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Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement at an Inner-City K-8 Center in the United States

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LaTonya H. Eaford

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2018

Abstract

Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement at an Inner-City K-8 Center in the United

States

by

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MA, Florida International University, 2011

BS, Florida International University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Educators and researchers have long considered parental involvement to be an integral factor in the success of students. However, parental involvement is low in many U.S. schools. Guided by Epstein's parental model, the purpose of this case study was to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center in the United States which has had low parental involvement over the last 5 years. The overarching research question concerned teacher perceptions and experiences regarding communicating with parents, encouraging learning at home, and parents volunteering. Data sources consisted of interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the 11 teacher participants. Data were transcribed, coded and analyzed for various themes. The findings indicated that teachers perceive parental involvement to be important when they communicate with parents, when parents encourage learning at home, and when parents volunteer. The themes that emerged from the data were (a) the importance of parental involvement, (b) reinforcing learning at home, (c) communication, (d) encouraging parental involvement at school, and (e) increasing parental involvement. Based on the findings, a policy recommendation was developed to enhance the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) currently in place at the study site. This project could lead to positive social change by assisting the staff at the K-8 center in developing a PTSA program that may encourage parents to become more involved. Their efforts may provide a model for other schools struggling with a lack of parental involvement.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, Omar, who encouraged me throughout this journey. On those days when I wanted to give up you constantly reminded me of why I couldn't and for that, I thank you!!

I also dedicate this to my son, Malachi. To this day, you have been my greatest blessing and inspiration. You're the reason I go as hard as I do. Mommy can only hope I inspire you as much as you've inspired me.

I dedicate this work to my mommy, Olivia. For you were a constant reminder that with God ALL things are possible. You were my first teacher, always leading by example. I'm eternally grateful for all the prayers and words of encouragement you provided along this journey. I love you always and forever!!

To my Young & my Henry family, I thank you for your constant support and encouragement along the way.

Mama Mack, I finally made it. Wish you were here but I know you're smiling down!! Love Always!!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Educational researchers have long viewed parental involvement as a contributing factor in student success. Parental involvement is a term used to describe a wide variety of parental practices, ranging from educational beliefs and academic achievement expectations to the multiple behaviors parents use to advance children's academic achievement and other educational outcomes (Seginer, as cited in Toren, 2013). It can encompass a variety of actions, such as assisting with homework, attending school functions, discussing academic expectations, and communicating with faculty and staff at their child's school (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). Children have the capacity to learn at an early age, and parents are usually their child's first teacher (Kurtulmus, 2016). As Cheatham and Ostrosky (2013) noted, parents have a great deal to contribute to their child's learning.

Various educational researchers have found evidence showing the significance and importance of parental involvement in children's education (Cheaung & Pomerantz, 2012; Huang & Mason, 2009; Lewis, Kim, & Bey, 2011; Patel & Stevens, 2010). According to Griffin and Galasi (2010), students' chance of achieving academically increases when there is collaboration between parents and school staff in the areas of academics, attendance, and truancy. Moreover, Hill and Tyson (2009) stated that one of the greatest impacts on a child's academic success stems from parents having high expectations for their child, which they express through encouragement, and from parents having school support.

Multiple studies have been conducted to explore the influence of parental involvement in the educational system (Apple, 2013; Crichlow, 2013; Kim & Page, 2013; Kurtulmus, 2016; Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). The notion that parental involvement influences educational success is of such importance that education leaders have required schools to develop and implement parent-involvement plans that can be used to help promote parental involvement (Kurtulmus, 2016). Also, over the years, U.S. lawmakers have encouraged parental involvement in federal, state, and local policies, some of which have made it mandatory for schools to include goals to promote parental involvement in their child's education (Smith, 2006). The Educate America Act, also known as Goals 2000, was signed into law in 1994 (Bennett, 2007). Goals 2000 legislation expressed the need for schools to promote partnerships with parents, which would enhance students' social, emotional, and academic growth (Bennett, 2007). The second federal effort that addressed parental involvement was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2001). One tenet of this legislation was that all school districts in the United States must have parent-involvement policies (NCLB, 2001). Even though various initiatives such as these support parental involvement, such involvement remains low in economically disadvantaged areas (Hamilton, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Teachers play a direct role they monitor parents as they participate and volunteer in the classroom and they play an indirect role when they motivate parents to participate in school activities and home learning activities with their children (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Teachers can be instrumental when it comes

to parental involvement. Therefore, collaboration between parents and teachers is a necessity (Epstein, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2010). When collaboration occurs between parents and teachers, parents have more direct access to their child's education and are able to stay informed about important developments.

The Local Problem

Parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center remained low throughout 2011-2015. Despite implementing various activities to involve parents, administrators and teachers noted that the rate of parental involvement continued to decline on a yearly basis. According to the K-8 Center School Improvement Plan, during the 2014-2015 school years, less than 26% of parents were involved in activities that occurred at the school (Miami Dade County Public Schools [MDCPS], 2015).

Various researchers have examined parental involvement, identifying the concept as parents and teachers working together to provide the opportunity for a child to be academically successful (see Allen, 2008; Columbo, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Sanders, 2008). However, less is known about teacher perceptions and experiences in regard to parental involvement and how parental involvement or lack thereof may influence teachers in motivating parents to be involved in their child's education, in general and specifically at the site of this study. According to Patterson, Webb, and Krudwig (2009), if teachers do not take it upon themselves to collaborate and encourage parents to become involved, then parents may remain disengaged in their child's education. Teacher perceptions of parents or their relationship with parents can play a vital role in the practices that teachers

use to encourage parental involvement in schools, according to researchers (Cole, & Aguilar, 2010).

Teachers have the job of ensuring that their students have the necessary skills to function outside of school (Miller, Kuykendall, & Thomas, 2013). To be more successful in doing so, it is important for teachers to seek and build relationships with families and communities (Jeynes, 2012). According to Robbins and Searby (2013), when parents positively perceive invitations for involvement from teachers they are very likely to increase their involvement in their child's education. Research has shown that when parents are involved it allows them the opportunity to assist teachers when it comes to reinforcement of skills learned in school, which could be beneficial to children's academic achievement (Kersey & Masterson, 2009). Thus, it is important for parents and teachers to have a positive relationship, as this relationship is beneficial not just to them but also to students.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Parental involvement has become a concern of the U.S. federal government as it pertains to education. NCLB emphasizes the significance of parental involvement in education. NCLB has raised awareness of the importance of increased parental involvement and the need for parents to be taught successful practices to increase their child's educational success (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The K-8 center is an inner city, public school serving over 400 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The school district and study site are located in the

southern portion of the United States. The student demographics for the center for the previous school year consisted of 91% Black (Non-Hispanic), 5% Hispanic, 0.7% multiracial, and 0.5% White (Non-Hispanic) students. Twenty-four percent of the K-8 center's students have limited English proficiency, and 98% receive reduced or free lunch (MDCPS, 2015).

As noted in the center's school improvement plan for the 2014-2015 school year, leaders of the Center had various parental involvement targets for this timeframe. The school administration and staff wanted to increase parent participation during the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) parent night and technology professional development sessions, from 25% during the 2014-2015 school year to 50% in the 2015-2016 school year (MDCPS, 2015). Furthermore, the school administration and staff wanted to increase parent attendance during the Parent Teacher Association/Parent Student Teacher Association (PTA/PTSA) and Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC) meetings, from 5% during the 2014-2015 school year to 10% for the following school year (MDCPS, 2015). Lastly, the school administration and staff wanted to increase parent attendance during Title 1 Orientation from 10% during the 2014-2015 school year to 20% for the 2015-2016 school year (MDCPS, 2015).

Every school year, randomly selected parents, students, and staff at the K-8 Center receive school climate surveys to complete. I used the school climate survey to gather information in regard to individuals' perceptions of schools in the district. Results are used by the district to help improve schools. Throughout the past 5 years, the return

rate for parents' surveys has been very low, ranging from 15.3% at its lowest in 2014 to 36.4% at its highest in 2011.

Based on the results of staff surveys over the past 5 years, it seems that many teachers agree that their ability to do the best possible at their school is limited by the lack of concern and/or support from parents (MDCPS, n.d.). Throughout the 2011-2015 school years, parent enrollment in the PTSA at the K-8 Center has declined from 38 parent memberships to 22 parent memberships. Meeting records from the PTSA for 2014-2015 school year revealed there were nine PTSA meetings and no more than 5% of parents attended each meeting.

Findings from my study may be used by administrators and teachers in developing a stronger parent and school partnership. Findings may also provide teachers with some effective strategies they can use to help increase parental involvement. Bennett (2007) explained how increasing parental involvement allows teachers more time to focus on the task of educating their students and went on to explain that when teachers initiate contact with parents, teachers learn more about students' needs. This knowledge, Bennett noted, can be beneficial to teachers in giving them some insight on how to better meet those needs.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Despite the fact that parental involvement has been mandated by the federal government, some schools throughout the United States still struggle in the area of parental involvement when it comes to implementing effective partnerships (Epstein et al., 2007). According to research, even when teachers are expected to directly

communicate with parents they seem to be unable to incorporate effective strategies to encourage and sustain relationships with parents that last throughout the school year (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Dunlop, 2013). A study conducted by Bartel (2010) revealed that even though parents were aware that it was their responsibility to be involved in their child's education less than half of those parents took the initiative to maintain contact with their child's teacher and/or attend school functions. According to Beck (2010), parental involvement is also a concern in other countries besides the United States. Beck conducted a study in Norway that revealed that Norwegian teachers were also concerned about low parental involvement. Findings of the study showed that only 67% of parents surveyed reported attendance at all parent meetings. For other school events, there was a marked reduction in parental attendance. Only 36% of parents reported attending events held by the school, and 42% stated they attended some of the time.

Gross and Pochop (2007) surveyed administrators in the United States from charter and alternative school settings and found that these administrators perceived low parental involvement to be a major issue in their schools. In a study conducted by Becker and Epstein (1984), 84% of teachers agreed that if parents volunteered time at school they usually made a greater subsequent effort to be involved with their children at home. When parents are involved in their child's education, teachers become more comfortable with communicating with parents which then leads to a positive relationship amongst the two (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement can be key elements in determining teachers' expectations of parents, and how teachers communicate with parents (Miller, Kuykendall, & Thomas, 2013). The results from this case study may contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address teacher perceptions of parental involvement. Using study findings, educators may be able to formulate ways to improve parental involvement which may result in improved student educational outcomes.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used operationally in this study and are listed in alphabetical order:

Collaborating: The process of working together with all stakeholders to assist with various school programs, activities, family resources, and learning (Epstein, 2005).

Communication: The ability to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and student progress (Epstein, 2005).

Decision-making: The establishment of parent leaders and representatives who are involved in school-based decisions (Epstein, 2005).

Learning at home: The involvement of teachers in providing parents with the necessary information and resources to assist students with their academics at home (Epstein, 2005).

Parenting: The process of assisting parents in establishing a home environment that contributes to learning (Epstein, 2005).

Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA): An organization comprised of parents, teachers, students, and administrators that provides a voice for all children. This organization serves as a relevant resource for all families, and advocates for the educational rights and well-being of every child (Cheung, 2008).

Parental involvement: The engagement by parents and/or guardians in ongoing communication in regards to student academic learning and other schools related activities which may include, but is not limited to, (a) parents supporting their child's academic endeavors, (b) parents actively being included in their child's instruction at school, and (c) parents partnering with their child's school and being involved in the decision-making process as it pertains to their child's school and academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Perceptions: The thoughts of an individual that influences the scope, level, or nature of a matter (Lawson, 2003).

Volunteering: The enlistment of help and support from individuals to assist not only with the school but also with the students (Epstein, 2005).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Patterson et al. (2009) explained that if teachers do not take it upon themselves to collaborate and encourage parents to become involved, then parents may remain disengaged in their child's education. In conducting this study, I

focused solely on the perceptions of teachers. Teachers' perceptions of parent involvement can be key elements in determining teachers' expectations of parents and how teachers communicate with parents (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Epstein, 2011; Jeynes, 2010; Patterson, Webb, & Krudwig, 2009; Semke & Sheridan, 2012;). Meaningful interaction between parents and teachers stems from teachers' approach when it comes to fostering relationships that are perceived as positive by parents (Patel & Stevens, 2010; Whitakers & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

Research gathered from this study may provide the school district with significant information in regard to how teachers perceive parental involvement. Information gathered from this study may be used by district and administration to form professional development sessions for teachers with information on various strategies, which can aid in increase parental involvement. Parents may be able to use the results to gain a better understanding of how influential their involvement is in their child's education. It is important for parents to be informed and involved so they can become partners with, and advocates in the school (Walker et al., 2010). Teachers may be able to use the results to establish new strategies to motivate parents to become more involved in their children's education. Many times, teachers are frustrated with the lack of parental involvement but rarely receive specific training in regard to strategies that can be used to effectively involvement parents (Robbins & Searby, 2013). Administrators may be able to use the results to develop activities and programs that will promote communication and build partnerships between parents, teachers, and the school.

Guiding/Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Parental involvement is imperative to the success of students (Richardson, 2010). However, even though the federal legislation NCLB mandates that parents maintain involvement in their child's education, many parents remain uninvolved (Toren, 2013). I sought to answer the following primary research question and three sub questions in the study:

Research Question: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?

These primary questions provided insight into teachers' perceptions and how they may or may not influence parental involvement. Being able to gain an understanding of teacher perceptions and attitudes in relation to parental involvement at this K-8 center may be beneficial to educational administrators when determining whether teachers may need professional learning communities or professional development courses on how to communicate with parents. Study findings may also assist administrators with helping teachers to form partnerships with parents and increasing their involvement.

Review of the Literature

The goal of this literature review is to provide an in-depth look at the available literature that is relevant to parental involvement, teachers' perception of parental involvement, and how this literature highlights the role it may play in the education of students. I reviewed literature that analyzed various definitions of parental involvement, along with barriers and benefits of parental involvement. Literature was also reviewed to examine teacher perceptions and various ways parent/teacher relationships may promote parental involvement. Databases were browsed in search of literature that focused on the influence parental involvement may have on academic achievement and student motivation.

Literature was gathered for this review using online professional journal references provided by Walden University Library, along with information from the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Google Scholar, and other notable professional books and resources. Databases were searched using keywords, which included terms such as *parental involvement*, *family involvement*, *parent/teacher partnerships*, *student achievement*, *academic achievement*, *student motivation*, *teacher perceptions*, *teacher attitudes*, and *parent perceptions*.

Conceptual Framework

This study was based on Epstein's parental model (Epstein, 2011). Epstein's framework includes six dimensions of parental involvement, which fosters parental involvement for not just parents but also teachers and students. This model provides a guide for all stakeholders on the importance of collaborating effectively to ensure that

student learning is impacted positively. It explains how schools can work with families and communities to assist them in becoming and staying informed and involved in their child's education. This framework requires stakeholders to work together diligently to build a strong school system that impacts each individual child's education. Epstein's framework has been used throughout many schools as a blueprint to increase parental involvement and assist educators in developing school and family partnerships programs (Epstein, 2005). Additionally, Epstein's model provides a guide for determining specific areas of involvement that may be lacking and establishing how those areas can be improved. Epstein's parental involvement model identifies six types of parental involvement: a) parenting, b) communicating, c) volunteering, d) learning at home, e) decision-making, and f) collaborating with the community. These categories are operationalized in terms of two dimensions: participation at home and participation at school (Park & Holloway, 2013).

The first type of involvement, *parenting*, involves helping parents establish a home environment that is conducive to learning. How parents support education at home can be impacted by their partnership with the school. Not all parents understand the importance of being involved in their child's education and those parents that do sometimes do not know the necessary steps to becoming involved. This is where the school steps in and takes on the task of providing information to parents on how they can become more involved with their child along with the school (Weaver, 2005). Families should be provided with information from the school regardless of whether they can attend workshops or meetings at school. Many times, those families that are not in

attendance are the ones who need the information most (Epstein, 2005). When parents and teachers join forces, and work together, rather than separately, it has a positive influence on their students' lives. Once parents have a clear understanding of the importance of their involvement then they may be motivated to become more involved.

The second type of involvement, *communicating*, involves parent-school initiated contact in regard to student progress along with school activities. Epstein (2005) defined communication as the ability to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and student progress. Schools must take the initiative to create a good communication system between the school and home (Epstein, 2011). Various forms of communication can be used such as daily or weekly progress report and parent teacher conferences to keep parents informed of their child's academic progress.

When communication between the home and school is effective it brings about positive results. Making certain students are aware of their academic progress can be beneficial to them. When parents have knowledge of policies, procedures, and programs within the school, it enables parents to provide additional support in the educational experience (Epstein, 2005). The goal of communication is to keep families informed about what is happening at school, keep them involved in programs, and keep them up to date on their child's academic progress (Epstein, 2011). Designing practices and activities with this goal in mind will help schools improve parental involvement levels.

The third type of involvement, *volunteering*, involves enlisting help and support from individuals to assist not only the school but the students also. Volunteering

encompasses variety of duties. It is less about being present the school and more about supporting the goals of the school and the learning process in any way possible (Epstein et al., 2009). In this area, it is important for schools to understand that time may be a barrier for parents. According to Wherry (2009), flexible timing is a key factor to increasing parental involvement. When scheduling conferences, programs, and other school-related functions it is important to be flexible with time to ensure parents who work or have other responsibilities have the chance to attend. Having effective volunteer programs can be a great asset to the school. Volunteers may assist with a variety of activities such as assemblies, sporting events, performances, awards ceremonies, and other student activities (Epstein et al., 2009). Volunteers may also take the time to assist teachers and students in the classroom. When volunteers assist in the classroom, the adult-child ratio increases which allows teachers to put forth more one-on-one attention with students. Epstein et al. (2009) stated educators tend to involve families in a variety of ways when parents take the initiative to become more involved.

The fourth type of involvement, *learning at home*, involves teachers providing parents with the necessary information and resources to ensure that students are not just learning in the classroom but reinforcing what has been learned during the day at home, as well. Resources may consist of interactive activities shared with parents at home linking schoolwork to real life (Epstein, 2011). At home, learning can yield positive results for all stakeholders, including students, when they are designed efficiently and implemented. Often parents want to assist their children with home learning but are unclear on how to go about doing so. The school can assist with this matter by providing

parents with information and strategies that can be used to assist students with home learning. It is imperative that parents are aware of homework policies and procedures. When parents are aware it can increase the completion of their child's homework assignments. The more parents support their child's educational experience; children may view their parent as an advocate, resulting in an increase of self-confidence in personal ability and attitude toward school (Epstein, 2005).

The fifth type of involvement, *decision-making*, involves establishing parent leaders and representatives to be involved in school-based decisions. Including parents in school decision-making and planning fosters an environment of collaboration and success for all students and inspires parents to initiate school-related discussions at home. Epstein (2005) argued that decision-making involvement surpasses the school and extends into the district level, as well. The academic success of students is derived from all stakeholders collaborating and working together to improve education. Decision-making should include all stakeholders that a shared vision and goals. The voices of families can be very instrumental in the decision-making process. Families can help in a variety of ways such as helping to develop mission statements, assisting with designing, reviewing, and improving school policies, and helping to create policies, which positively affect students and families (Epstein, 2005).

Collaborating with community is the sixth type of involvement, which entails enlisting resources from the community to assist with various school programs, activities, family resources, and student learning. Epstein (2005) defined community as those concerned about the quality of education regardless of whether they have children

attending the school. Involving all stakeholders is necessary for the academic success of the school and students (Epstein, 2011). When schools employ this aspect of parental involvement, they can create a community of learning and academic achievement. When students participate in activities with the community, in which they live, they tend to gain self-confidence and ownership of their community (Epstein et al., 2009).

“The positive aspects of Epstein's Model are that it encompasses the traditional definitions of parental involvement and recognizes the role of parents in the home, including supporting educational efforts and providing an environment where educational activities are supported and encouraged” (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 137). Epstein believed that schools could create a mutual atmosphere of respect that supports the development of children by reaching out to parents because they are an intricate part of the school (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein’s (2005) six types of involvement emphasized that when parents and schools collaborate and work together students achieve academically. Various practices of partnerships and challenges are incorporated in each type of involvement. This project study will utilize Epstein’s model to gauge perceptions of teachers concerning parental involvement as it relates to communicating with parents, assisting with learning at home, and encouraging parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center. This model can encourage teachers to motivate parents to cooperate, which is an important step in establishing a meaningful connection between the parents and the school (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012). This study will solely focus on the perceptions of teachers. Teachers’ perceptions of parents can be key elements to determine teachers’ expectations of parents and how teachers communicate with parents. The results from

this case study could contribute to the body of knowledge needed to establish ways to improve parental involvement.

Defining Parental Involvement

Parental involvement varies in how it is both defined and perceived. The definition of parental involvement covers aspects of involvement, home-school connections, parent engagement, and partnership (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) defines parental involvement as

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic, learning and other school activities including: assisting their child's learning, being actively involved in their child's education, work together with their child's school, and carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA" Section 9101(32) (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, n.d.).

Adams, Womack, Shatzer, and Calderella (2010) defined parental involvement as all the systematic and important parent-school communications (two-way) regarding the school activities, as well as students' academic performance. Parental involvement has also been defined as parent's interactions with their child, and their child's school to encourage student achievement (Hill et al., 2004). An additional definition describes parental involvement as the parents as teacher model, where the parents are assigned the task of being their child's teacher when they are at home (Daniel-White, 2002). Epstein (2011) defined parental involvement as occurring when parents are engaged in home learning, learning activities at school along with other school-related events. Jaynes

(2010) stressed the importance of ensuring that any definition of parental involvement embraces the intricate nature of the construct and should consider the activities of parents and their children, both in and out of the classroom. A study was even conducted that looked at how teachers defined parental involvement throughout the United States and Israel. The findings indicated that teachers in both countries mainly define parents' involvement through voluntarism, seem to be in favor of parents' involvement, and tend to be empowered by it (Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012). Despite the various definitions of parental involvement throughout the years, the overall meaning describes parents and/or guardians engaging in ongoing, two-way, communication involving student academic learning and other schools related activities (US Department of Education, 2007).

Parental Involvement Barriers

Even though parental involvement has been widely recognized as an important dimension of education there are a variety of barriers that hinder the process (Cobb, 2014). Numerous barriers can affect parental involvement, not only in the school, but also in home. Research has shown that there are some barriers that teachers inadvertently create that are counterproductive to building partnerships and teachers may be involved in building those barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, Laroque, 2013, Mesiridze, 2010). Identifying those barriers may be beneficial to schools when it comes to implementing programs to involve parents. Harris and Goodall (2008) conducted a qualitative case study where they examined various barriers to parental involvement. During the study, the following barriers were identified: lack of time, work commitment, childcare issues, and demands on the parents' time and work restrictions. Results from the study reported

that many social and economic factors create barriers that prevent parents from being as involved in their child's education as they would like to be.

Yangee (2009) conducted a study on school obstacles that hinder parental involvement in their child education. Yangee (2009) used the findings from this study to create categories of school barriers she found impeded parental involvement in the school setting. The barriers to parental involvement identified by Yangee (2009) were teacher's perceptions and lack of self-efficacy, school climate, lack of communication and/or communication barriers, and insufficient school leadership. Although the findings did not show causal relationship between each barrier and parental involvement in schools, they did suggest an association between the barriers and parents lack of active involvement in their child's school. Additional research studies on barriers that hinder parental involvement have found that demanding job hours, transportation issues, and lack of resources affect parental involvement, especially among lower income families (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Mapp, 2003). Findings from several research studies have revealed similar barriers with low levels of parental involvement as negative first impressions, lack of communication, past experiences, history of discrimination, parents lack of self-confidence, differing expectations and understanding the roles (Antunez, 2000; Garcia, 2004; Graue & Bown, 2003; Nancy & Gilbert, 2009; Webber & Wilson, 2012).

The Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement benefits not only students but can benefit parents as well. According to Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011), when parents are involved they become better informed about teachers' objectives and the needs of their children.

Increased parental involvement has also been associated with parents developing higher educational aspirations for their children. Patrikakou and Weissberg (2007) argued that parental involvement benefits not only the child but the parent as well. Some parents even begin to seek additional education because of their involvement in their child's education (Pena, 2001). While parents may be under the impression that being involved in their child's education is only beneficial to the child, they may also discover that their involvement can be just as beneficial to them as well.

Educational research has shown when parents attend parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and become involved in school related activities students tend to achieve higher test scores regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic background, or educational background of the parents (Epstein, 2005; Huang & Mason, 2008). Studies on parental involvement have shown that when parents are involved in their child's education there is an increase in their academic achievement. Ferrera (2009) went on to establish various ways in which both parents and students benefit from parental involvement such as increased academic performance, sense of accomplishment and knowledge of student's curriculum along with better student classroom behavior, improved school attendance and communication between parents and children, lower dropout rates, and greater achievement motivation to do well in school.

Furthermore, parents' involvement with their children appears to have a direct connection between failure and success for a child (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Active involvement from parents benefits the child not only when they are in school but at home as well. Research continues to suggest that when parents are involved in school, children

value their time in school, and exert more effort to make higher grades (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2010; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Smith, 2005). According to Grace, Jethro, and Aina (2012), when schools and families work together to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school but also throughout life. When children can see, their parents interact with their teachers on a regular basis it helps them to see how their school life and home life are intertwined: parental involvement with school can help parents actively participate with their child's academic development.

The Importance of Parent-Teacher Relationships

It is important that teachers understand the impact they have when it comes to getting parents involved. Educational researchers have suggested that parental partnerships in support of one another and an efficacious relationship with teachers and administrators can improve their child's academic achievement (Baartman, 2009; Epstein, 2005; Map et al., 2007; & Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009). Rodger (2011) stated that real partnership comes when the teacher and parent recognize that both has a role, one that is vital yet different and when both parties come together they can accomplish so much more. According to Map et al. (2007), when all stakeholders work together and share the responsibility of educating children they are then more likely to provide enhanced programs and more opportunities for students. Effective parental involvement in education requires a partnership between parents, teachers, students, and administrators (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Epstein et al. (2009) determined that regular, meaningful interaction among families and schools encourage students to

realize the importance of school, working hard, and staying focused and determined to continue their education.

Educational research conducted by Padak and Rasinki (2012) examined the impact of increasing parental involvement through school partnerships. The authors revealed that effective communication between the family and school led to positive relationships and easier resolution of problems. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), the key to creating effective parent-teacher relationships is to encourage parents to build supportive home environments, communicate on a consistent basis with teachers to develop shared goals, and participate in school activities. It takes a lot of effort to build effective partnerships that can benefit both parties through reflective dialogue, development of shared goals, and the increase of student knowledge (Ferrera, 2009). Building partnerships allow parents to stay attentive to how their child is progressing academically and allows parents to be aware of activities or changes that may occur at the school. A study conducted by Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) examined the connection between schools, parents, and looked at how it influenced parent's involvement. Results showed that parent's perceptions of school operations and teacher motivation had the largest effect on parent's role and involvement with their child's school.

Developing a positive parent-teacher relationship can be successful when teachers initiate parental involvement (Brooks, 2006; Lewis, Kim, & Bey, 2010). Teachers can encourage parent communication, suggest ideas to parents on how they can be more involved or promote community activities that may be relevant to student learning

(Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon, & Semke, 2012). According to research, establishing a relationship with parents is linked to host of outcomes for students such as higher grades, academic achievement, increased student attendance, retention, enhanced motivation, and self-esteem (Chen & Gregory, 2010; Epstein et al., 2009; Fan & Williams, 2010; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Jeynes, 2010; Marzano, 2003; McCoach et al., 2010; Sirvani, 2007; Wolters, 2012). Lazar and Slostad (1999) conducted a study that looked at the perspectives of three teachers and how they perceived initiating parental involvement. The teachers from the study viewed parents as important resources for insights and made certain that parents were aware of this by eagerly welcoming their involvement. According to Lazar and Slostad (2009), involving parents is largely dependent on teachers' initiative and experience. Little attention has been given to professional development in connection to fostering parental involvement. It is recommended that local school districts offer courses and workshops for teachers to learn various techniques on getting parents involved (Lazar & Slostad, 2009). Overall, parent-school collaboration in general along with parental involvement and participation are effective tools for facilitating and creating a holistic learning environment and helping children develop personally and most important academically (Scottie, Dubus. & Sossou, 2013).

Parental Involvement: Influence on Student Achievement

According to Semke and Sheridan (2012), parental involvement is positively related to a significant amount of student success. Young, Austin, and Growe (2013) argued that parental involvement boost a child's perceived level of competence and helps to internalize the value of an education and their academic performance. Research by

Chen and Gregory (2010) investigated student's perceptions of parental involvement and how it affected their academic, behavior, and social outcome. The authors measured three areas of parental involvement: participation, motivation, and expectations for academics and achievement. The study revealed that students of parents who had high expectations in regard to academics and achievement had high grade point averages and were more engaged academically. In a similar study, Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2010) examined the social supports in the lives of African American adolescents that influence strong academic achievement. The authors examined 206 African-American students to identify if there was a relationship between school support and academic expectations. The study revealed that high levels of school support and parental involvement facilitated the development of high academic expectations.

Xu, Kushner-Benson, Mudrey-Camino, and Steiner (2010) explored the relationship between parental involvement, self-regulated learning, and reading achievement. The data of fifth grade students from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study was analyzed to identify dimensions of parental involvement that were likely to foster self-regulated learning in the students. Parental education expectations were found to have had the strongest effect on self-regulated learning. Findings also suggested that self-regulated learning mediates the relationship between parental involvement and reading achievement. In another study, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) found that active participation of parents in their child's education, especially when parents voiced their educational goals for their children during parent-teacher or parent-student conferences, was shown to increase students' academic success.

Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) conducted similar studies where they investigated the influence of math-based family involvement activities and how they affected student performance. The study determined that the implementation of family activities had a positive effect on student achievement (Epstein et al., 2011). Therefore, when parents are involved in their child's education and their child knows what is expected of them, academically, they are more likely to be more academically engaged due to their parent's involvement, which in turn leads to them succeeding academically.

Literature that addresses parent involvement at home and out of school and how these interactions affect students' performance at school, has shown an additional relationship between parental involvement and achievement (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010; Vandermaas-Peeler, Nelson, & Bumpass, 2009). Research conducted by Altschul (2012) examined six forms of parental involvement in education to determine which form had the strongest relationship upon youth academic outcomes. Findings showed that the positive effect of parental involvement among Mexican-American parents occurred through parental involvement within the home. Denton and West (2002) conducted an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study and found that when parents perform activities with their children outside of the normal school related activities these students tend to show greater academic achievement in the areas of reading and mathematics. Furthermore, even with parental involvement from a teacher's perspective the more involved they are the more beneficial it is to teachers as well. According to a study conducted by (Beck, 2010), 82% of teachers wished that their student's parents were actively involved in their child's education. In sum, parental involvement

influences academic achievement not just when parents are involved at school but also when they are involved at home.

McCoach et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study in which they analyzed various factors, such as school demographics and background variables that affect student achievement. Research was conducted in both overachieving and underachieving schools. Parents, teachers, and administrators were surveyed throughout the schools. The study found that parental involvement was a key variable that helped to increase student achievement. In a similar study, Houtenville and Conway (2008) investigated the effects of parental involvement on student achievement. Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study results suggested that parental involvement has a positive effect on student achievement that is large relative to the effect of school resources and is not captured by family background variables. When teachers have positive perceptions of parents they are more likely to display positive attitude towards parents, their children, and the needs of both seem to promote an increase in parental involvement that in turns leads to an increase in student achievement (Kim et al., 2012). Jeynes (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to determine if parental involvement influenced the educational outcomes of urban secondary students. Results showed that parental involvement is significant for secondary school students.

In a quantitative study conducted by Topor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2010), researchers tested two variables to determine how parental involvement is related to a child's academic achievement. Findings from the study showed that increased parental involvement was significantly related to increased academic achievement based on how

students scored on a standardized achievement test and the teacher observation of the child's academic performance in the classroom.

Sirvani (2007) tested the influence of parental involvement on student achievement in mathematics. The researchers formed two groups, a control group and experimental group, from students that were in Algebra I classes. Communication between teachers and parents of students in the experimental group occurred daily. Parents were informed of their child's academic progress, homework submittal, and test grades, while the control group received no treatment. Results showed that students in the experimental group outperformed students in the control group. This shows that when parents are involved in their child's education, and there is ongoing communication between parents and teachers then the students tend to perform better academically in comparison to students whose parents are not involved. Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating (2009) conducted a comparable study in which they examined the association between parents' educational involvement and how it affects their child's academic achievement. Findings from the research revealed that when parents were more involved in their child's education and communicated with other stakeholders their child excelled in academics in comparison to those students whose parents were not involved in their education. A study conducted by Bartel (2009) examined teacher perceptions of parental involvement and findings from the study revealed that teachers themselves believed that their behavior promoted an increase in parental involvement, which in turn lead to an increase in student achievement.

Emanique and Davis (2009) further investigated the influence of parental involvement; they conducted a quantitative study to determine if parental involvement is associated with positive gains in African-American boys starting from an early age. Findings from the study showed that affluent African-American parents who participated in their child's education from kindergarten continued their involvement throughout high school. Their study also showed an association between levels of parent involvement and academic gains in reading and mathematics. In a similar study, Jeynes (2012) examined the relationship between various parental involvement programs and student achievement of students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Results from the study showed a significant relationship between the parental involvement programs and academic achievement for students in all grade levels. Nevertheless, findings from the above-mentioned studies suggest that with active parental engagement in the school to help motivate students' learning, students showed an increase in academic achievement. Giving the positive influence parental involvement has on children it is equally important for teachers to communicate effectively with parents and keep them engaged in their children's education.

Parental Involvement: Influence on Student Motivation

Multiple sources have shown the influence of parental involvement and the affect it has on student motivation. According to Pallor (2011), the most accurate predictor of a child's academic achievement is the extent to which the child's family creates an environment where learning is encouraged, expectations are communicated, and parents are involved in the school. Research conducted by Fan and Williams (2010) looked into

how parental involvement influenced the motivation of tenth grade students. A result from the study showed that parent's educational aspirations and school-initiated contact by teachers has a strong positive effect on student motivation. Additionally, parental involvement was positively related to student's academic self-efficacy in English and mathematics. A later study conducted by Fan, Williams, and Wolters (2012) studied how different dimensions of parental involvement linked to various constructs of school motivation across ethnic groups. The researchers analyzed four ethnic groups: Caucasian, African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic. Results showed that parental aspiration for children's education, within all ethnic groups, was positively related to student's school motivational constructs.

Quilliams and Beran (2009) studied individual and family factors that give reason as to why children are at risk for academic failure. The authors examined students' academic motivation, self-concept, and parental involvement. They found that students with little to no parental involvement tend to exhibit low sense of competence and motivation towards learning and low achievement in academics. Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) explored the benefits of parent-oriented motivation on their child's motivation and achievement in school. Findings showed that the more parents were involved in their child's education the more motivated their child was to achieve academically. Another study conducted by Cheung and Pomerantz (2011) examined parental involvement in children's learning in the United States and China. Findings showed that parents' heightened involvement predicted children's enhanced engagement and achievement similarly in the United States and China.

Shumow, Lyutykh, and Schmidt (2011) examined predictors and outcomes of parental involvement with high school students in science. The associations between parental involvement in both home and school and academic outcomes were tested. Results from the study revealed that parental involvement in the home had the greatest influence on the students' efficacy, interest in science, and motivational states in science class. A similar research study was conducted by Simons-Morton and Chen (2009) who assessed the relationship of parental involvement and student engagement of students in grades sixth through ninth. Findings from the study suggested that authoritative parenting practices might foster school motivation directly.

In conclusion, as indicated by means of the current literature review, parental involvement continues to show positive relation with respect to student achievement and student motivation. Existing literature on parental involvement indicates that children benefit from consistent involvement from their parents in their education. As revealed by the review of literature, parental involvement benefits not just the students but all stakeholders involved in the educational process including teachers as well as the parents. The literature review exposed the need for more studies that focus on relational intervention (i.e., parent/teacher relationship) for increasing and improving parental involvement (Sheridan et al., 2012; Mapp, 2012). Further research on teacher perceptions of parental involvement might provide cleared insight into understanding what impact teachers' perceptions may have when it comes to hindering or improving parental involvement.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of their experiences of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. Information gathered from teachers during this study may be beneficial when it comes to developing initiatives and parental involvement programs and activities. By investigating teacher perceptions with parental involvement, the necessary framework would be provided for the creation of parental involvement programs, which could focus on the importance of collaboration between all stakeholders, and most importantly, the parents and the school. However, researchers also indicate that parental involvement initiatives that are planned and implemented by the school, not those that are externally imposed, are more effective (Morgan, 2009; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Therefore, it is important that the teachers examine their practices and use the actual results of their internal examinations to guide the planning and implementation of parental involvement programs.

Research from this study might positively impact to not only the K-8 Center but also the school district. Implications for project directions based on the projected findings may include a policy recommendation for the study site. Teachers' perceptions of their experiences may be used to support and engage parental involvement and assist in building their confidence and ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with parents. Administrators can also come up with a plan which involves collaboration between parents, students, and teachers so they may become more involved and remain abreast as to what is transpiring in the school.

Summary

The research study focused on exploring teacher perceptions and experiences about parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. This section includes an introduction of parental involvement and its importance in the field of education. The problem was explained along with information on how it has influenced the local section. This section included an examination of research literature related to parental involvement along with the conceptual framework of this study. The research methodology that was used in this project study is discussed in section two. The research design and approach will be presented along with a description of the study's setting, sample, and data information. In section three, the project will be introduced and a review of literature that supports the project will be presented. Lastly, in section four, the results of the project will be presented and discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Parental involvement provides an essential opportunity for schools to develop effective partnerships between home and school. Researchers have found that parents' educational involvement leads to an increase in student success, an increase in parent-teacher relationships, and an improved school climate (Auerbach, 2009; Frances, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Information in this section focuses on the research design and approach that were used in this study. Additionally, I provide information regarding the population, sample, data instrumentation, and data collection and analysis procedures I used.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

In conducting my investigation, I used a qualitative case study research design. This type of research design can be used to understand, explain, and describe the perspectives of those who have experiences with a research topic (Yin, 2013). Creswell (2007) explained that a researcher conducting a case study evaluates a single issue by working with several individuals in a bounded setting. This qualitative approach allowed me to gather detailed understandings of teacher participants' experiences with parental involvement. Through use of semi structured interviews and questionnaires, I identified teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center.

Justification of Chosen Design

I could have used other qualitative approaches for this research study. For example, I considered a phenomenological approach. According to Merriam (2009), a phenomenological study is used to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences. However, in obtaining information for a case study, researchers draw from participants' first hand experiences, which allows for a clearer and more concrete understanding of the study phenomenon (see Merriam, 2009). An alternative qualitative approach would have been the ethnography approach, which is used when a researcher studies a cultural group by observing and collecting data for a prolonged period (Creswell, 2012). Due to time constraints needed to study a culture in its natural habitat and the need for a larger team of researchers, I opted not use an ethnographic approach. Another qualitative approach that I rejected was the narrative approach, which requires studying the lives of the participants involved in the study (Merriam, 2009). Using a narrative approach, the researcher retells the participants' individual stories (Merriam, 2009), which may not answer specific questions in regard to parental involvement for the data needed pertaining to this study. Lastly, the grounded approach, which is used not only to seek out and understand something but also to develop a theory about the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009) was excluded.

To facilitate the research, I opted against the use of a quantitative research design. Creswell (2012) explained that the use of quantitative research describes a research problem through a description of trends or the need for an explanation of the relationship among variables. Quantitative researchers ask *how much* questions and provide statistical

aspects of the research phenomenon, while qualitative researchers ask *why*, *what*, and *how* questions related to the case in a more explanatory fashion (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For this study, I was interested in exploring participants' perceptions and experiences, which made a qualitative case study research design the better choice.

Participants

This study took place at an inner-city K-8 center located within the southern part of the United States. The selected K-8 center serves students in prekindergarten through eighth grade. The student demographics consist of 91% Black (Non-Hispanic), 5% Hispanic, 0.7% multiracial, and 0.5% White (Non-Hispanic) students (MDCPS, n.d.). Twenty-four percent of the K-8 Center students have limited English proficiency, and 98% receive reduced or free lunch (MDCPS, n.d.).

According to the School Improvement Plan (2015), there were 35 classroom teachers at the K-8 Center. Three (9%) were first-year teachers, eight (25%) had 1-5 years of teaching experience, 26 (74%) had 6-14 years of teaching experience, and 3 (9%) had 15 years or more of teaching experience (MDCPS, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. According to Merriam (2009) when conducting a qualitative case study, the sample should be purposeful and small, which allows the researcher to spend a great amount of time gathering data from the participants. The sampling technique used was purposeful sampling. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) stated that purposeful sampling is used when the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight about a phenomenon. According to Lodico et

al. (2010), a researcher, therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned. Use of purposeful sampling allowed me to fully focus on the teachers, which enhancing my understanding of their perceptions in regard to parental involvement. The criteria for participation in this case study were that (a) participants must have been employed at the study site and (b) participants must have had 3 or more years of teaching experience at the study site. The sample for this study consisted of 11 teachers: four primary teachers, three intermediate teachers, and four middle school teachers. Participants were selected based on their teaching experience and the length of time they had been employed at the K-8 Center.

I chose this setting for this study because the school is an inner-city K-8 center where parental involvement has been low and because the administration and staff wanted to increase the percentage of parents involved at the K-8 Center. Potential participants received a letter notifying them of the purpose of the study, their expectations, and rights, contact information, and a consent form for participation. Participants signed and returned the consent form prior to participating in the research study.

Participant Rights

Prior to conducting my research, I secured approval to conduct research from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once I received approval from the IRB, I then requested consent to conduct research from the school district. After permission was granted, I contacted potential participants via e-mail and invited to participate in the research study. I informed all participants of the purpose and

procedures of the research study and assured them of confidentiality. All participants received a written consent form, which they completed prior to participating in the study. I made certain participants were aware through language in the consent form of their right to participate and/or withdraw at any time throughout the study. Each participant had the opportunity to ask any questions at any time during the research process. Data collected from the research study were transcribed and maintained on a password-protected computer in my home. Data will remain on the device throughout the duration of the study for 5 years following the conclusion of the study.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

Being that I am a teacher in the school district that may have increased the comfort level of research participants. Merriam (2009) stated that it is important for researchers to identify their biases and examine how they might shape the data collection and affect the analysis of the data. I practiced bracketing, which allowed me to set aside my own personal beliefs and preconceptions so that I could view the data through a more objective lens (Moustakas, 1994). Participants were reminded that their experiences and perceptions were valuable, and important means of improving current practices that affect the K-8 Center and the district. Once data was collected and analyzed, participants were provided with a transcript and allowed the opportunity to clarify any information they believed was not accurately transcribed in their transcripts. Creswell (2003) stated this form of member checking would help to ensure the validity of the research study.

Data Collection

This data collection subsection summarizes the various methods that were used to gather data for this project study. The three methods used to gather data were individual face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data. The data collection methods for the interviews and questionnaires are provided below. The unobtrusive data is also explained and discussed in this section.

The following research question and three sub questions guided the study:

Research Question: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?

Individual Interviews

A case study could involve in-depth interviews that may play a central role in data collection (Creswell, 2012). Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with seven participants. These participants were chosen based on their grade levels and years of experience teaching at the study site. The interview consisted open-ended questions that addressed (a) participants' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement (b) participants' experiences with communicating with parents (c) participants' experiences

with encouraging learning at home and (d) strategies used to promote parental involvement. Moustakas (1994) advised that when conducting interviews to prepare open-ended questions prior to the interviews occurring; however, interview questions may be modified as the interview progresses and as the participant details their experiences. Hour-long interviews were scheduled with each participant based on a time that was most convenient for them.

Interviews were conducted at a private mutual location that was convenient for each participant. Prior to the interview, all participants were advised of the purpose of the study and the participants' consent form was reviewed with them. An interview protocol was used to assist in guiding the interview process and helped to ensure consistency among the interview sessions. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder to capture responses, and then transcribed for analysis following each interview. Member checking was used following the interviews to assist with confirming the study is reliable. Member checking aids researchers to produce a study that is valid and reliable (Hatch, 2002).

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the middle school and special education teachers. Initially six participants received an email with a link to complete the questionnaire. Regrettably, four participants completed the questionnaires in the allotted period. This questionnaire contained information concerning teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents, assisting with learning at home, and encouraging parental involvement at the K-8 Center. According to Yin (2013),

questionnaires are effective when it comes to gathering rapid, dependable, and valid qualitative data. Participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire using a URL link that directed them to Survey Monkey. The use of a questionnaire allowed participants the chance to answer multiple open-ended questions regarding their perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. The URL link was open for a three-week period to allow participants to complete the questionnaire. Being that completion of the questionnaire was anonymous, all participants received an email reminder when there was 48 hours remaining to complete the questionnaire. Creswell (2003) stated the importance of using multiple methods of data collection in qualitative research that are interactive and humanistic. The results of the questionnaires allowed me the opportunity to assemble reliable data on the perceptions of teachers regarding parental involvement at the K-8 Center.

Unobtrusive Data

Unobtrusive data for this study consisted of PTSA sign-in logs, meeting minutes, and open house attendance logs. According to Hatch (2002), unobtrusive data gives insight into the social phenomenon under investigation without interfering with the enactment of that social phenomenon. Unobtrusive data was reviewed over a 1-week period at the K-8 Center. All logs and meeting minutes that were available for the current and previous school year were reviewed. The unobtrusive data was used to verify attendance during PTSA meetings and other school activities. The attendance total varied with each event, but overall, they were consistent in showing that less than 20% of

parents attended various school related activities. The P.T.S.A. held only three P.T.S.A. meetings during the entire school year.

Being able to gain an understanding of teacher perceptions and attitudes in relation to parental involvement at this K-8 Center can be beneficial to administrators and leadership when it comes to developing and implementing programs that will foster communication and build partnerships between the parents and school. The involvement of parents is a multidimensional task that requires an outreach by school officials, avenues for engaging with school, and a concerted effort to understand the family's needs, concerns, and strengths (Scottie, Dubus, & Sossou, 2013).

Procedures for Gaining Access

Prior to research being conducted, I secured approval to conduct research from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once I received approval from the IRB, I then requested consent to conduct research from the school district. Once the district granted approval, I contacted the principal of the proposed study site and informed them of the study and the goal of the study. Following approval from the study site, an email invitation was sent to all classrooms teachers. The teachers were informed of the purpose and goal of the study and then were asked to participate in the study if they had more than three years' experience teaching at the current study site. The first four primary teachers, three intermediate teachers, and four middle school teachers to respond to the email invitation were chosen to participate in the study. All participants had the opportunity to ask any questions or withdraw from the study at any time during the research process. All data collected from the research study was copied to a separate

hard drive and maintained on a password protected computer in my home. This data will remain on the device throughout the duration of the study and up to five years following the conclusion of the study.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in the data collection process is multifaceted and important (Smart & Paulsen, 2011). According to Smart and Paulsen (2011), the obligation of the researcher is to make certain the clarity of the research and data collection is comprehensible. My role as the researcher is significant to this project study. I have worked in the same school district as the study site for over 10 years. My focus was to set aside all prejudgments to maintain an unbiased picture of the teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center. I set aside my biases during all stages of the data collection and analysis process by remaining neutral when interpreting responses. I made certain to take all measures to ensure that I reduced bias by not leading participants' answers or asking for more details if participants respond with vague answers. Prior to the data collection process, careful thought and consideration was taken in regard to my personal feelings about the study. Husserl (1931) acknowledged the difficulty of setting aside all previous thoughts or biases. During the research study, I kept my thoughts recorded in a personal journal where I recorded my preconceptions for increasing self-awareness and limiting the influence of my subjectivity on the data itself (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014). I also partook in memoing which occurred throughout the data collection process and entailed the researcher taking notes, which may include personal observations and/or theoretical

or analytical hunches (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly, & Renshall, 2013). My main objective was to concentrate on the data to ensure production of a sufficient study that educational leaders may use to influence teachers' ability to motivate parents to be involved in their children's education.

Data Analysis

This study collected and analyzed data from three sources: interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data. According to Hatch (2002), data analysis is a logical search for meaning, a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to other individuals. The data analysis process included the following steps:

1. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed
2. Member checking of all transcripts
3. Transcripts were reviewed for patterns
4. Transcripts were reviewed for themes
5. Conducted open coding using NVivo

Data from this study provided insight into teachers' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement at the K-8 Center.

Interviews, Questionnaires, and Unobtrusive Data

Seven teachers participated in individual face-to-face interviews, and four teachers completed online questionnaires. All individual interviews were conducted at a mutual location that was convenient for each participant. The individual interviews lasted approximately 35 to 45 minutes. Numerous topics on parental involvement were

discussed and the participants answered with substantial detail. All face to face interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed. All transcriptions consisted of verbatim accounts from each of the participant's interview. Following the transcription of the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to check their transcripts for accuracy. Once the participants reviewed their transcripts and gave approval, I read the interviews and questionnaire responses multiple times to gain an understanding of the data. According to Hatch (2002), it is important to read all data analysis, and it must begin with a keen sense of the study. Once I read the transcripts, I then re-read them to begin coding the interviews and questionnaires. Coding data is the categorizing and classification of data per subjects, themes, and pertinence of the research study (Stake, 2010). As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005), I addressed the research questions based on responses from the data. Coding is used to mark interview text so that the researcher can readily retrieve information and examine all the data units that refer to the same subject across all interviews. The data were and categorized based upon the participants' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. NVivo was used to store, manage, organize and code data from the individual interviews and questionnaire responses. Open and axial coding were used to analyze the data. Using NVivo, I coded each data set into nodes. The NVivo program organizes data into a file folder system through the use of main folders and subfolders. I created folders for each interview question and questionnaire. Themes that emerged from the responses were organized into a subfolder. The use of the folders in NVivo made it easier to code responses to specific questions without having to toggle between various documents. By

having the responses organized by question, five themes emerged. The themes were (a) the importance of parental involvement, (b) reinforcing learning at home, (c) lack of communication, (d) encouraging parents to volunteer, and (e) increasing parental involvement. Data was managed using a private computer storage and hard copy files will be stored at my home. For the unobtrusive data, PTSA attendance logs and meeting minutes and open house attendance logs were reviewed. These documents were analyzed at the K-8 Center in the Community Involvement Specialist office to gain insight on parental involvement at the K-8 Center based on parent's attendance at the above-mentioned events.

Findings

Findings for this project study were gathered from interview responses, questionnaire responses, and unobtrusive data during a 6-week period. This project study examined teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. The overall research design was led by the following research question and in addition three sub questions were considered, which guided the study:

Table 1

Alignment of Interview/Questionnaire Questions to Research Sub Question 1

Research question addressed	Interview/questionnaire question
Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?	Describe for me your methods of communication with parents to keep them informed of what is occurring at school and/or in the classroom.
	How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to communicate with parents?
	How is developing and maintaining a positive relationship with parents beneficial to you as the teacher?
	Describe particular behaviors you display to build a positive relationship with parents.
	What do you think is the best way to communicate with families regarding general information such as daily student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings and nonacademic information?
	In what ways, do you inform parents of information regarding classroom rules and procedures?
	In what ways does your school inform parents of information regarding school rules and procedures?
	How often do you conduct face-to-face conferences with parents in regard to their child academics/behavior?
	Can you describe any barriers you have encountered when communicating with parents?
	How do you deal with barriers you have encountered when communicating with parents?

Sub Question 1: *What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?* To answer this question, data was analyzed from all participants through individual interviews (see Appendix D) with the researcher and through participants' questionnaire responses (see Appendix E). This sub question attempted to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions when it comes to communicating with parents and their experiences with communicating with their students' parents at the K-8 Center. The participants interview and questionnaire responses provided answers to sub question 1. Participants implement various strategies when communicating with parents at the K-8 Center. Nevertheless, even though teachers implement various communication strategies there are barriers when comes to communicating with parents at the K-8 Center.

Table 2

Synopsis of Responses to Research Sub Question 1

What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?				
Participant Responses	Perceptions and/or Experiences	Teacher Efforts	School Efforts	Barriers
Participant A	Communicating with parents is very important but I find it hard to get parents involved	Class Dojo	ConnectEd Flyers	Language
Participant B	It's important for teachers and parents to communicate but I've noticed that parents do not have a clear understanding of how vital it is for them to be involved	Face to Face	ConnectEd	Lack of attendance at open house Unanswered phone calls
Participant C	I believe parents play a significant role in their child's education but parental involvement has always been an issue for me	Parent Notice Telephone	ConnectEd	Phone number disconnected or not updated
Participant D	I think parents should be involved but I find it hard to maintain constant communication with parents here at the school	Daily Parent Note	ConnectEd	False phone numbers Phone calls not returned
Participant E	Parental involvement is important. I try my best to keep parents informed but it hard. I say about 25% of my parents are actively involved.	Weekly calendar with homework packet to be signed and returned daily	ConnectEd	Calendar is usually returned unsigned
Participant F	Keeping parents involved in their child's education has been a constant struggle. I think parents just don't realize how much their involvement is needed not just by their child but us teachers also	Email Face to face	ConnectEd	Language
Participant G	Parental involvement is so important but so rare here.	Face to face or telephone	ConnectEd Flyers	Disconnected phone or parents don't show for

				requested conference
Participant H	Parent involvement has always been a struggle at my school.	Behavior log Telephone	ConnectEd Flyers	Language Incorrect telephone number
Participant I	Parents should be involved with their child's teacher. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I rarely have parental involvement with my student's parents.	Telephone Face to face	ConnectEd Flyers	Number incorrect or disconnected parents don't return calls
Participant J	It's important for parents to be involved but some parents just don't get it.	Class Dojo Emails	ConnectEd	Lack of technology
Participant K	When it comes to parental involvement and communication it is imperative that parents stay in contact with their child's teacher and vice versa.	Daily progress report	ConnectEd Flyers	Parents just don't respond to your calls or notices

Participants were asked to describe methods of communication they used to keep parents informed and about their experience with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center. Participants explained that they used various strategies to promote open and positive communication with their students' parents. Participant K expressed that she sends home a progress report to parents daily informing them of their child's academic progress and behavior. Participant E explained that she attaches a weekly calendar with the homework packet which is to be signed and returned daily. She explained that they majority of the time the calendar comes back unsigned. Participant G explained that she likes to communicate either face-to-face or via telephone conference but unfortunately, she hits a road block because she is unable to reach the parents or the parents don't contact her for to schedule the requested conferences. She stated, "there are parents who

are very hard to get in touch with. Sometimes they have multiple jobs and it is hard for them to get the time off to meet. Other parents just don't answer the phone, return messages, or their phone line is disconnected. Participant I recalled similar obstacles with communicating with parents due to incorrect or disconnected phone numbers. She expressed, "the biggest thing is phone numbers, not having a phone that works."

Table 3

Alignment of Interview/Questionnaire Questions to Research Sub Question 2

Research Question Addressed	Interview/Questionnaire Question
Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?	Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage learning at home.
	How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to encourage learning at home?
	How do you encourage parents to assist with their child's learning at home?
	What does the school do to support parents with student learning?
	Describe how you inform families on how to monitor and discuss homework?
	Describe for me the homework policies that you have in place for your classroom?
	In what ways does your school provide information and ideas to families on how to help students with their academics at home?

Sub Question 2: *What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?* To answer this question, data was analyzed from all participants through individual interviews (see Appendix D) with the researcher and through participants' questionnaire responses (see Appendix E). This sub question attempted to seek the participants, perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center. Participants interview and questionnaire responses provided answers to sub question 2. Participants perceive learning at home to

be essential in education. Based on teachers' experiences, parents are not always involved at home which was evident by homework assignments being returned incomplete or parent notices being returned with no feedback or requested signature to acknowledge receipt.

Table 4

Synopsis of Responses to Research Sub Question 2

Participant Responses	Teacher Efforts	School Efforts	Teacher Recommendations
Participant A	Encourage students to share their class notes with parents	Not much	The school should offer parent workshops
Participant B	Encourage them via word of mouth to be more involved at home	The school doesn't have anything in place to support parents with student learning	I think they should have parent nights at the school to get them involved in their child's learning
Participant C	Ask parents to assist with homework	Nothing	The school can provide pamphlets to parents with information on different educational resources. They also should try workshops for parents.
Participant D	Provide reading strategies to parents to use at home	Unknown	Host a parent information night with vendors to provide parents with information and options
Participant E	Assign home learning daily	Nothing I know of	Have workshops for both parents and teachers where they can work together
Participant F	Show parents the curriculum for the year ahead	Nothing	Parent Night, Parent workshops, Open House Info Sessions
Participant G	Send home resources for parent to use with students	Not certain	Workshops for parents
Participant H	Students receive homework daily	The school does nothing to help the parents out with learning at home	Have parent night and provide them with information to help at home
Participant I	Send home strategies for parent to use with their child	Nothing at all	Have workshops every month for the parents to get them involved
Participant J	Assign homework daily	Nothing	Provide parents with strategies and resources they can use at home
Participant K	Students get home work everyday	Nothing I'm aware of	Workshops

Participants were asked about the practices and strategies they use to encourage learning at home. All participants perceived it to be important for parents to reinforce learning within the home. Participant D believe that parents play a significant role when it comes to what their kids learn whether it be academically or life lessons in preparing them for the future. Participant J explained that she assigns students homework daily and parents are supposed to sign off on the home to ensure that they have completed the assignments correctly. However, Participant J explained that often students returned their homework incomplete or without a parent signature. Participant H explained that at the beginning of the school year she sends home a letter with various strategies that can be used for parents when assisting their child with homework and reinforcing academic skills. Parent I explained that she provides parents with web addresses, YouTube videos, and games that can be used to reinforce learning at home. Overall, participants believed that parents can be valuable resources when it comes to offering additional at home learning support for their children.

Table 5

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Sub Question 3

Research Question Addressed	Interview Question
Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?	Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage parental involvement at school.
	How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to encourage parental involvement at school?
	What kinds of parental involvement programs and practices are currently in place at your school?
	How do these parental involvement programs and practices that are currently in place at your school beneficial when it comes to parental involvement?
	How do you perceive the practices and strategies your school employs to encourage parental involvement?
	Do you think your measures have a positive effect on parental involvement? Why/Why Not?
	How do you and/or the school notify parents of volunteering opportunities?
	What strategies do you use to get parents involved in both academic and nonacademic activities?
	Describe for me the volunteer programs that your school has in place for parents?
	In what ways does your school organize parent patrols or other activities to aid in the operation of school activities?

What changes would you recommend improving the parental involvement program at the school where you are employed?

Sub Question 3: *What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?* To answer this question, data was analyzed from all participants' individual interviews (see Appendix D) with the researcher and through participants' questionnaire responses (see Appendix E). This sub question attempted to gain an understanding of participants perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer and be involved at the K-8 Center. Furthermore, to address this question, unobtrusive data was reviewed to verify attendance during PTSA meetings and other school related activities at the K-8 Center. Participants interview and questionnaire responses to questions provided answers to sub question 3. Participants perceived the opportunity for parents to volunteer at their child's school to be a positive one which creates a welcoming environment. However, based on teachers experiences they explained that parents are not always knowledgeable or aware of the opportunity to volunteer within the classroom or during school activities at the K-8 Center.

Table 6
Synopsis of Responses to Research Sub Question 3

What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?				
Participant Responses	Perceptions and/or Experiences	Teacher Efforts	School Efforts	Teacher Recommendations
Participant A	PTSA not operated effectively	I notify parents of website information to complete the volunteer application	PTSA	It would be nice if there was a program for teachers to volunteer once every other week in class
Participant B	Only opportunities for parents to be involved here at the school is through the PTA	I let parents know about the PTA	PTA	The school should have mandatory volunteer hours for parents
Participant C	This school really don't have parents volunteer	I make parents aware of the opportunity to volunteer as chaperones on field trips	PTA	I think they need to revamp the PTSA program to get parents more interested in being involved
Participant D	No parental involvement programs here at the school	I ask for chaperones but the application process is lengthy for parents and some just state they don't have the time	PTSA	Administration needs to build a rapport with parents and students. They also need to get the PTSA up and running on the regular
Participant E	Parents aren't allowed to volunteer		PTA	They need to have a membership drive for the PTA so parents can sign up and get involved
Participant F	No volunteer opportunities here are the school		PTSA	The school needs a parental involvement program because there is none in place
Participant G	Our school doesn't have a policy for parents to volunteer.	Inform parents of website to complete	PTSA	Give some incentives to parents who become

		volunteer application		involved in the PTSA
Participant H	There is no program in place for parents.		PTA	More volunteer opportunities/drives. Stronger PTA
Participant I	Our school really doesn't have a strong volunteer program for parents.	Inform parents of opportunity to chaperone field trips.	PTSA	PTSA membership drive and get administration and staff actively involved with it too
Participant J	School has PTA but it is not operated consistently		PTA	Have PTA operate consistently
Participant K	No volunteer opportunities	I let the parents know about the PTA	PTSA	Provide volunteer opportunities to the parents

Participants were asked about various strategies they have used to motivate or encourage parents to volunteer at the school. The teachers advised that the school does not allow parents to volunteer within the classroom. When asked about parental volunteers at student activities participants explained that parents can participate at school activities but must go through a background check and get cleared by the district prior to volunteering. Participant F explained that parents are not made aware of what it required for them to participate at the school activities. When asked about parental involvement programs at the K-8 Center Participant J explained that the school has a PTSA association but there are few parents involved with the association. She went on the say, "if they actually took the time and ran the association correctly then more parents would participate." Parent H explained the PTSA rarely meets and when it is time to meet parents and teachers are informed at the last minute of the meeting.

Face-to-face interview questions and questionnaire questions were created by the researcher and were based on the above stated central research question and sub-

questions. The participants' responses were based on their personal experiences with the parents at the K-8 Center, which are correlated to the research questions. The identifiers for the 11 participants are provided in Table 7.

Table 7

Participant Identifiers

Participant A	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant B	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant C	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant D	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant E	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant F	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant G	Face-to-Face Interview
Participant H	Questionnaire
Participant I	Questionnaire
Participant J	Questionnaire
Participant K	Questionnaire

Note: Participant identifiers were given to participants to provide confidentiality and ethical protection throughout the research process.

Based on the project study, five themes emerged from the data related to teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The themes were (a) importance of parental involvement, (b) reinforcing learning at home, (c) lack of communication, (d) encouraging parents to volunteer, and (e) increasing parental involvement.

Table 8

Themes

Research Question	Themes
Research Question: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?	Theme A: Importance of Parental Involvement Theme B: Reinforcing Learning at Home Theme C: Lack of Communication Theme D: Encouraging Parental Involvement at School Theme E: Increasing Parental Involvement
Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?	Theme C: Lack of Communication
Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?	Theme B: Reinforcing Learning at Home
Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?	Theme D: Encouraging Parental Involvement at School

Theme 1: Importance of Parental Involvement

The means in which the participants in the study explained the importance of parental involvement was consistent as teachers had similar perceptions. During the interview process, most of the participants shared their beliefs on the importance of parental involvement and the impact parental involvement has in the educational process. They explained why it was of importance and how it impacted them as the teacher as well as the student. The key questions related to this theme were (a) How would you describe

the impact of parental involvement in education? (b) How is developing and maintaining a relationship with parents beneficial to you as the teacher? (c) How does parental involvement impact you as a teacher?

Participant A: I believe that parental involvement is very important in the field of education, and it has an impact on both us teachers and students. When parents are involved, they stay informed of what's happening at their child's school and in their child's education. It is important for parents to be involved because it also helps us teachers, too. Parental involvement assists with behavior issues and academics. I notice that students tend to behave better, and they put forth more effort in comparison to those students whose parents are not involved. So yes, parental involvement is very important in the education field.

Participant C: Parental involvement is very important, especially in the primary grades. At that age, it is difficult for children to accurately express what is happening at school and in the classroom. So, if parents are involved they know what going on and it also helps with student learning, teaching, and behavior in the classroom.

Participant D: I believe it parental involvement is important and it impact me because I feel like when parents are involved their children are also more involved in their education and in their learning. When students know, they have parents that's going to be checking up and making sure they're doing what they're supposed to be doing they're going to try their best to be on their p's and q's so they don't get in trouble. Then you have those students whose parents are not

involved in their education, the children know that they're not involved, so it's pretty much hey whatever and it's sad at such a young age they have that mentality but unfortunately that's how it is when they're parents are not involved. Students tend to feel like, "oh well it doesn't matter you can't do anything, you can't say anything, you don't see my mom, my mom don't you" so they feel like they can do what they want to do and they'll be no kind of consequences for them because they know their parents are not involved. That's why it's very important for parents to maintain involvement in their child's education.

Theme 2: Reinforcing Learning at Home

Based on participants' personal experiences, they believe it was essential to reinforce learning at home. According to Epstein's framework, learning at home involves teachers providing parents with the necessary information and resources to make certain that what students are learning in the classroom is being reinforced at home (Epstein, 2011). All participants indicated that they provide home learning or homework daily to their students. Participants explained that parents have a vital role in assisting their child and/or children with work at home that is received from school. Teachers also explained that from their experience parents are not always involved at home, which is evident by home learning or work being returned incomplete. The key questions related to this theme were (a) Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage learning at home? (b) How do you encourage parents to assist with their child's learning at home? (c) What does the school do to support parents with student learning?

Participant B: Students receive home learning daily, I just ask that parents help them and work with them when they're completing it to ensure that they're actually understanding what it is that should be done and it's being completed accurately.

Participant C: Every week my students receive a home learning packet and the home learning packet is based on what we've done in class. Every day my students have an assignment to complete at home, so in math if I'm teaching addition their homework is going to be addition it's not going to be multiplication it's not going to be subtraction it's going to be whatever we learned in class that day. I tell parents at the beginning of the school year during open house that I want them to work with them to make sure they're doing what they're supposed to be doing because a lot of time they bring me back their home learning packets and it's the same way I sent it home incomplete. You can tell that the student tried but they just didn't have any assistance at home from an adult to let them know what exactly it was they were supposed to do so they can do it correctly. So, I try to encourage learning at home by sending home those packets everyday home learning packets every day from the beginning of the school year all the way to the end they will receive a home learning packet, their homework for them to complete daily and it also must be returned daily.

Participant E: It is imperative that learning not only occurs in the classroom but is also reinforced at home. My students receive a weekly packet that contains various assignments for them to complete daily. Whatever work they receive is

an extension of work that was taught that day or week and they practiced in the classroom.

Participant K: At the beginning of the school year I send parents resources for them to engage with their children at home. (links to websites etc.). I talk to them about what they can do with their child, practice sight words, review the ABCs, etc. I also send home work with my students daily. The homework is to be completed, signed, and returned daily. I assign homework so the students can practice and review the content that they learned in the classroom

Theme 3: Communication

The theme, communication, emerged in several responses. According to Epstein's framework, it is vital that schools take the initiative to create a good communication system between the school and home (Epstein, 2011). Based upon participants' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement they make every effort to encourage effective communication with their students' parents. Participants did acknowledge the difficulty they have experienced when it comes to maintaining communication with parents. All participants expressed that they would like to increase the line of communication between them and their students' parents. The key questions related to this theme were (a) Describe for me your methods of communication with parents to keep them informed of what is occurring at the school and/or in the classroom? (b) What do you think is the best way to communicated with families regarding general information such as daily student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings,

and non-academic information? (c) In what ways, do you inform parents of information regarding school rules and procedures?

Participant G: I believe the best way to communicate with parents is face to face or via daily notice. I usually send home a daily log to parents to inform them of their child's behavior and/or academics for the day. However, at times, I don't get the response I would like from parents. A lot of times, students return their daily notice unsigned or don't even return it at all. If it's something of great importance, then I usually try to inform the parents of it during dismissal which works sometimes but not all because a lot of the students are walkers so I don't get to see their parents.

Participant H: In my classroom, I have a daily behavior log and that goes home every day and on the log the parents are informed of their child's behavior, if there's an assessment for that day or that week the parent knows what grade their child receives. For example, if they take a spelling test and I check it then I will write the spelling grade on their log. I also let the parent know how their child's behavior was everyday there's going to be something on there for their behavior it may not always be something academically but every day there's going to be something regarding their behavior and how they behaved that day in the classroom and it goes home to the parent and the parents must sign and return it back daily. If a situation occurs in the classroom that needed to be dealt with immediately I would attempt to reach the parent via telephone to inform them of

the issues. This is beneficial at times, and other times not because many parents have no phones which makes it very difficult to get in touch with the parent.

Participant I: I find that the best to communicate with a parent is in person at dismissal time. Secondly, it may be efficient to call or text parents regarding students process, but many parent do not have stable phone numbers, so at times, this may be a challenge.

Participant J: I attempt to communicate with my parents daily using a homework log. On the log is their child's homework but there is also a section which contains their child's conduct and/or academics for that day. This section has area for parents to sign to acknowledge they received it and the students must return it to me daily.

Theme 4: Encouraging Parents to Volunteer

Per Epstein's model, volunteering means getting parents involved by supporting school goals as well as their child's learning (Epstein, 2011). Participants expressed that when parents are allowed the opportunity to be involved at their child's school it creates a welcoming environment. They believe that it would also allow for the development of parent-teacher relationships. The key questions related to this theme were (a) What strategies do you use to get parents involved in both academic and non-academic activities? (b) Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage parental involvement at school? (c) How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to encourage parental involvement at school?

Participant D: Well right now the only program we have here is the PTSA, that is the parent, teacher, and student association I think all schools have a PTSA but other than that there aren't really any other parental involvement programs or ways for parents to be involved here. Like as for volunteering, where the parents can come in none of that really occurs and even with the PTSA when they do meet parents don't really show up for that either the participation is very, very, very low, very low.

Participant G: Parent involvement was a struggle for me as well as the school. The parents aren't able to volunteer here at the school or in the classroom. The school has Open House at the beginning of the year but other than that there aren't many opportunities for parental involvement at the school. When the PTSA has a dance for the students the same two parents are there.

Participant H: Unfortunately, there aren't many opportunities for parental involvement. We do have a PTSA program but it isn't active or rather consistent. They don't meet on a regular basis and they don't really promote activities here at the school for the parents. I just do my best to try and encourage parents to be involved at home and make certain they encourage learning at home. The only opportunity I can recall for parents this past school year is Open House. That is where parents come out at the beginning of the school year to meet their child's teacher. However, that is mandated by the district. Other than open house we didn't really have any parent night or activities for them here at that the school.

Participant K: I try to encourage parents to become involved in the PTSA at the beginning of the school year, usually during Open House. Other than that, the school doesn't offer many opportunities for parents to be involved. They have a PTSA but the parents don't show to the meetings. However, I don't think they are made aware of the meetings in a timely manner, some are just unable to attend due to other activities, and some just don't care to participate.

Theme 5: Improving Parental Involvement

Unobtrusive data showed that there was room for improvements when it comes to the P.T.S.A. currently in place at the K-8 Center. P.T.S.A. and open house attendance logs were reviewed in order to confirm the attendance at P.T.S.A. meetings and open house. P.T.S.A. minutes were reviewed to analyze information discussed and the frequency of meetings. The attendance total varied with each event, but overall, they were consistent in showing that less than 20% of parents attended various school related activities. The P.T.S.A. minutes revealed that only three P.T.S.A. meetings were held during the entire school year. Less than ten parents were in attendance at all of the P.T.S.A. meetings held during the 2015-2016 school year. Participants also expressed the lack of parental involvement school based opportunities available to parents. Participants provided resources to improve parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The key questions related to this theme were (a) What kind of parental involvement programs and practices are currently in place at your school? (b) How do you perceive the practices and strategies your school employ to encourage parental involvement? (c) Describe for me the volunteer programs that your school has in place for parents? (d) What changes

would you recommend helping with improving parental involvement programs at the school where you are employed?

Participant B: I would recommend that schools require parents to contribute a designated number of mandatory "volunteer" hours per child per year. It would help parents become more active in their child's learning community. I also believe that the P.T.S.A. program should be revamped for the upcoming school year. We need to provide not just parents with more opportunities to be involved. We can work on having P.T.S.A. meetings more consistently and incorporating parent nights, and opportunities during the day for parents to be involved here at the school.

Participant E: I believe that the school should incorporate a parental involvement program because now there's none in place for parents. It would allow for them to have an opportunity to be involved in school which hopefully will then roll over to involvement at home also.

Participant F: There needs to be more volunteer opportunities or we can even have volunteer drives to help increase involvement from parents here at the school. We also need a stronger P.T.S.A., I believe if they are consistent with meetings and start incorporating at least one activity each grading period then we might be able to see an increase in involvement from the parents.

The five themes that emerged from the data were aligned with the research question to help answer the question that led to this case study. The participants'

responses created the themes and aided in providing a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences at the K-8 Center.

Research Question: *What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?* To answer this question, data was analyzed from all participants through individual interviews with the researcher and through participants' questionnaire responses and unobtrusive data. I wanted to gain an understanding of the participants' perceptions of parental involvement and their experiences with parents being involved during their tenure at the K-8 Center. Responses to interview questions (see Appendix D) and questionnaire questions (see Appendix E) provided answers to the Central Research Question. Data indicated that teachers perceive parental involvement to be important and believe it has a positive impact in the educational process. Participants experience with parental involvement at the K-8 Center has not been as high as they would like. Furthermore, participants perceived an increase in parental involvement could be likely if the P.T.S.A. was operated on a consistent basis.

Participants were asked how parental involvement impacts them as a teacher. All participants expressed that parental involvement is beneficial to them as a teacher. They stated that parental involvement tends to have a positive impact on their students. Many stated that when the parents of their students are involved in their education they perform better not just academically, but behaviorally, in comparison to those students whose parents are uninvolved. When participants were asked to about their perceptions on parental involvement in education they are have positive responses and believe that parental involvement has a significance role in education. The participants suggested that

students tend to take a vested interest in their studies when they know their parents are invested in the education process. Participant B stated that often her students' parents serve as a motivator for their child to do well in school. She explained, "It seems that when parents have an expectation for their child to do well in school then the kids also want to do well for themselves and for their parents." Participant E asserted that parental involvement also bolsters a child confidence. He believed that when children know that someone is there motivating them at home and at school they tend to put forth more effort to succeed. Participants also observe a connection between high parental involvement and their students' academic achievement. Parent A described parental involvement as "the key to a child's success." Overall, parental involvement was perceived by participants to contribute to a host of positive outcomes.

When participants were asked about their experience with parental involvement all the participants expressed that involvement at the K-8 Center is rather low. Participant F explained that her experience at the K-8 Center consist of a lot of "hands-off" parenting. When asked to explain, she stated that parents are not as involved as she believed they should be. Participant E expressed that many parents rely solely on the teacher and believe it is the teachers responsibility only to teach the student. She stated, "some parents respect for the teaching profession leads them to believe that teachers are supposed to do all the work when it should be a partnership between the school, student, and parents." One participants expressed that she had twenty-one students in her class and only five parents responded to her back to school welcome letter and returned signature papers. She stated that those parents' children are the top student in her class.

Teachers expressed that they have tried to develop a relationship with their students' parents but have not been as successful as they have liked. One participant expressed that it is hard to foster a relationship with parents when they don't show for school activities, parent teacher conferences, etc. Another participant explained that at times she is unable to communicate because of disconnected telephone lines, incorrect phone numbers, or unreturned parent notices. Participant G explained that the K-8 Center needs to allow for more opportunities to network with parents. She believed that the K-8 Center should offer various parent workshops at different times to meet parents schedule needs. She stated, "most parents are unaware of what is expected of them. She continued, "I believe it would be beneficial if the school provides parents with the opportunity and necessary resources to ensure their child is successful." Participant B stated that the school currently has a PTSA but unfortunately, they do not meet on a steady basis. She stated, "I think many parents want to be involved but just do not know where to start. We have a PTSA Association but unfortunately the parents are not involved. I think the association has lot of room for improvement and if we start there we can increase parental involvement.

Conclusion

I explored the perceptions and experiences of teachers in regard to parental involvement for this project study. Participants increased their awareness through being engages in the data collection process through individual interviews and the completion of questionnaires. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the

perceived need for parental involvement of teachers in a inner-city school district in southern Florida. All participants of the study expressed the need to implement an effective parental involvement program that addresses the need for parental involvement.

The research findings were the driving factor in the creation of this project. By using the research questions as a guide, I was able to disaggregate the most important feature from the data to ensure the project offers a significant solution to the perceptions of the teachers who were interviewed and completed the questionnaire. I used the exact words of the teachers from the interview transcripts and responses from their questionnaires. This offered an opportunity to convey the teachers' feelings and justify the interpretations as research findings.

In section two, the findings materialized from the research served as the guiding views that lead toward the development of the project. The first finding was the need increase communication amongst parents. The second finding was the lack of parental involvement within the home. The third finding was the lack of parent volunteers and participation in the association. The fourth finding was the need to implement changes within the PTSA currently in place at the K-8 Center. The following research question and three sub questions guided the study:

Research Question: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?

My goal throughout this project study was to gain understanding of the perceptions of teachers in the local setting and their experiences with parental involvement. This significant information allowed me the opportunity to create a project that will encourage parents of children attending the K-8 Center to become more involved in their child's education. The project will consist of three recommendations to be implemented during the upcoming school year at the K-8 Center. The recommendations will focus on enhancing the P.T.S.A. currently in place at the K-8 Center and incorporating parent workshops. It is anticipated that implementation of these recommendations will increase the engagement and involvement of parents at the K-8 Center.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

According to Hill et al. (as cited in Kim & Nancy, 2015), parental involvement in education has been defined as “parents’ interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success.” I used a qualitative case study to address the problem of minimal parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. I interviewed teachers, who completed questionnaires on their perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the study site and how it has affected them as teachers.

Results from the data analysis indicated a lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Many of the teacher participants stated that their school did not offer many opportunities to increase parental involvement. They explained that, while the school has a PTSA, it is not being operated on a consistent basis. Based on these results, I developed a policy recommendation that, if implemented, may aid administrators and teachers in increasing parental involvement at the study site. This section includes a description of the project along with project goals, the rationale for the chosen design, a review of literature, the implementation schedule, and the project evaluation process. I also include implications for social change within this section.

Description and Goals

For this project study, I examined teachers’ perceptions of and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Based on the findings of this study, a policy recommendation was created to highlight important information and study results. This report includes specific recommendations for improving the PTSA currently in place

at the study site. The project chosen for this study was a policy recommendation that focuses on revamping the PTSA. I developed the recommendation using unobtrusive data along with participants' questionnaire and interview responses, which indicated a desire on the part of teacher participants for increased and sustained parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The policy recommendation includes a description of the problem, findings, and recommendations.

My goal in formulating this policy recommendation was to address the problem of a lack of parental involvement at the study site. This policy was presented to administration and staff with recommendations that may serve as a basis for change in how the PTSA at the K-8 Center is run and operated. The project was designed to possibly increase parent participation through their attendance at school-wide activities, and communication and collaboration amongst parents, teachers, and school staff.

Rationale

Creating a policy recommendation allowed me the opportunity to make recommendations to address issues and concerns raised by participants during this study. Recommendations were made to help increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Teacher noted that they experienced a lack of parental involvement at the school. Furthermore, many of the teacher participants stated that they felt if the PTSA currently in place was more active then they might be able to increase and maintain parental involvement.

This project directly correlates with findings from the data analysis reported in Section 2. In analyzing the questionnaires and individual interview responses, I

determined that the perceptions held by teachers at the school that would fall into the realm of this project. A perception that was evident was that many teacher participants viewed it as necessary to take some type of action to increase parental involvement at the study site. I chose the genre of policy recommendation because it was the best fit in terms of addressing the lack of parental involvement at the study site.

Review of the Literature

The goal for this project study was to increase parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. After gathering and analyzing data from participants, I determined that the study site could benefit from a policy recommendation which emphasized enhancing the PTSA currently in place at the K-8 Center. This project was influenced by the work of two psychologists, Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky. Bandura (1994) asserted that individuals' self-belief of efficacy regulates their level of motivation. Whereas, if parents are encouraged to participate and become members of the PTSA, they may have greater motivation to become more involved in their child's education at the school and within the home. Vygotsky (1980) contended that social interaction is essential for learning to occur. Therefore, when parents become involved with the PTSA, they will be provided with the resources needed to assist their child in being academically successful.

For the literature review, I examined recent research and studies related to policy recommendations and PTSAs. The topics include defining policy recommendations, writing a policy recommendation, PTSAs, benefits of a PTSA, and examples of successful PTSAs. To complete this research, I used various databases within the Walden University Library. These databases and search engines included ProQuest,

ERIC, EBSCO, and SAGE. I also used Google Scholar to search for recent peer reviewed research about the topics included in the literature review. The phrases used in the search included *policy recommendation; writing a policy recommendation; recommendation reports; policy reports; parent, teacher association; P.T.A.; parent, teacher, student association; PTSA.; and parental involvement programs.*

Defining Policy Recommendations

I believe that a policy recommendation was the best genre for this project study. A policy recommendation will present information in a manner that can be easily distributed and understood by administration and staff. The policy recommendation will link specific themes that emerged from the project study. When policy recommendations are translated into thematic statements, intervention and implementation within the educational setting may be improved (Sandelowski & Lemman, 2012). Through the use of recommendations, I will outline solutions that may address the problem that the K-8 Center has been experiencing with parental involvement. According to Doyle (2013), a policy recommendation is a written policy that is comprised of advice for a group or organization with the authority to make policy decisions. Policy recommendations may be used to inform individuals on issues and how they may use research and evidence to ensure that they make the best decision (Sandelowski & Lemman, 2012). Canada, Pigott, Polanin, Valentine, and Williams (2013) expressed the importance of reporting all findings in the policy recommendation report. The goal of this project was to provide stakeholders at the study site with evidence-based research and opinions that may be used

to enhance the PTSA currently in place at the K-8 Center, which may result in increased parental involvement.

Writing a Policy Recommendation

Brownson, Colditz, and Proctor (2012) described a policy recommendation report as a suitable method for disseminating research findings and initiating project implementation. McIntosh and Gunther (2013) compared a policy recommendation to a type of research paper, which has similar characteristics to other genres such as a thesis or dissertation. Gray (2013) supported the use of a policy recommendation report as preferable to other genres for reporting research within the education field. When writing a policy recommendation report, there are things one must consider to ensure that your recommendation is practical and actionable. The Center for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) prepared guidelines that may be used by researchers to assist with writing policy recommendations based on research. The first of the ten steps CARDI outlined for writing a policy recommendation was to determine the objective of the recommendation. The objective for this project was to enhance the P.T.S.A. in a way that would be beneficial to all stakeholders at the K-8 Center.

The second step in writing a policy recommendation is deciding on a target audience. It is important to determine the key stakeholders and what influence they have when it comes down to decision making (CARDI, 2012). Understanding who your audience is and what their job entails is crucial when it comes to writing a policy recommendation (Musandu, 2013). In this case, my target audience was school administration, teachers, and the community involvement specialist.

The third step is to make certain that the issue is clearly stated. It is imperative that the existing situation is clearly outlined when being presented to stakeholders. I will state the problem and explain how it will be solved, which would be favorable to the audience. The next step for a good policy recommendation is to allow options, when possible. CARDI (2012) stated that having several approaches to solve the issue based on research evidence can help make the decision easier.

The fifth step focused on recognizing the economic climate. The economic climate would not be an issue for this project because the policy recommendation will be making recommendations for a program that is already in place at the study site. The next step is making sure the policy recommendation is aligned with the existing policies. This project and policy recommendation is aligned with the K-8 Center because the goals of this project are to improve the parental involvement which will be valuable to the school.

Using examples is the seventh step in the process. It is a good idea to check for the outcome of similar approaches when making a policy recommendation (CARDI, 2012). I will check for similar approaches by showing how other schools with an active P.T.S.A. use similar strategies when it comes to parental involvement. Step eight is remembering the audience by ensuring academic and technical language is not in the policy recommendation. It is important to make certain the policy is presented in simple language and easily understood by any reader without background knowledge of the subject area. The language must be just right, not technical, but professional (Musandu,

2013). The audience for this policy recommendation will be the school administrations, teachers, and the community involvement specialist.

The next step is to show what form of impact the policy recommendation will have on the group or organization. CARDI (2012) explained the importance of writing a policy recommendation that will be beneficial to society or the organization that will be implementing the recommendations. In this case, the project and its recommendation will be beneficial to the school, the community, and the school district. The final step is highlighting the importance of employing the recommendation. Highlighting the importance of this recommendation will be done by convincing the organization that the issue is significant and the recommendations will be beneficial when implemented.

Parent-Teacher-Student Associations

According to Froiland and Davison (2014) communication amongst parents and the school should be an ongoing process. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is the bridge to close the relationship between the parents and the school. Involving parents in the educational process has been a local and national problem for many years (Young, Austin, and Growe, 2013). The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is a nonprofit organization that prides itself on being a powerful voice for children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education (Gary, 2015). The PTA also known as parent, teacher, and student association (PTSA) has been around for years. The National PTA was founded in 1897 in Washington D.C. A PTA is a formal organization comprised of parents, teachers, staff, and students that is dedicated to supporting the

education of students and is intended to facilitate parental involvement within a school (Bush, 2012).

The overall goal of the PTA is to engage and empower families and communities to be involved and advocate for the children. Most schools, whether public or private have a PTA or a comparable organization, which is adapted to the exclusive needs of each school (Wilson, 2012). Every person that joins a local PTA automatically becomes a member of the state and national PTA. The National PTA is dedicated to supporting the education of students in the United States from preschool all the way through high school (Wang, 2015). Per the National PTA (2013), the goal at a national and local level is for parents to be enthusiastically involved in their child's education by becoming active members in the PTA at their child's school.

Benefits of a Parent-Teacher-Student Association

The belief that children benefit from their parents' involvement in school-related activities is supported by research, particularly studies of the impact of parental involvement on students' academic outcomes, behavior, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy (Ross, 2016). Many parents are unaware of what PTA is or what the association does. The PTA does a variety of things within the school at times even in the community (Manno, 2012). Many PTA activities do not cost anything just require time. These activities can range from assisting with field day activities, assisting students in the library and classroom, or simply volunteering time in the office. However, there are PTA activities that may require funding and for these efforts the PTA may raise funds through school dances, bake sales, book fairs, membership drives, or other creative methods

(Jones, 2011). One of the PTAs goals is to make certain that all stakeholders are provided with whatever is needed to ensure that all children are succeeding academically.

According to Post (2015), in order for students to achieve, participation by their parents is mandatory. Unfortunately, many parents know what a PTA does, but their main concern is understanding what exactly it is that the PTA can do, not just for their child, but for them as well. It is important to instill the value of the PTA in parents and students. According to Back (2011), in some cultures, parents do not believe they have the right to question administration and teachers or they just do not feel comfortable speaking on their child's behalf. To successfully implement changes, it is important that all stakeholders, especially parents, are included and able to provide input in the association (Miele & Bennett, 2014). When all stakeholders come together and work on one accord, it brings them one step closer to achieving their goal.

For your PTA to be successful, you must appeal to parents in various ways (Brinckerhoff, 2012). To transform parents into active members they must be informed of the goal and the in purpose of their PTA membership and how it will impact them. Sarpong (2012) explained that people will join organizations that serve a great cause in an effective and efficient manner. When it comes to membership, it is important for administration, teachers, and staff to first take on the role of being an active PTA member. When membership is presented to parents and they realize school personnel is on board and serious about being involved they tend to take more interest in becoming involved themselves (Chevalier, 2012). Parents are their child's first teacher and the PTA plays a significant role in offering parents the opportunity to assist teachers in the

most valuable endeavors, the education of their child (Cassano, 2012). The PTA is about connecting to resources and people who care about children and their education. Back (2011) explained a few benefits of being involved in a PTA:

- You will find a support system of parents who can relate to rearranging schedules, planning carpools, and worrying about how their child is doing in school, and parents that are willing to help you.
- The more support you have, the easier working with your child's principal, teachers, and school community. PTA encompasses a large, nationwide network of people working toward the same goals, and who are happy to share their ideas and experiences no matter where you and they are located.
- PTA offers you access to programs and resources that may be lacking in your school.
- Because the national PTA has been around for over 100 years, it has a long and proven structure for serving students, parents, and teachers, as well as an impressive record of accomplishment for advocating for education and child welfare improvements.
- PTA is the only parent organization with national, state, and local governing bodies. This means that whether you are interested in national school nutrition or getting a stop sign installed near your school, you can call on PTA to help you make your voice heard.

The benefits of being involved in a PTA are endless, and it is important to inform parents that the sooner they get involved the more of an impact it will have on their child's learning and education going forward.

Successful Parent-Teacher-Student Associations

Per Wilson (2012) for families to become involved, they must

- believe they should be involved,
- believe their involvement can make a difference,
- believe that the teacher, school, and their child wants their involvement, and
- believe they can be involved.

Like anything else, the foundation for success starts with building strong, genuine relationships. When parents are involved in they can make a huge difference in improving the education experience of their child (Goumbri, 2016).

Murray High School PTSA, which is in Jackson, Mississippi, believes that you must get out there and go to where the people are to spread value of the PTA. To increase their PTSA membership, Murray High created a campaign entitled, "Each One, Reach One", which consisted of current members recruiting another parent or community supporter for PTSA membership. The school used incentives such as holiday parties and dances to get the students involved with the campaign. Constant reminders were placed around the school with information on the membership progress and goal. PTSA membership forms were made accessible via the schools PTSA website, email, newsletters, and even placed in the parent resource center, school library and office.

Announcements were made during the school sporting events to encourage PTSA membership.

For the 2011-2012 school year, Murray's PTSA had more than 700 members. They received recognition from Mississippi, their state PTA, for having the largest PTA/PTSA in the entire state. They recruited an additional 323 members during their "Each One, Reach One" campaign. Determination, persistence, and enthusiasm is what is needed to get individuals excited about PTSA membership (Sarpong, 2012). Goals are accomplished more easily when the administration and PTSA are on the same page and makes the journey more enjoyable when you have great leaders serving on the PTSA board.

Franklin Elementary, in Glendale, California, also knows what it is like to have a successful PTA. They started with a membership of 375 members and by the following school year membership has almost doubled to 721 members. They believe the main reason for their PTA success was because they made it a priority to connect with families. At Franklin, they found one to one contact with families to be very beneficial. They would hold welcome back events before the beginning of the school year which allowed them the opportunity to meet new families prior to the first days of school which can be very hectic.

The second key to their membership success was visibility. Throughout the school year, parents could see what their school PTA has contributed in the community as well as within their child's school. They ensured that their PTA name was visible at all activities using flyers, posters, and name badges. Like Murray High School, Franklin

also found it beneficial to have membership campaigns. Their membership campaigns were not just focused on reaching their goal but on how quickly they could achieve their goal. To encourage the students, each class had an ice-cream cone placed in the hallway by their classroom. Scoops of ice-cream were added to their cones every time they turned in membership forms. Parents received membership updates via email and weekly newsletters. By the end of the campaign, Franklin had reached membership levels between 200-300 percent.

Lastly, Franklin made it a priority to ensure that everyone was included regardless of their race or cultural background. They made every effort to keep the school unified by including all individuals. Parents need to feel they are valued, and when they feel needed and valued they are even more inclined to join and participate in the PTA (Freemon, 2012). Franklin made certain that they were always they were appreciative of their members and were always positive with everyone. These key factors are what made Franklin's PTA a success.

Parent Workshops

Parental involvement is a right, responsibility, and a social need (Castro et al., 2015). Without an active home-school connection students most likely will not attain academic progress (Castro et al., 2015). Families need to collaborate with schools by monitoring students' progress, and by supporting students' learning at home (Sylaj, 2013). Findings of the study indicated that parents were not comfortable assisting their children with homework, were not aware of grade-level expectations, or meaningful ways to engage with their children at home. Parent workshops will increase parents'

understanding of grade-level curriculum, and how they can best support the academic progress of their children.

Bolivar and Chrispeel (2011) observed that when parents were given explicit information, interacted with other parents, educators, and community members regarding educational systems, parents' efficacy increased. Providing parents with guidance regarding how to and what to communicate to children who were experiencing challenges in school, parents maintained a positive learning experience at home (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012). These interactions may result in increased use of school and community resources to support children academically as well as socially.

Because some parents did not understand how children were evaluated and assessed, they did not monitor their children's academic progress (Deslandes & Rivard, 2013). Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, and Schoeneberger (2015) evaluated Parent University, a parent engagement program designed to engage traditionally underserved parents. Results of their evaluation indicated that students' school performance increased when parents attended workshops that connected to academic outcomes. Workshops that integrated data were a way to improve and support effective parental involvement (Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, & Schoeneberger, 2015). Parents were empowered when workshops built their knowledge of evaluation and learning (Murray, Ackerman-Spain, Williams, & Ryley, 2011). When schools planned meetings that regarded parents as a valued part of the educational system, parents maintained the home-school connection (Hafizi & Papa, 2012).

Building parents' self-efficacy to participate in decisions in relation to school budgets and curriculum could be another benefit of parent workshops. Parents' understanding of academic goals may allow them to contribute to conversations related to choosing curricula. Their participation in decisions regarding education becomes a source of pride for students, and students gain a positive perspective of school (Hafizi & Papa, 2012). Moreover, Cunningham, Kreider, and Ocon (2012) found that when parents received training, they extended their involvement in educational activities beyond school-based activities and decision-making. They became aware and involved in entities which influenced education on a broader scale. The parent workshops that I propose may empower parents to influence students' academic goals and may increase their ability to participate in school-wide and district-wide educational policy making processes.

Project Description

This project was a policy recommendation report for administrators and staff at the K-8 Center. The project will address the inconsistencies of the P.T.S.A. currently in place at the school. The policy provides recommendations to enhance the association to assist with increasing and maintaining parental involvement at the study site. The policy recommendation will be implemented during the upcoming 2017-2018 school year. The policy will consist of three recommendations (a) 2017-2018 P.T.S.A. Membership Drive (b) monthly P.T.S.A. meetings and (c) monthly parent workshops. The needed resources for this project is for administration and teachers to dedicate their time so that implementations of recommendations may be successful.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers that could impact the implementation of the policy recommendations could be a lack of support from all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, and students). The fact that administrators and teachers would have to volunteer their time to get the association running could possibly be a barrier. Successful implementation relies heavily on time dedicated by staff outside of their working hours. Not only do we need participation from staff, but there may also be uncommitted parents, which could also be a barrier when it comes to implementation of the project being successful. Funding may also pose as a potential barrier. For the P.T.S.A. membership drives, I would like to offer incentives to keep the students and parents motivated to join and become more involved. For the workshops, it may require funding to bring in special individuals to host the workshops and to have snacks to offer the guest and participants attending the workshops and meetings.

Proposal for Implementation

There is currently a P.T.S.A. currently in place at the K-8 Center. However, it was not operated and ran on a consistent basis. According to the data, the P.T.S.A. does not meet on a consistent basis. For the previous school year, the P.T.S.A. only had four meetings during the entire school year. The policy recommendation I have prepared will consist of three recommendations, which includes having a membership drive during the beginning of the school year, monthly P.T.S.A. meetings, and monthly parent workshops. The policy will be implemented during the 2017-2018 school year. Implementation of this project could increase parental involvement and create a better partnership between

home and school. To make certain that the policy is prepared for the upcoming school year, I will meet with the school administrators, a few weeks before the start of the 2017-2018 school year, to get their support and feedback on the recommendations. Following the meeting with administration, I will meet with the staff, during the planning days before the first day of school, to present them with an explanation of the policy and what the recommendations entails.

Role and Responsibility

In the beginning, the participants will consist of school administrators, teachers, and the community involvement specialist. Being that I am the researcher and developed the project, I will be involved to some extent with the supervision of the project. I anticipate that I will help with the membership drive during the beginning of the school year. I will help the staff with coming up with a theme along with incentives that can be used to encourage and motivate both the students and parents. I will also assist with the monthly parent workshops. I will work with the P.T.S.A. to determine what topics would be beneficial to the parents there at the K-8 Center. Once everyone is aware of what is required of them they will then begin to inform parents and students of the changes made to the association with the goal of increasing the involvement of parents at the K-8 Center.

Project Evaluation Plan

The goal of this policy recommendation is to enhance the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place based on findings of teachers' perceptions and experiences at the study site. Following 4 months of implementation of the project at the

study site, a survey will be issued to gather feedback from stakeholders. The stakeholders will consist of teachers and parents of students that have been enrolled at the K-8 Center prior to the implementation of the project. The survey will be used to gather stakeholders' opinions in regards to their experience with the association and whether they believe that there has been an improvement in the P.T.S.A. in comparison to previous years. The purpose for the project evaluation is to determine if the recommendations address the current problem at the study site. In addition, the evaluation will be used to decide if the recommendations have had a positive impact on increasing parental involvement at the study site.

Project Implications

Local Community

This project will promote social change at the local level by improving parental involvement through the analysis of teacher perceptions. The policy recommendation was designed from the teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the study site. The goal of the project is to increase parental involvement which is not beneficial to just teachers but all stakeholders involved. Not only will the administrators be made aware of teacher perceptions but the district will also be informed of their perceptions along with the outcome of a policy recommendation for this study.

Following approval of this project study, a copy will be sent to the school district for their review. The policy implementation has the potential to improve the school through the increase of parental involvement. Recommendations to enhance the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association may be used in other schools within the district that may be facing

similar roadblocks when it comes to getting parents involved or maintaining the involvement of their parents.

Further Context

Parental involvement is of great importance in many schools throughout the United States. Not only can this policy recommendation impact schools in the district of the K-8 Center but it may also serve as a model to districts in other cities within the state. This project has the potential to be used by other districts and states that are looking to improve parental involvement within their schools. The proposed project may be used to determine how to address the issue of parental involvement using a Parent, Teacher, and Student Association. However, if the school already has a parental involvement program, the recommendations could be used for the current program the school has in place or it could be used to develop something comparable to promote social change within the communities.

Conclusion

In this section, the details for the project are defined. This project was developed to address the lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Based on the findings, a policy recommendation report was developed which centers on enhancing the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place at the study site. The implementation of this policy recommendation is based on teachers' perceptions and experiences along with an in-depth analysis of unobtrusive data. This recommendation will affect how the school makes the necessary changes to their current P.T.S.A. to increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. This recommendation

intends to support teachers in terms of resolving the lack of parental involvement as described in their interviews and questionnaire responses.

The following section includes a reflection and conclusion of the study. Additionally, the projects strengths and weaknesses are described along with implications and directions for future research. I will also include a self-reflection along with a reflection on my growth because of this study. Lastly, I will include the project study potential to impact social change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

For this project study, I examined teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. I sought to gain an understanding of how the lack of parental involvement affects teachers at my study site, a K-8 center, and then use that information to develop viable solutions to increase parental involvement within the school as well as the district. The following themes emerged my analysis of questionnaire and interview question data: (a) the importance of parental involvement, (b) reinforcing learning at home, (c) communication, (d) encouraging parental involvement at school, and (e) increasing parental involvement. After analyzing the data, I concluded that a policy recommendation to enhance the PTSA at the K-8 Center would be the best genre for this project study.

In this section, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project and offer recommendations for the remediation of limitations. This section will also include recommendations for alternative methods to address issues of parental involvement at inner-city schools. A reflection on the development and evaluation of this project will also be included along with discussion of my growth as a scholar, professional, and project developer. Lastly, I will discuss the importance of this project study, what was learned, implications for social change, and the potential impact on future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

I created this project to address the issue of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 center. Using a qualitative approach, I gathered data from participants about their

perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the study site. This knowledge allowed me to create a project that may increase parental involvement at the K-8 Center. This project had several strengths, one being that it addresses the issue of parental involvement. I used data gathered from the interview and questionnaire responses along with unobtrusive data to create this project, which may be used by administration at the study site to increase parental involvement. The policy report provides recommendations for teachers and administrators at the study site to use so that they can collaborate with parents to address the issue of low parental involvement and increase it.

Use of open-ended questions in the questionnaire and during the individual interviews allowed participants to voice their concerns in regard to their perceptions and experience with parental involvement at the study site. The reasoning behind this project study was to ensure that teachers at the K-8 Center perceptions and experience were recognized. I drew from participants' responses in making my recommendations.

Limitations

When it is implemented, this project will have potential limitations, as with any new project, which need to be recognized and addressed. The number of participants who participated in the study can be considered a limitation. If there had been more participants, the data would have been more representative of the district population. In addition, if data had been gathered from other K-8 centers it would have also been more representative of the district population. Another limitation was securing individuals who are willing to volunteer their time and resources for the parent workshops. The presenters must be willing to dedicate their time in order for the implementation of the

project to be a success. There will also be the need for the school personnel to support the project and do their part for the project to be a success. This requires effort and time put forth by the administration and staff at the K-8 Center. Increasing the membership of the PTSA will play a vital role in the school administration and staff members' promotion of the PTSA and communication with parents regarding the importance of their involvement. Another limitation for this project may be scheduling parent workshops. It is important that the days and time are feasible for parents and that they allow the opportunity for maximum participation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Parental involvement or the lack there of is a concern that many educational institutions experience not just in the study district but also throughout the United States. This project was created with the hopes of increasing parental involvement at the study site. An alternate method that may I have used to address the local problem, would be to examine why parents are not involved in their child's education. Additionally, I would identify K-8 centers in the district that have a high level of parental involvement and meet with their staff to discuss some of the strategies they have used to increase and maintain involvement from the parents at their school. Lastly, I would consider professional development sessions for teachers that include various strategies that are effective when interacting with parents. Offering these sessions may increase teacher participation the study site.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

It was not until I embarked upon my doctoral program that I gained a true understanding of what it means to be scholarly. Scholarship can be defined as the pursuit of transformational truth grounded in the pursuit of improving the human condition through gaining new understandings from looking at ourselves and the world differently (Oliver, 2010). . Scholarly work and research require much patience and perseverance. I have gained various skills during the past 5 years as a student at Walden University. While completing this project, I have read and analyzed numerous scholarly text and peer-reviewed articles to extract information that has enhanced my growth as not only a student but also an educator. I learned that the use of peer-reviewed articles can be helpful in ensuring that the articles are accurate and valid. During my time at Walden, I learned how to analyze quantitative and qualitative data, first, through the SPSS course that I took during my coursework, and, then, more thoroughly during the completion of my project study. The finished project is an original piece of work that I created which may potentially be used by educators at the study site.

Project Development and Evaluation

When developing a project, it is imperative to take into consideration all potential viewpoints that could be involved in the outcome. While developing this project, I have learned that it requires much time and effort to ensure that it will be successful. I created this project to help enhance the PTSA currently in place at the study site; enhancing the PTSA may lead, I believe, to an increase in parental involvement at the site. The development of this project study was guided by the use of the rubric along with valued

feedback from my committee members. Based on the data that were collected and analyzed, I created this project, which consists of a policy recommendation that may have a positive impact, when implemented, on the K-8 Center. I developed three recommendations that may be useful in improving parental involvement and encouraging parents to become involved with the PTSA at the study site. The recommendations entail the PTSA having a membership drive along with monthly meetings and parent workshops and opportunities for parents to volunteer for school activities.

For this project, I used an outcome-based evaluation. According to Royse et al. (2015), a systematic way of examining a program is to ensure that it has achieved the intended results. This evaluation will be used to determine whether after the recommendations have been implemented there has been an increase of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Evaluation will consist of reviewing attendance sheets from P.T.S.A. meetings and other parental activities held there at the study site. Attendance sheets will be compared to those from the previous school year, along with the current, implementation, school year on a month to month basis. The effectiveness will be measured through an increase of the P.T.S.A. membership and an increase in parental attendance during P.T.S.A. meetings and parental activities. For the project to be successful constant evaluation is needed to continue to make the necessary changes to guarantee needs are being met accordingly. The goal of the evaluation is to examine whether there has been an increase in parental involvement at the K-8 Center. If there is not increase, then there would be some revisions to attempt to increase the involvement.

Leadership and Change

I have learned that both leadership and change are indispensable. According to DuFour and Reason (2015), one of the most important aspects of leadership for change is working with others to form a shared sense of purpose. Often times, leaders are aware that change is required but uninformed as to how to implement the necessary resource for change to occur. You cannot lead on your own, there must be collaboration with others to meet the common goal of change. Throughout my educational career, I have been exposed to several leaders and a variety of leadership styles. Effective leadership and the willingness to change are important components of the educational process. Leaders are the individuals to facilitate and introduce the change which then requires a plan for implementing the change that is needed. My time here at Walden has equipped me with the knowledge and assurance needed to be an effective leader of change in the field of education.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

Becoming a scholar has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding tasks that I have accomplished thus far. However, over the last 5 years, my thoughts of being a scholar have changed. According to Anderson, Gold, Stewart, and Thorpe (2015), a scholar works through integral parts of the research by examining what others have concluded regarding the topic of study. In addition, a scholar is reflective during the research process, has a strong sense of self, and continues to seek answers long after the research process has occurred (Anderson, Gold, Stewart, & Thorpe, 2015). During this journey, I learned how to efficiently gather and analyze data. I am comfortable as a

qualitative research scholar. I used the skills learned to create a project that may be beneficial to the study site and the local district. After this journey, I will continue to examine numerous areas in the field of education which will increase my capacity to be an effectual scholar and educator.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

During this process, I have learned that parental involvement has been widely examined but the topic remains worthy of further research. According to Lawrence and Murphy (2013), the practitioner who is challenged by a situation in an educational situation seeks to delve beneath the surface of the problem to find reasons for the challenging situation. Throughout this doctoral journey, I have learned a lot about myself as a practitioner. The lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center was a concern that needed to be addressed. I successfully gathered and analyzed data, which allowed me to address the problem of parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. My overall goal of this project was to increase parental involvement at the study site.

As a practitioner, I have come to value the skills I have attained as a researcher in the field of education. I have used these skills in my current field to stay informed with current trends and best practices. Through staying informed with the best practices, I can use these skills in the classroom to increase my students' academic success.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

It was not until I embarked upon this doctoral journey that I have developed a project this impactful. Establishing the genre for my project was not difficult. However, making certain that the recommendations were reasonable and attainable required critical

thinking on my behalf. In the beginning, I knew what was required and took the time to reflect on how I could best implement a project to address the needs of the teachers at the K-8 Center. I have learned that it takes time, dedication, and effort to develop a project. My selection of the chosen genre was based on my understanding of the needs for the K-8 Center. To ensure this project was successful, it was developed with all stakeholders (i.e., school administrators, teachers, parents, and students) in mind. The purpose and goal of this project was for parents to become more involved at the K-8 Center. I created this project because I did not want the lack of parental involvement to remain at this study site. I believe it was important to determine a project that would provide viable solutions to increase parental involvement at the K-8 Center. As a project developer, I am satisfied with the completion of this project that will be used at the K-8 Center to help increase parental involvement.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Researchers, educators, and policy makers have identified the lack of parental involvement in education as a problem that surpasses socio-economic status (Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014). Parental involvement was even addressed at the national level when the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 included a parental involvement component. School districts nationwide were mandated to develop parental involvement programs to address the issue in regard to a lack of parental involvement within the educational system. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine teacher perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. This study will contribute to the growing body of research on the topic of parental involvement.

With a qualitative research approach, I conducted a case study of teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. The findings indicated that there is a lack of parental involvement at the study site. Participants expressed that the school currently has a P.T.S.A. program but it is not operated and ran on a consistent basis. The participants also mentioned that the parental membership is very low within the P.T.S.A. To address this issue, recommendations were made to the study site to assist with increasing the membership of the P.T.S.A., which in turn lead to an increase parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The project potential impact on social change will be driven by the partnership between parents, administration, and staff at the K-8 Center to increase parental involvement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Research on promoting effective parental involvement can be very beneficial to all stakeholders in the educational process. There is a plethora of literature and research on the importance of parental involvement in the educational field, but there was a limited amount of information in regard to strategies that can be used to effectivity increase parental involvement. The data from this study indicated a need for opportunities that would allow for parental involvement along with a consistent parental involvement program in the form of the P.T.S.A. For this reason, recommendations were made to the study site, to assist with increasing parental involvement at there at the K-8 Center.

Continued research on parental involvement is needed to help keep school administrators and teachers informed on various strategies that may be used to increase

and maintain parental involvement. Future research may involve parents' perceptions of parental involvement. The research could examine parents' perspectives and take a close look at how they perceive their involvement and what it takes to break the barriers and get them involved.

Conclusion

For this qualitative case study, I examined teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. Unobtrusive data was examined and teachers completed questionnaires and individual interviews that gave insight into their perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. Data gathered from this study also provided insight into methods that could be used to increase parental involvement at the study site. The findings from this case study led to recommendations, which if implemented has the potential to improve parental involvement at the K-8 Center.

In Section 1 of this project study, I introduced the concept of parental involvement and discussed its importance in the field of education. The problem was explained along with information on how it has influenced the local section. This section included an examination of research literature related to parental involvement along with the conceptual framework of this study.

In Section 2, I presented a review of the research methodology that was used for this study. The research method for this study was a qualitative research design with a case study approach. A case study was explained as the appropriate approach for conducting this study because it provides a rich, detailed account of teachers' perceptions

and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. Furthermore, a qualitative design with a case study approach was suitable because the findings from this study may be used to contribute to the improvement of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Data collection and analysis consisted of individual interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data to determine teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The vital data gathered from this study have provided a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement.

In Section 3 of this project study, I provided the details for the project and defined then. This project was developed to address the lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Based on the findings, a policy recommendation report was developed which centers on enhancing the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place at the study site. The implementation of this policy recommendation was based on teachers' perceptions and experiences along with an analysis of unobtrusive data. This recommendation will affect how the school makes the necessary changes to their current P.T.S.A. to increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. This recommendation intends to support teachers in terms of resolving the lack of parental involvement as described in their interviews and questionnaire responses.

Lastly, this section includes discussion of the strengths and limitations of the project and alternative approaches. The section also contains my personal reflection on scholarship, leadership, and change, along with my personal growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer throughout my doctoral program. Last but not least,

this section concluded by exploring potential impact for social change along with recommendations for future research on parental involvement.

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Appendix A: Policy Recommendation Report for K-8 Center

As part of my doctoral study at Walden university and based on the findings of my project study, I am presenting this policy recommendation to the administration and staff at the K-8 Center. I examined teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. My research was based on three of the six types of parental involvement based on Epstein's Parental Involvement Model which guided me in formulating my research question and sub-questions for this study. In this policy recommendation report, I will provide background information on the problem which inspired this project, information on the data analysis and findings along with specific recommendations that may be implemented to improve parental involvement at the K-8 Center.

Background of the Problem

Multiple studies have been conducted to explore the influence of parental involvement in the educational system (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015; Crichlow, 2013; Apple, 2013; Kim & Page, 2013; Kurtulmus, 2016). Parental involvement at the K-8 Center has remained low throughout 2011-2015. Despite implementing various activities to involve parents, the center has still found it hard to maintain parental involvement. According to the K-8 Center School Improvement Plan, during the 2014-2015 school years, less than 26% of parents were involved in activities that occurred at the school (MDCPS, 2015).

Every year, randomly selected parents and students, and staff at the K-8 Center complete school climate surveys which are used to gather information in regard to the

individuals' perceptions of the school. Results are used to help improve the school.

Throughout the last five years, the return rate of parent's surveys has been extremely low ranging from 15.3% at its lowest in 2014 to 36.4% at its highest in 2011. After reviewing the results of staff surveys over the last five years, many teachers agree their ability to do the best possible was limited by the lack of concern and/or support from parents (MDCPS, 2015). Throughout the 2011-2015 school years, parent enrollment in the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (P.T.S.A.) at the K-8 Center has declined from 38 parent memberships to 22 parent memberships. Meeting records from the P.T.S.A. for 2014-2015 school year revealed there were nine P.T.S.A. meetings held and for each meeting, no more than 5% of parents attended.

Overview of the Study

By using a qualitative research approach, I conducted a case study and explored teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. Purposeful sampling was used to select of 11 participants (four primary teachers, three middle school teachers, and four middle school teachers). Participants were selected based on their teaching experience and the length of time they have been employed at the K-8 Center.

Data Collection

The three methods used to gather data were individual face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data. The following central research question and sub questions guided the study:

Central Research Question: What are teachers' perceptions of their experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with communicating with parents at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with encouraging learning at home at the K-8 Center?

Sub Question 3: What are teachers' perceptions and experiences with motivating parents to volunteer at the K-8 Center?

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with seven participants. These participants were chosen based on their grade levels and years of experience teaching at the study site. The interview consisted open-ended questions that addressed (a) participants' perceptions and experiences of parental involvement (b) participants' experiences with communicating with parents, (c) strategies used to promote parental involvement, and (d) participants' experiences with encouraging learning at home.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the middle school and special education teachers. Initially six participants received an email with a link to complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire contained information in regard to teachers' perceptions of communication, assisting with learning at home, and encouraging parental involvement at the K-8 Center.

Unobtrusive data for this study consisted of PTSA sign-in logs, meeting minutes and open house attendance logs. Unobtrusive data was reviewed over a one-week period

at the K-8 Center. All logs and meeting minutes that were available for the current and previous school year were reviewed. The unobtrusive data was used to verify attendance during PTSA meetings and other school activities.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed. Following the transcription of the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to check their transcripts for accuracy. Once the participants reviewed their transcripts and gave approval, I read the interviews and questionnaire responses twice to gain an understanding of the data. Once I read the transcripts, I then re-read them to begin coding the interviews and questionnaires for potential themes. I developed codes that addressed the research questions. Data was managed using a private computer storage and hard copy files will be stored at my home. For the unobtrusive data, PTSA attendance logs and meeting minutes were reviewed along with open house attendance logs. These documents were analyzed to gain insight on parental involvement at the K-8 Center based on parent's attendance at the above-mentioned events.

Summary of Findings

Findings for this project study was gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and unobtrusive data during a six-week period. Based on the project study, five themes emerged from the data related to teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The themes were (a) importance of parental involvement, (b) reinforcing learning at home, (c) communication, (d) encouraging parents to volunteer, and (e) increasing parental involvement.

Results from the data indicated a lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Participants from the study voiced their perceptions and experiences with parental involvement. Many of the teachers stated their school did not offer many opportunities to increase parental involvement. They explained that the school does have a Parent, Teacher, Student Association (P.T.S.A.), but it is not being operated on a consistent basis. Based on these results, I was lead to develop a policy recommendation that would aid in increasing parental involvement at the study site. This section will include a description of the project along with project goals, rational for the chosen design, a review of literature, the proposed implementation schedule, and the project evaluation process. I will also include implications for social change within this section.

Description and Goals

For this project study, I examined teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. Based on the findings of this study, a policy recommendation was created to highlight important information and findings from the study. This report includes specific recommendations for improving the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place at the study site. The project chosen for this study was a policy recommendation that will focus on revamping the P.T.S.A. This policy came about from data gathered from unobtrusive data along with questionnaire and interview participant's responses from the study site and the teachers' desire to increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The policy recommendation includes a description of the problem, findings, and recommendations.

This project was developed based on data collected and analyzed. The goal of this policy recommendation is to address the problem cited in section one which was a lack of parental involvement at the study site. This policy will be presented to administration and staff with recommendations that will serve as a basis for change in how the P.T.S.A. at the K-8 Center is ran and operated. This project is designed to increase parent participation through numbers, increase school-wide activities, and increase communication and collaboration amongst the parents, teachers, and school staff.

Rationale

For this project study, creating a policy recommendation allows the opportunity to make recommendations in regard to the current Parent, Teacher, and Student Association (P.T.S.A.) at the study site to address issues and concerns raised by participants during this study. The policy strives to make recommendations to help increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Teachers expressed the lack of parental involvement they have experienced at the school. Furthermore, many of the teachers stated that they feel if the P.T.S.A. currently in place was more active then they might be able to increase and maintain parent involvement.

Through the questionnaires and individual interview responses from participants, it was determined that there was a perception held by teachers at the school that would fall into the realm of this project. A perception that was evident was many teachers felt the need for something to be put into place to increase parental involvement at the study

site. The “policy recommendation” was chosen because it was the best fit in terms of addressing the problem at hand.

Review of the Literature

The goal for this project study was to increase parental involvement at an inner-city K-8 Center. After gathering and analyzing data from participants it was determined that the study site could benefit from a policy recommendation which will emphasize on enhancing the parent, teacher, and student association (P.T.S.A.) currently in place at the K-8 Center. This project was developed and influenced by the work of two psychologists, Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky. Bandura (1994) believed that your self-belief of efficacy regulates your level of motivation. Whereas, if parents are encouraged to participate and become members of the P.T.S.A it may increase their motivation to become more involved in their child’s education through the school and within the home. Vygotsky (1980) sustained that social interaction is essential for learning to occur. When parents become involved with the P.T.S.A., they will be provided with the resources needed to assist their child to ensure they are academically successful.

The literature review examined recent research and studies related to policy recommendations and parent, teacher, and student associations. The topics included defining policy recommendations, writing a policy recommendation, parent, teacher, and student association, benefits of a parent, teacher, and student association, and examples of successful parent, teacher, and student associations. To complete this research, I utilized various databases within the Walden University library. These databases and search

engines included: ProQuest, ERIC, EBSCO, and SAGE. I also used Google Scholar to search for recent peer reviewed research about the above-mentioned topics. The phrases used in the search included: *policy recommendation, writing a policy recommendation, recommendation reports, policy reports, parent, teacher association, P.T.A., parent, teacher, student association, P.T.S.A., and parental involvement programs.*

Defining Policy Recommendations

A policy recommendation was the best genre for this project study. This genre will present information in a manner that could be easily distributed and understood by administration and staff. The policy recommendation will link specific themes that emerged from the project study. When policy recommendations are translated into thematic statements, it could improve intervention and implementation within the educational setting (Sandelowski & Lemman, 2012). The policy recommendation will outline solutions that will address the problem that the K-8 Center has been experiencing with parental involvement. According to Doyle (2013), a policy recommendation is a written policy that is comprised of advice for a group or organization with the authority to make policy decisions. Policy recommendations may be used to inform individuals on issues and how research and evidence can assist with ensuring the best decision is made. Canada, Pigott, Polanin, Valentine, and Williams (2013) expressed the importance of reporting all findings in the policy recommendation report. The goal of this project was to provide stakeholders at the study site with evidence based research and opinions that may be used to enhance the P.T.S.A. currently in place at the K-8 Center, which would then lead to an increase of parental involvement.

Brownson, Colditz, and Proctor (2012) described a policy recommendation report as a suitable method used for disseminating research findings and initiating project implementation. McIntosh and Gunther (2013) compared a policy recommendation to a type of research paper, which has similar characteristics to other genres such as a thesis or dissertation. Gray (2013) supported the use of a policy recommendation report as preferable to other genres for reporting research within the education field. When writing a policy recommendation report, there are things one must consider ensuring that your recommendation is practical and actionable. The Center for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) prepared guidelines that may be used by researchers to assist with writing policy recommendations based on research. The first of the ten steps CARDI outlined for writing a policy recommendation was to determine the objective of the recommendation. The objective for this project was to enhance the P.T.S.A. in a way that would be beneficial to all stakeholders at the K-8 Center.

The second step in writing a policy recommendation is deciding on a target audience. It is important to determine the key stakeholders and what influence they have when it comes down to decision making (CARDI, 2012). Understanding who your audience is and what their job entails is crucial when it comes to writing a policy recommendation (Musandu, 2013). In this case, my target audience was school administration, teachers, and the community involvement specialist.

The third step is to make certain that the issue is clearly stated. It is imperative that the existing situation is clearly outlined when being presented to stakeholders. I will state the problem and explain how it will be solved, which would be favorable to the

audience. The next step for a good policy recommendation is to allow options, when possible. CARDI (2012) stated that having several approaches to solve the issue based on research evidence can help make the decision easier.

The fifth step focused on recognizing the economic climate. The economic climate would not be an issue for this project because the policy recommendation will be making recommendations for a program that is already in place at the study site. The next step is making sure the policy recommendation is aligned with the existing policies. This project and policy recommendation is aligned with the K-8 Center because the goals of this project are to improve the parental involvement which will be valuable to the school.

Using examples is the seventh step in the process. It is a good idea to check for the outcome of similar approaches when making a policy recommendation (CARDI, 2012). I will check for similar approaches by showing how other schools with an active P.T.S.A. use similar strategies when it comes to parental involvement. Step eight is remembering the audience by ensuring academic and technical language is not in the policy recommendation. It is important to make certain the policy is presented in simple language and easily understood by any reader without background knowledge of the subject area. The language must be just right, not technical, but professional (Musandu, 2013). The audience for this policy recommendation will be the school administrations, teachers, and the community involvement specialist.

The next step is to show what form of impact the policy recommendation will have on the group or organization. CARDI (2012) explained the importance of writing a

policy recommendation that will be beneficial to society or the organization that will be implementing the recommendations. In this case, the project and its recommendation will be beneficial to the school, the community, and the school district. The final step is highlighting the importance of employing the recommendation. Highlighting the importance of this recommendation will be done by convincing the organization that the issue is significant and the recommendations will be beneficial when implemented.

Parent, Teacher, and Student Association

According to Froiland and Davison (2014) communication amongst parents and the school should be an ongoing process. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is the bridge to close the relationship between the parents and the school. Involving parents in the educational process has been a local and national problem for many years (Young, Austin, and Growe, 2013). The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is a nonprofit organization that prides itself on being a powerful voice for children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education (Gary, 2015). The PTA also known as parent, teacher, and student association (PTSA) has been around for years. The National PTA was founded in 1897 in Washington D.C. A PTA is a formal organization comprised of parents, teachers, staff, and students that is dedicated to supporting the education of students and is intended to facilitate parental involvement within a school (Bush, 2012).

The overall goal of the PTA is to engage and empower families and communities to be involved and advocate for the children. Student success is not merely a situation that can emerge as a result of the teacher, student or school administration alone, but

rather may be said to be the result of the achievement of a number of objectives that are desired collectively by the shareholders (Bui & Bush, 2016). Most schools, whether public or private have a PTA or a comparable organization, which is adapted to the exclusive needs of each school (Wilson, 2012). Every person that joins a local PTA automatically becomes of member of the state and national PTA. The National PTA is dedicated to supporting the education of students in the United States from preschool all the way through high school (Wang, 2015). Per the National PTA (2013), the goal at a national and local level is for parents to be enthusiastically involved in their child's education by becoming active member in the PTA at their child's school.

Benefits of a Parent, Teacher, and Student Association

The belief that children benefit from their parents' involvement in school-related activities is supported by research, particularly studies of the impact of parental involvement on students' academic outcomes, behavior, motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy (Ross, 2016). Many parents are unaware of what PTA is or what the association does. The PTA does a variety of things within the school at times even in the community (Manno, 2012). Many PTA activities do not cost anything just requires time. These activities can range from assisting with field day activities, assisting students in the library and classroom, or simply volunteering time in the office. However, there are PTA activities that may require funding and for these efforts the PTA may raise funds through school dances, bake sales, book fairs, membership drives, or other creative methods (Jones, 2011). One of the PTAs goals is to make certain that all stakeholders are provided with whatever is needed to ensure that all children are succeeding academically.

According to Post (2015), in order for students to achieve, participation by their parents is mandatory. Unfortunately, many parents know what a PTA does, but their main concern is understanding what exactly it is that the PTA can do, not just for their child, but for them as well. It is important to instill the value of the PTA in parents and students. According to Back (2011), in some cultures, parents do not believe they have the right to question administration and teachers or they just do not feel comfortable speaking on their child's behalf. To successfully implement changes, it is important that all stakeholders, especially parents, are included and able to provide input in the association (Miele & Bennett, 2014). When all stakeholders come together and work on one accord, it brings them one step closer to achieving their goal.

For your PTA to be successful, you must appeal to parents in various ways (Brinckerhoff, 2012). To transform parents into active members they must be informed of the goal and the in purpose of their PTA membership and how it will impact them. Sarpong (2012) explained that people will join organizations that serve a great cause in an effective and efficient manner. When it comes to membership, it is important for administration, teachers, and staff to first take on the role of being an active PTA member. When membership is presented to parents and they realize school personnel is on board and serious about being involved they tend to take more interest in becoming involved themselves (Chevalier, 2012). Parents are their child's first teacher and the PTA plays a significant role in offering parents the opportunity to assist teachers in the most valuable endeavors, the education of their child (Cassano, 2012). The PTA is about

connecting to resources and people who care about children and their education. Back (2011) explained a few benefits of being involved in a PTA:

- You will find a support system of parents who can relate to rearranging schedules, planning carpools, and worrying about how their child is doing in school, and parents that are willing to help you.
- The more support you have, the easier working with your child's principal, teachers, and school community. PTA encompasses a large, nationwide network of people working toward the same goals, and who are happy to share their ideas and experiences no matter where you and they are located.
- PTA offers you access to programs and resources that may be lacking in your school.
- Because the national PTA has been around for over 100 years, it has a long and proven structure for serving students, parents, and teachers, as well as an impressive record of accomplishment for advocating for education and child welfare improvements.
- PTA is the only parent organization with national, state, and local governing bodies. This means that whether you are interested in national school nutrition or getting a stop sign installed near your school, you can call on PTA to help you make your voice heard.

The benefits of being involved in a PTA are endless, and it is important to inform parents that the sooner they get involved the more of an impact it will have on their child's learning and education going forward.

Successful Parent, Teacher, and Student Associations

Per Wilson (2012) for families to become involved, they must:

- Believe they should be involved
- Believe their involvement can make a difference
- Believe that the teacher, school, and their child wants their involvement
- Believe they can be involved

Like anything else, the foundation for success starts with building strong, genuine relationships. When parents are involved in they can make a huge difference in improving the education experience of their child (Goumbri, 2016).

Murray High School PTSA, which is in Jackson, Mississippi, believes that you must get out there and go to where the people are to spread value of the PTA. To increase their PTSA membership, Murray High created a campaign entitled, “Each One, Reach One’, which consisted of current members recruiting another parent or community supporter for PTSA membership. The school used incentives such as holiday parties and dances to get the students involved with the campaign. Constant reminders were placed around the school with information on the membership progress and goal. PTSA membership forms were made accessible via the schools PTSA website, email, newsletters, and even placed in the parent resource center, school library and office. Announcements were made during the school sporting events to encourage PTSA membership.

For the 2011-2012 school year, Murray’s PTSA had more than 700 members. They received recognition from Mississippi, their state PTA, for having the largest

PTA/PTSA in the entire state. They recruited an additional 323 members during their “Each One, Reach One” campaign. Determination, persistence, and enthusiasm is what is needed to get individuals excited about PTSA membership (Sarpong, 2012). Goals are accomplished more easily when the administration and PTSA are on the same page and makes the journey more enjoyable when you have great leaders serving on the PTSA board.

Franklin Elementary, in Glendale, California, also knows what it is like to have a successful PTA. They started with a membership of 375 members and by the following school year membership has almost doubled to 721 members. They believe the main reason for their PTA success was because they made it a priority to connect with families. At Franklin, they found one to one contact with families to be very beneficial. They would hold welcome back events before the beginning of the school year which allowed them the opportunity to meet new families prior to the first days of school which can be very hectic.

The second key to their membership success was visibility. Throughout the school year, parents could see what their school PTA has contributed in the community as well as within their child’s school. They ensured that their PTA name was visible at all activities using flyers, posters, and name badges. Like Murray High School, Franklin also found it beneficial to have membership campaigns. Their membership campaigns were not just focused on reaching their goal but on how quickly they could achieve their goal. To encourage the students, each class had an ice-cream cone placed in the hallway by their classroom. Scoops of ice-cream were added to their cones every time they

turned in membership forms. Parents received membership updates via email and weekly newsletters. By the end of the campaign, Franklin had reached membership levels between 200-300 percent.

Lastly, Franklin made it a priority to ensure that everyone was included regardless of their race or cultural background. They made every effort to keep the school unified by including all individuals. Parents need to feel they are valued, and when they feel needed and valued they are even more inclined to join and participate in the PTA (Freemon, 2012). Franklin made certain that they were always they were appreciative of their members and were always positive with everyone. These key factors are what made Franklin's PTA a success.

Parent Workshops

Parental involvement is a right, responsibility, and a social need (Castro et al., 2015). Without an active home-school connection students most likely will not attain academic progress (Castro et al., 2015). Families need to collaborate with schools by monitoring students' progress, and by supporting students' learning at home (Sylaj, 2013). Findings of the study indicated that parents were not comfortable assisting their children with homework, were not aware of grade-level expectations, or meaningful ways to engage with their children at home. Parent workshops will increase parents' understanding of grade-level curriculum, and how they can best support the academic progress of their children.

Bolivar and Chrispeel (2011) observed that when parents were given explicit information, interacted with other parents, educators, and community members regarding

educational systems, parents' efficacy increased. Providing parents with guidance regarding how to and what to communicate to children who were experiencing challenges in school, parents maintained a positive learning experience at home (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012). These interactions may result in increased use of school and community resources to support children academically as well as socially.

Because some parents did not understand how children were evaluated and assessed, they did not monitor their children's academic progress (Deslandes & Rivard, 2013). Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, and Schoeneberger (2015) evaluated Parent University, a parent engagement program designed to engage traditionally underserved parents. Results of their evaluation indicated that students' school performance increased when parents attended workshops that connected to academic outcomes. Workshops that integrated data were a way to improve and support effective parental involvement (Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, & Schoeneberger, 2015). Parents were empowered when workshops built their knowledge of evaluation and learning (Murray, Ackerman-Spain, Williams, & Ryley, 2011). When schools planned meetings that regarded parents as a valued part of the educational system, parents maintained the home-school connection (Hafizi & Papa, 2012).

Building parents' self-efficacy to participate in decisions in relation to school budgets and curriculum could be another benefit of parent workshops. Parents' understanding of academic goals may allow them to contribute to conversations related to choosing curricula. Their participation in decisions regarding education becomes a source of pride for students, and students gain a positive perspective of school (Hafizi & Papa,

2012). Moreover, Cunningham, Kreider, and Ocon (2012) found that when parents received training, they extended their involvement in educational activities beyond school-based activities and decision-making. They became aware and involved in entities which influenced education on a broader scale. The parent workshops that I propose may empower parents to influence students' academic goals and may increase their ability to participate in school-wide and district-wide educational policy making processes.

Project Description

This project was a policy recommendation report for administrators and staff at the K-8 Center. The project will address the inconsistencies of the P.T.S.A. currently in place at the school. The policy provides recommendations to enhance the association to assist with increasing and maintaining parental involvement at the study site. The policy recommendation will be implemented during the upcoming 2017-2018 school year. The policy will consist of three recommendations (a) 2017-2018 P.T.S.A. Membership Drive (b) monthly P.T.S.A. meetings and (c) monthly parent workshops. The needed resources for this project is for administration and teachers to dedicate their time so that implementations of recommendations may be successful.

Potential Barriers

Potential barriers that could impact the implementation of the policy recommendations could be a lack of support from all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, and students). The fact that administrators and teachers would have to volunteer their time to get the association running could possibly be a barrier. Successful

implementation relies heavily on time dedicated by staff outside of their working hours. Not only do we need participation from staff, but there may also be uncommitted parents, which could also be a barrier when it comes to implementation of the project being successful. Funding may also pose as a potential barrier. For the P.T.S.A. membership drives, I would like to offer incentives to keep the students and parents motivated to join and become more involved. For the workshops, it may require funding to bring in special individuals to host the workshops and to have snacks to offer the guest and participants attending the workshops and meetings.

Proposal for Implementation

There is currently a P.T.S.A. currently in place at the K-8 Center. However, it was not operated and ran on a consistent basis. Per the data, the P.T.S.A. does not meet on a consistent basis. For the previous school year, the P.T.S.A. only had three meetings during the entire school year. The policy recommendation I have prepared will consist of three recommendations, which includes having a membership drive during the beginning of the school year, monthly P.T.S.A. meetings, and monthly parent workshops. The policy will be implemented during the 2017-2018 school year. Implementation of this project could increase parental involvement and create a better partnership between home and school. To make certain that the policy is prepared for the upcoming school year, I will meet with the school administrators, a few weeks before the start of the 2017-2018 school year, to get their support and feedback on the recommendations. Following the meeting with administration, I will meet with the staff, during the planning days before

the first day of school, to present them with an explanation of the policy and what the recommendations entails.

Role and Responsibility

In the beginning, the participants will consist of school administrators, teachers, and the community involvement specialist. Being that I am the researcher and developed the project, I will be involved to some extent with the supervision of the project. I anticipate that I will help with the membership drive during the beginning of the school year. I will help the staff with coming up with a theme along with incentives that can be used to encourage and motivate both the students and parents. I will also assist with the monthly parent workshops. I will work with the P.T.S.A. to determine what topics would be beneficial to the parents there at the K-8 Center. Once everyone is aware of what is required of them they will then begin to inform parents and students of the changes made to the association with the goal of increasing the involvement of parents at the K-8 Center.

Project Evaluation Plan

The goal of this policy recommendation is to enhance the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place based on findings of teachers' perceptions and experiences at the study site. Following 4 months of implementation of the project at the study site, a survey will be issued to gather feedback from stakeholders. The stakeholders will consist of teachers and parents of students that have been enrolled at the K-8 Center prior to the implementation of the project. The survey will be used to gather stakeholders' opinions in regards to their experience with the association and whether

they believe that there has been an improvement in the P.T.S.A. in comparison to previous years. The purpose for the project evaluation is to determine if the recommendations address the current problem at the study site. In addition, the evaluation will be used to decide if the recommendations have had a positive impact on increasing parental involvement at the study site.

Project Implications

Local Community

This project will promote social change at the local level by improving parental involvement through the analysis of teacher perceptions. The policy recommendation was designed from the teachers' perceptions and experiences with parental involvement at the study site. The goal of the project is to increase parental involvement which is not beneficial to just teachers but all stakeholders involved. Not only will the administrators be made aware of teacher perceptions but the district will also be informed of their perceptions along with the outcome of a policy recommendation for this study.

Following approval of this project study, a copy will be sent to the school district for their review. The policy implementation has the potential to improve the school through the increase of parental involvement. Recommendations to enhance the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association may be used in other schools within the district that may be facing similar roadblocks when it comes to getting parents involved or maintaining the involvement of their parents.

Farther Context

Parental involvement is of great importance in many schools throughout the United States. Not only can this policy recommendation impact schools in the district of the K-8 Center but it may also serve as a model to districts in other cities within the state. This project has the potential to be used by other districts and states that are looking to improve parental involvement within their schools. The proposed project may be used to determine how to address the issue of parental involvement using a Parent, Teacher, and Student Association. However, if the school already has a parental involvement program, the recommendations could be used for the current program the school has in place or it could be used to develop something comparable to promote social change within the communities.

Conclusion

This project was developed to address the lack of parental involvement at the K-8 Center. Based on the findings, a policy recommendation report was developed which centers on enhancing the Parent, Teacher, and Student Association currently in place at the study site. The implementation of this policy recommendation is based on teachers' perceptions and experiences along with an in-depth analysis of unobtrusive data. This recommendation will affect how the school makes the necessary changes to their current P.T.S.A. to increase and maintain parental involvement at the K-8 Center. This recommendation intends to support teachers in terms of resolving the lack of parental involvement as described in their interviews and questionnaire responses.

This policy recommendation report consists of three recommendations for the study site to implement during the 2017-2018 school year. These recommendations may be useful in improving parental involvement at the K-8 Center. The first recommendation is for the K-8 Center to host a P.T.S.A. membership drive. The membership drive will begin the second Monday of the school year and will end the third Friday of the school year. There will be incentives for the top class in the primary grade (K-2), intermediate grade (3-5), and middle school grade (6-8) with the highest membership. Parents will be notified of the membership drive via flyers that will be passed out by teachers during the Back to School Meet and Greet. The week the drive starts, parents will receive notification of the commencement via Connect Ed. Membership forms will be sent home to parents via students each Monday during the drive. The effectiveness of this recommendation will be evaluated by looking at the difference in membership registration during the 2016-2017 school year and after the membership drive of the current school year.

The second recommendation is for the K-8 center to increase their P.T.S.A. meetings. During the previous school year, the school conducted three meetings. For the P.T.S.A. to be effective they need to meet on a consistent basis. I recommend the P.T.S.A. increase their meetings to nine which would be held monthly beginning the month of September 2017 through May 2018. The effectiveness of this recommendation will be evaluated by examining the P.T.S.A. attendance logs and meeting minutes at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

The final recommendation is for the K-8 center to host monthly parent workshops. The purpose of the workshops is to enlighten and empower parents to remain involved in their child's education. The first three workshops will be based on and centered around three types from the Epstein's Parental Involvement Model (2005): communication, learning at home, and volunteering. These workshops will consist of the presentation of information on the above-mentioned topics by administration and teachers along with other pertinent information and informal discussions regarding ways the school administration, teachers, and parents can work together as a team which would be valuable for all stakeholders involved in the education process. Parents will be informed of several ways they can be involved in their child's education beyond the classroom. The effectiveness of this recommendation will be evaluated by having participants of the workshops complete a survey to provide feedback after each workshop. These workshops will also be evaluated by examining and comparing attendance logs. If there is an increase in the attendance it may be an indication that the parents believe attending the workshops have been beneficial and may have invited other parents to attend the workshops.

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Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the impact of parental involvement in education?
2. How does parental involvement impact you as a teacher?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the parents of your students?
4. How is developing and maintaining a positive relationship with parents beneficial to you as the teacher?
5. Describe particular behaviors you display to build a positive relationship with parents.
6. Describe for me your methods of communication with parents to keep them informed of what is occurring at school and/or in the classroom.
7. How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to communicate with parents?
8. Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage learning at home.
9. How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to encourage learning at home?
10. Describe practices and strategies you believe you use to encourage parental involvement at school.
11. How effective are the practices and strategies you employ to encourage parental involvement at school?

12. What kinds of parental involvement programs and practices are currently in place at your school?
13. How do these parental involvement programs and practices that are currently in place at your school beneficial when it comes to parental involvement?
14. How do you perceive the practices and strategies your school employs to encourage parental involvement?
15. Do you think your measures have a positive effect on parental involvement? Why/Why Not?

Appendix C: Questionnaire Questions

Communication

1. What do you think is the best way to communicate with families regarding general information such as daily student conduct, student work progress, classroom happenings and nonacademic information?
2. How do you feel the school should communicate with families on more important topics such as school reforms, assessment tools, discipline procedures and school goals?
3. How do you communicate with families on more important topics such as school reforms, assessment tools, discipline procedures and school goals?
4. In what ways does your school assist families that may have language barriers?
5. In what ways, do you inform parents of information regarding classroom rules and procedures?
6. In what ways does your school inform parents of information regarding school rules and procedures?
7. How often do you conduct face-to-face conferences with parents in regards to their child academics/behavior?
8. Can you describe any barriers you have encountered when communicating with parents?
9. How do you deal with barriers you have encountered when communicating with parents?

10. In what ways does your school provide parents with information on choosing schools, programs, or activities within the school?

Volunteering

1. What strategies do you use to get parents involved in both academic and nonacademic activities?
2. If parents are unable to physically volunteer at the school, what are some other ways that the school can provide parents with an opportunity to volunteer at the school?
3. How do you and/or the school notify parents of volunteering opportunities?
4. Describe for me the volunteer programs that your school has in place for parents?
5. In what ways does your school organize parent patrols or other activities to aid in the operation of school activities?
6. Can you describe any barriers that you have encountered when encouraging parents to volunteer?
7. In what ways does your school implement a class parents or establish parent rooms?
8. Describe for me the process that is in place for parents that would like to volunteer at the school?
9. Describe for me the process that is in place for parents that would like to volunteer in the classroom?
10. What changes would you recommend improving the parental involvement program at the

school where you are employed?

Student Learning

1. How do you encourage parents to assist with their child's learning at home?
2. What does the school do to support parents with student learning?
3. Describe how you inform families of skills required for students in all subject areas?
4. Describe how you inform families on how to monitor and discuss homework?
5. In what ways does your school interact with parents on what their child is learning in class?
6. Describe for me the homework policies that you have in place for your classroom?
7. Describe for me the homework policies that your school has in place for students?
8. In what ways does your school provide information and ideas to families on how to help students with their academics at home?