The information that was provided						

4. What could we do to make this workshop better?

5. What topics should we offer at the next workshop?

6. Any additional comments

Thank You!

**Partners in Learning Evaluation
Follow-Up Survey**

Please answer the following questions

1. What new steps have you taken to engage parents since attending the workshop?

2. How many parents attended your parent-teacher conference?

3. What support do you need at this time to assist you in engaging parents?

Appendix B: School Staff Interview Protocol

Date _____

Brief Overview/Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to better understand your perceptions of parental involvement in your school. You are not required to answer the questions. However, by participating you will be providing valuable information about how your school can better support parental involvement. Please note, your identity and your comments will be kept confidential. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

- Introduce yourself
- Provide informed consent
- Explain recording device and note taking journal
- Ask if participant has any questions

1. Share school-based parental involvement activities available to families

(RQ2- What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?)

2. Do you perceive parent participation at this school to be a problem? If so, how so? If not, please explain why not?

(RQ1- What perceived factors contribute to low parental involvement?).

3. In what ways are you trying to increase parental involvement in your classroom or within the school?

(RQ2-What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?)

4. What are your perceptions about the design and purposes of the parental involvement activities?

(RQ3- What is the perceived potential solution to the low parental involvement problem and who should be involved in the solution?).

5. How have you encouraged parents to participate in their child's learning?

(RQ2-What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?)

6. Did you attend a parental involvement activity this year? If so, why did you attend? If not, please explain why?

(RQ1- What perceived factors contribute to low parental involvement?).

7. What do you think are the challenges/barriers for parents to attend parental involvement activities?

(RQ1- What perceived factors contribute to low parental involvement?).

8. What resources/supports do you think should be available to increase parent participation?

(RQ4- What resources are needed to implement and support the solution?).

9. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding solving the problem of low parental involvement?

(RQ4- What resources are needed to implement and support the solution?).

- Thank them for their participation
- Remind participants of opportunity to review the transcript
- Ask participant if they would like to see a copy of the results
- Record reactions about the interview in reflection journal

Appendix C: Parent Interview Protocol

Date_____

Parent ID Number ____

Brief Overview/Introduction

The purpose of this interview is to better understand parents' perceptions about their involvement in their child's education. You are not required to answer the questions. However, by participating you will be providing valuable information about how your child's school can better support parental involvement. Please note, your identity and your comments will be kept confidential. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

- Introduce your self
- Provide informed consent
- Explain recording device, note taking and parent i.d.
- Ask if participant has any questions

1. Do you see parent participation at this school to be a problem? If yes, what is the problem? If not, please explain why not?

(RQ1- What perceived factors contribute to low parental involvement?).

2. In what ways have you been involved in your child's school?

(RQ2- What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?).

3. What are your views about the design and purposes of the parental involvement activities?

(RQ2- What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?).

4. How are you encouraged to participate in your child's learning?

(RQ2- What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes?).

5. Did you attend a parental involvement activity this year? If so, why did you attend? If not, please explain why?

(RQ2- What strategies have been used to increase parental involvement and what were their outcomes).

6. If you attended an activity. Describe your experience at the activity? I would like for you to tell me about it as if it were a story, including as many details as possible about the activity, for example why you decided to attend this particular experience, what your experience was like, how you felt after attending the activity.

(RQ4- What resources are needed to implement and support the solution?).

7. What do you think are the challenges/barriers for parents not attending parental involvement activities?

(RQ1- What perceived factors contribute to low parental involvement?).

8. What resources/supports do you think should be available to increase parent participation at the school?

(RQ4-What resources are needed to implement and support the solution?).

9. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding how to make it easier and more beneficial for parents to participate?

(RQ3- What is the perceived potential solution to the low parental involvement problem and who should be involved in the solution?).

- Thank them for their participation

- Ask participant if they would like to see a copy of the results

- Record reactions about the interview in reflection journal

Appendix D: Staff/Parent Demographic Questionnaire

Parent ID Number: _____

Date: _____

1. Gender

 Female Male

2. Age: _____ years old

3. Highest level of education:

 Attended high school High school graduate Attended college Graduated college

4. Ethnicity

 Black or African American Hispanic or Latino White or European decent

5. Family size

 1-3 4-6 7-9 other

6. Number of children you have enrolled at the research site _____

Appendix E: Document Data Recording Form

Date of Event/Activity:	
Type of parental involvement activity:	
Number of parents of third grade students in attendance:	

<u>Six Types of Involvement:</u>	
Communication	
Parenting	
Volunteering	
Learning at Home	
Decision Making	
Collaborating with the Community	