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Walden University

College of Education

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Monica Leigh Nelson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Dr. Marilyn Robb, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Laura Siaya, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

The Office of the Provost

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Parents' Perceptions About Parent Involvement in an Elementary School

by

Monica Leigh Nelson

MA, University of Phoenix, 2011

BS, Worcester State College, 1998

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2019

Abstract

Parent involvement is as an important contributor to students' academic and social success in school. However, parent involvement at a suburban public K-4 school has lagged, specifically in activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. The purpose of this study was to examine parents' perceptions about their involvement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their engagement. A conceptual framework based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's motivational constructs for involvement guided this study. The research questions focused on parents' perceptions of their participation, reasons for and against engaging in school activities, and what the school could do to support their involvement. A purposeful sampling method was used to select participants from among 3rd and 4th grade parents. A basic qualitative design was used to capture the insights of 9 parent participants through individual interviews. Emergent themes were identified through open coding, and the findings were developed and checked for trustworthiness through member checking, an audit trail, reflexivity, and rich descriptions. The findings revealed that parents perceived teachers and administrators should welcome their involvement, create events that recognize parent challenges, and engage parent support. A professional development project was created to provide teachers with strategies to develop effective parent-teacher teams. This study has implications for positive social change by providing a structure to increase parent involvement in constructive and purposeful partnerships with teachers and the school. This in turn could positively influence students' academic journey and achievement.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Beatrice McMeekin, an involved parent, an encouraging grandmother, and a loving great-grandmother. She never finished high school, but she never stopped learning. Inspired by her passion, both of her children, two of her grandchildren, and one of her great-grandchildren grew up to be teachers. She always fully supported and encouraged me on my educational journey. This is for her.

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I would also like to thank my family and friends. My parents, Wayne and Melody, provided calm, ongoing emotional support throughout this chaotic journey. Thanks also go to Jen, Helen, and all of the others who provided support along the way. Special thanks go to my child, Wesley, who was an intellectual sounding board and a motivation to write quickly. Thank you for the example you set of following your heart and reaching for your dream. You never knew we were racing, but I won! .

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Section 1: The Problem

Parent-teacher relationships have been studied since Kaplan (1950) first explored the factors causing tension between parents and teachers. The three factors Kaplan found to strain parent-teacher relationships were (a) misunderstandings between parents and teachers, (b) efforts by both parties to protect their own interests, and (c) lack of efficacy. Epstein (1983) surveyed 1,269 parents and found that over 40% of them did not feel teachers were respectful and welcoming. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1992) studied 390 parents and 50 teachers and found that teacher efficacy and teacher perceptions of parent efficacy were associated with increased parent presence and participation, but that teachers' perceptions of parent efficacy were strongly linked to the socioeconomic status (SES) of the parents. These researchers helped to lay the groundwork for many of the studies on parent involvement that followed.

Over the six decades since Kaplan's seminal work, parent-teacher relationships have been studied under a variety of names, including parent-teacher relationships (Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014), family-school partnerships (Lasater, 2016), parent involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Grolnick, 2015), and parent engagement (Wong, 2015). Parent-teacher relationships have also been studied from a variety of perspectives, including those of teachers (Lasater, 2016; Minke et al., 2014), parents (Grolnick, 2015; Lasater, 2016; Minke et al., 2014), and students (Lasater, 2016). Researchers have also explored the benefits of successful parent-teacher relationships (Hindin & Mueller, 2016; Jeynes, 2012), as well as the barriers (Baker, Wise, Kelley, & Skiba, 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). However, despite this abundance of research, more research is needed on increasing parent participation at the local level.

The Local Problem

The academic performance at the local school was lower than that desired by administrators and teachers. According to the director of academic affairs at the school, at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 70% of the students in the local school were reading below grade level. The local school used Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as a benchmark assessment in reading. This assessment was administered school-wide by the Title I teachers three times a year. At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 53% of the students in the school scored within the needing intensive support category and 19% scored in the needing strategic support category (University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning, 2018). That left only 28% of students in the school performing at or above the goal level.

State assessment data also showed a need for improvement. On the 2017 fourth-grade state English language arts (ELA) assessment, 52% of local students scored partially or not meeting expectations (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MDESE], n.d.). This equaled the state average. However, on the math state assessment, 57% of local fourth graders scored partially or not meeting expectations, compared to a state average of 52% (MDESE, n. d.). Third graders tested below average in both subjects, with 71% of local students scoring partially or not meeting expectations on the reading state assessment and 67% on the math (MDESE, n.d.). The state averages for third graders were 62% and 51% respectively (MDESE, n.d.). Only 48% of local fourth graders and 29% of local third graders scored at or above goal on the state ELA and reading assessments (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Percentage of students scoring partially or not meeting expectations on state assessment in 2017 (MDESE, n.d.).

Assessment	Local School	State
Fourth Grade Reading	52	52
Fourth Grade Math	57	52
Third Grade Reading	71	62
Third Grade Math	67	51

Note: Data from MDESE, n.d.

The site for this study, which will be referred to as the local school, was a public K-4 school with 430 students enrolled (MDESE, n.d.). The school's location was classified as a large suburb (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). According to the school's profile, 21% of the students were identified as having disabilities, compared with 18% of students statewide (MDESE, n.d.). Of the 430 students at the school, 3% were English language learners, compared to 11% statewide (MDESE, n.d.). Fifty-two percent of the students were classified as high needs, compared with 47% statewide (MDESE, n.d.). The profile also showed that 38% of the local school's students were classified as economically disadvantaged, compared with 32% of the students in the state (MDESE, n.d.). There were 35 teachers employed by the school, including classroom teachers and specialists (MDESE, n.d.). According to the 2017 MA School Report Card Overview, the average number of absences per student in 2017 at the local school was 8.8 with a chronic absence rate of 11.1%. The rates for the state were 7.9 and 9.8% respectively (see Table 2).

Researchers showed that both state assessment scores and attendance rates can be influenced by parent involvement (Hayes, 2012; Park & Halloway, 2017). There is a

strong positive relationship between parent involvement and school achievement (Wilder, 2014). Parent involvement has also been positively linked with student achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; McNeal, 2014). The benefits of parent involvement apply to multiple subjects. In 2017, Park and Halloway showed that parent involvement predicted school achievement in both reading and math. Furthermore, Jeynes (2012) showed that when parents and teachers work together, they have a greater impact on students' academic success than when they each work independently.

Table 2

Comparison of local school and state demographics

	Local School	**State**
Students with disabilities	21%	18%
English Language Learners	3%	11%
High Needs	52%	47%
Economically Disadvantaged	38%	32%
Average Absence per Student	8.8	7.9
Chronic Absence Rate	11.1%	9.8%

Note: Data from MDESE, n.d.

Ma, Shen, and Krenn (2014) found that the type of involvement also made a difference. PTO membership can marginally increase math achievement scores (McNeal, 2014), but parent workshops have been found to have greater benefits for students and parents. Portwood, Brooks-Nelson, and Schoeneberger (2015) noted that parental attendance at one or more academic workshop was linked with fewer student absences. Workshops on storybook reading with pre-kindergarten students were found to improve student attitudes toward and interest in reading (Lacour, McDonald, Tissington, & Thomas, 2017). These workshops also increased parent self-confidence for helping

children with their reading and led to more storybook reading within the home (Lacour et al., 2017). Parent workshops have also been found to shift parents' beliefs about how students learn (Eisenreich & Andreasen, 2016).

Within the local context, several attempts have been made to increase parental participation at workshops as a way to raise student achievement. According to the school's positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) coordinator, a parent workshop survey was conducted at a school-wide open house at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year to determine what parents wanted. Sixty-five parents completed the survey, which provided some insight into what parents were looking for, but did not answer the problem of parent participation. The survey was brief, with only five questions, and was completed only by parents attending the open house.

School leaders and teachers used the survey data to create workshops for parents based on the needs and preferences revealed. However, parent attendance was low at those workshops. One example of this was the Summer Gap workshop. The last question on the survey was open ended: "Are there any workshop topics you would be interested in learning more about?" The PBIS coordinator reported that forty-five parents responded, "academic help." In response, a.teacher-created workshop was designed to give parents strategies and resources to help their children prevent summer learning gaps. The PBIS coordinator reported that all parents at the school were invited and encouraged to bring their children, but only 15 families participated out of the 370 families with children who attend the school. Only 14 parents attended another school-sponsored workshop focused on reducing stress and creating wellness at home.

The results of administrator and teacher efforts to increase parent involvement were uneven. While attendance at workshops was low, activities that were more focused on family fun nights were very well received. For example, one movie night activity sponsored by the school had 260 people in attendance with others turned away due to lack of space. However, research shows that parent workshops connected to academic outcomes seem to provide greater academic benefits for students than these social events (Portward et al., 2015; LaCour et al., 2017). It was unclear to staff, faculty, and leadership why parents were not more fully engaged in the activities that they indicated they wanted and that literature suggested would be most beneficial to student achievement, such as parent workshops, parents' group membership, and committee involvement. The problem addressed in this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities shown to have a positive influence on student achievement.

Rationale

Administrators and teachers at the local school worked to increase parental involvement with uneven success. Parents attended social events and engaged online with the local school and parents' group. In the parents' group, there were 114 parents signed up to receive email notices and 261 members in their Facebook group. However, while parents engaged in the more social activities, many did not participate in the type of activities most beneficial for student achievement.

PTO monthly meeting attendance averaged seven or eight parents, including the five officers, according to the PTO president. At a PBIS committee meeting at the end of

the 2016-2017 school year, a school counselor stated that an action step for the committee was to have at least one parent voice on the team. The PBIS committee was made up of teachers, counselors, and administrators from the school, but there were no parent members. As of March 2018, there were still no parent members on the committee.

There was also a lack of parent attendance at educational workshops held by the local school, such as the teacher-created workshop designed to prevent summer learning gaps. Only 15 families participated. Yet, on the parent workshop survey, 69% of parents indicated they wanted workshops focused on how to provide academic help to their children. According to the local school principal, there was a need to bridge the divide between fun events and educational events.

Robinson (2017) found that while most parents want to be involved, they are not sure how to do so. If parents do not feel capable of becoming involved, they will avoid involvement opportunities (Yamamoto, Holloway, & Suzuki, 2016). However, parents will become more involved when they feel welcomed and invited (Wong, 2015). To address the problem of parental engagement as outlined by the local administrators and teachers, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement.

Definition of Terms

Parent: A parent is "a natural parent, a legal guardian or other person standing in *loco parentis*" (Ferguson, 2009, p. 7). The term includes the child's main caretakers who make academic decisions for that child and interact with them at home.

Parent involvement: Parent involvement is a two-way partnership between the schools and families with the goal of helping students succeed in both school and life (Epstein, 2009). Involvement includes both parent presence in the school and creating a home environment that supports academic success (Jeynes, 2010).

Parent participation: Parent participation means "parents actively take part in regular and special school activities" (Ma et al., 2014, p.630). For this study, attending educational workshops, PTO meetings, school-sponsored activities, and parent/teacher conferences is parent participation,

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was that it led to identifying strategies that could encourage greater parental participation that will benefit children in the local school setting. Ma et al. (2014) found that parent involvement was significantly related to academic performance. In urban settings, schools with higher rates of parent participation were 1.724 times more likely to make AYP than were schools with lower rates of involvement. AYP is mainly determined by scores on state assessments (Delisio, 2005). By exploring local parents' perceptions of involvement, I explored their motivations for being or not being involved and I considered ways to increase their participation, which could lead to increases in student academic performance at the local school.

This study also helped to identify areas where training could help teachers more effectively invite parents. There are positive social change implications for the creation of teacher-training opportunities with the results of this study. With this training, parent participation could be increased, which could potentially lead to academic and behavioral benefits including increasing students' academic achievement. While the study findings will not generalize to other schools, they may be beneficial for those schools trying to improve parent participation or academic achievement.

Research Questions

To address the problem of parental involvement, as outlined by the local administrators and teachers, I examined parents' perceptions of school participation and parents' ideas for how school administrators and teachers could increase parent participation. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement. The following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

1. RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school?
2. RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events?
3. RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research on parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey's copious research and resultant model laid the groundwork for this study by exploring the benefits of, barriers to, and best ways for implementing parent involvement. Although this model was not used in its entirety, it formed the framework for this study.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research explored why parents choose to become involved with schools. Their model of the parental involvement process showed five levels between a parent choosing to become involved and the resultant influence on their child. The first of these five levels explained the parents' decisions to become involved and the constructs that influenced those decisions. This study focused on those constructs.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested that the three most influential constructs impacting parents' decisions to become involved are (a) the parent's role construction, (b) the parent's sense of efficacy for involvement, and (c) the invitation and opportunities for involvement offered by the school. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, role construction, which included the expectations a person or group held for that person, was the most important construct of the three. In the case of parent involvement, if the group that the parent belonged to felt that involvement was important, that person was more likely to be involved, whereas if the group did not value parent involvement and had no expectations for it, the parent was less likely to become

involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The second construct, the parent's sense of efficacy, involved how parents perceive their own abilities to help their children. Parents who believed they were capable of helping their child succeed were also likely to (a) believe that their involvement with the school would be beneficial and (b) be willing to spend time and effort on involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents with higher self-efficacy tend to make more positive decisions about engagement and are more likely to continue involvement despite barriers (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005). Conversely, parents with lower efficacy are less likely to participate when faced with obstacles. The third construct in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model included the invitations and opportunities for involvement offered by the schools. This invitation could be provided by the school or by the student. This category included home-school communications, parent-teacher relationships, and welcoming (or unwelcoming) school climates. While the parents' role construction was the most influential, teacher invitation was the least influential of the three constructs on parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, Curry, Jean-Marie, and Adams (2016) found that specific teacher invitation could help change parents' role construction. This study is focused on parents' perceptions of teacher and school invitation.

These three motivational constructs provided a framework to examine and understand the local problem. I investigated the problem of low parent involvement in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement by exploring the main constructs that influenced parents to become

involved. This conceptual framework served as a tool for research and reflection to better understand the problem and the resources necessary to increase parent participation at the local school.

Review of the Broader Problem

Since Kaplan (1950) first studied the factors that caused tension between parents and teachers, parent-teacher relationships have been widely studied under a variety of names from different perspectives. There is no dearth of research on the topic. I began my research using the search term *parent engagement* in the ERIC database. This search produced over 400 articles, more than 100 of them published within the last 5 years. I narrowed the search by adding multiple search terms, such as *elementary, barriers*, and *benefits*. I also conducted searches using the terms *parent involvement* and *parent-teacher collaboration*. Jeynes (2012) listed a variety of search terms including "parents, schools, family, education, parental support, partnership, programs, communication, expectations, reading, attendance, homework, household, rules, and parental style" (pp. 713-714). I used some of these search terms in ERIC, Education Source, and ProQuest. I also searched with these terms using Google Scholar. As I researched, I found that certain articles kept surfacing and I began to read those articles. Then I read through the articles' References sections and began studying the articles cited.

In this section, I synthesize what I found. I begin with a discussion of the terms parent involvement and parent engagement, then discuss the benefits of and barriers to parent involvement. This is followed by an explanation of parent motivations for involvement, a discussion of the effects of poor involvement, and a summary of some of

the current research exploring parent involvement from the perspectives of parents and teachers.

Parent Involvement and Parent Engagement

There is some confusion among researchers between the terms *parent involvement* and *parent engagement*. Baker et al. (2016) pointed out that some researchers have defined these terms differently, with specific behaviors assigned to each. Baker et al. defined parent involvement as parent presence in the school. Activities like volunteering at school events, attending parent-teacher conferences, and donating supplies for the classroom are often associated with the term involvement (Baker et al., 2016; Bower & Griffin, 2011). According to Baker et al. (2016), parent engagement includes parent voice, as well as the actions of the school to hear and respond to that voice, creating collaboration between the school and the parents. Park and Halloway (2017) used the term parent involvement, but described three types: (a) private-good parent involvement such as helping with homework and attending conferences, (b) public-good parent involvement such as volunteering in the classroom and attending parent teacher association meetings, and (c) parent networking.

Some researchers see parent activity as a continuum with passive actions on one end and more active actions on the other (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). Schultz, Sreckovic, Able, and White (2016) stated that teachers need to recognize parent involvement as a continuum and meet parents wherever they are on it. Baker et al. (2016) argued that it is the school's job to move parents along on this continuum, from parent involvement into parent engagement.

Other researchers created new definitions for the terms. Epstein (2009) referred to home-school collaboration as parent involvement, writing that parent involvement is a two-way partnership between the family and the school with the intention of helping children succeed. Hindin and Mueller (2016) expanded the definition of parent involvement, broadening it to include not only parent-school activities, but also parent-child activities such as discussing experiences, reading together, and telling stories. They considered showing children that they value education and encouraging students to do well in school to be parent involvement activities (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). Harris and Robinson (2016) also redefined parent involvement when they stated that it includes activities that were not acknowledged in traditional definitions of the term. Their framework of parent involvement included four themes: (a) being supportive, (b) making wise school choices, (c) conveying the importance of school to their children, and (d) telling their children that they are smart (Harris & Robinson, 2016).

As shown above, not all researchers made a distinction between parent engagement and parent involvement. Some authors even stated that the terms parent involvement and parent engagement could be used interchangeably (Holloway & Kunesh, 2015; Wong, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2016). However, whether parent engagement and parent involvement are interchangeable or are distinct phenomena, "there are similar benefits of increasing either" (Baker et al., 2016).

Benefits of Involvement

Parent involvement has been shown to have academic benefits for students. Wilder (2014) completed a study of nine meta-analyses examining the influence of parent

involvement and found a strong positive relationship between involvement and student achievement "regardless of the definition of parental involvement" (p. 392). McNeal (2014) also found a connection between involvement and student achievement. Positive parent-child discussions were found to raise math, science, and reading achievement scores as well as educational expectations (McNeal, 2014). However, Park and Halloway (2017) found that different types of involvement led to different benefits . Private-good involvement predicted individual school achievement in both reading and math, whereas parent networking was strongly related to school wide achievement (Park & Halloway, 2017).

Parent participation and parent-initiated involvement have both been significantly and positively linked with the AYP of schools (Ma et al., 2014). Ma et al. (2014) found that parent participation had "statistically significant absolute and relative associations with academic performance" (p. 635) in urban, suburban, and rural schools. In urban schools, a school one step higher on the participation scale was 1.7 times more likely to make AYP. In suburban schools, the school with the higher participation was 1.5 times more likely to make AYP. In rural schools, it was 1.4 times more likely to make AYP (Ma et al., 2014).

Parent participation in schools has also been directly linked with educational expectations and how highly children value academic achievement. Being involved in a PTO was found to significantly raise educational expectations as well as marginally raise math achievement scores (McNeal, 2014). Cheung and Pomerantz (2015) found that the more children perceived their parents as highly involved, the more they perceived them

as valuing educational achievement. Having parents who valued educational achievement was predictive of students also coming to value achievement. Even when taking into account gender and whether it was a one- or two-parent home, evidence showed that parents' involvement directly influenced the degree to which students valued academic achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015). This value can in turn increase student engagement and improve student grades (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015).

Parent involvement also benefits students socially. Involvement has been positively correlated with fewer school absences (Hayes, 2012; Portwood et al., 2015). Involvement in the form of constructive relationships between parents and teachers helped resolve students' school difficulties (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). In addition, parent involvement is connected with decreased social-emotional problems in English language learners (ELLs) (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) used longitudinal data from 1,020 ELLs and found that parent involvement was a significant predictor of social emotional problems in children ($\beta = -.149$, $p = .018$). The more their parents were involved, the less social-emotional problems these students reported. In that same study, a significant negative association was discovered between students' social-emotional problems and their academic outcomes. Parent involvement predicted the amount of social-emotional problems students reported, which in turn influenced their academic achievement.

Parent-teacher relationships can also influence teachers' perceptions of students. Minke et al. (2014) found that teachers who gave a positive rating to their relationships with parents were more likely to give higher ratings to the social skills of those parents'

children. Conversely, teachers who negatively rated their relationships with parents were more likely to find children's negative behaviors problematic (Minke et al., 2014). Similarly, Tran (2014) found that teachers who successfully communicated with parents were more empathic.

The positive effects of parent involvement have been found to vary by location and SES. The link between parent involvement and AYP is stronger in urban settings (Ma et al., 2014). In addition, the benefits of parent involvement are greater in schools with a high poverty rate (McNeal, 2014). Park and Halloway (2017) also found that the associations between student achievement and public-good intervention were stronger with families from a lower SES background.

It is important to note that parent involvement can even benefit children whose parents are not involved. McNeal (2014) called this a spillover effect of parent involvement. Students whose parents were less involved or uninvolved still received the benefits of involvement in a school with a high rate of parent involvement. Park and Halloway (2017) also noted the spillover effect, finding that public-good involvement is beneficial for the whole school community (Park & Halloway, 2017).

In a study on the efficacy of parent involvement programs, Jeynes (2012) wrote that "parents and teachers working together produce something more than either working alone in isolation" (p.733). Jeynes also noted that while there is much research available on how to get the parents on to the side of the teachers, there is a need for training to help teachers join with the parents. As noted above, certain types of parent involvement benefit students academically and socially. However, despite the proven benefits of

parent involvement and participation, there was a lack of adequate participation in those activities at the local school. To address this lack, it was important to explore the barriers to involvement.

Barriers to Involvement

Lasater (2016) found that the perceived barriers to parent involvement correspond to two categories: (a) disengaged or demanding parents and (b) lack of teacher training. Many teachers do not feel equipped to work successfully with parents (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). Parents may also not know how to work successfully with teachers. Parents who are overly demanding or disengaged from the school may lack advocacy skills and training on how to be effectively involved (Lasater, 2016). These lacking skills on the part of both parents and teachers can create barriers to parental involvement and prevent successful parent-teacher communication.

There are many other barriers that could prevent parent involvement. Wong (2015) found that the main barrier to parent presence and participation is time. Being present at the school may involve taking time off from work or other events (Baker et al., 2016). Parent involvement can also be influenced by the presence of other children in the family, a lack of childcare, the availability of transportation, and cost (Baker et al., 2016).

Another important consideration involves language and culture. A lack of proficient English skills on the part of the parent can prevent involvement (Mahmood, 2013; Tadesse, 2014). Cultural differences can also interfere with successful parent and teacher communication (Mahmood, 2013). Parents and teachers of different ethnic backgrounds may have differing definitions and expectations of parent involvement that

can sometimes led to conflict (Parsons, Walsemann, Jones, Knapf, & Blacke, 2018). Often, teachers are not adequately prepared to work with families from different cultures (Lasater, 2016). Wong (2015) found that language and cultural issues were the third most important barrier for teachers. However, it was the next to last for parents who rated their own perceived lack of knowledge as more concerning.

This lack of knowledge can be another barrier to parent participation and involvement. Many parents believe that they ought to be involved in their child's education, but do not know how to become involved (Robinson, 2017). Refugee families may need encouragement to become involved (Tadesse, 2014). Education is also a factor. In a study involving African refugee parents, Tadesse (2014) found that lower levels of parent education interfered with parent involvement. However, this lack of education and knowledge can be addressed through training and clearer invitations to be involved (Robinson, 2017).

Parent perceptions of invitations also influence their participation within the school (Yamamoto et al., 2016). Elbaum, Blatz, and Rodriguez (2016) found that 68% of the parents in their study felt that their school did not meet the state mandates for facilitating parent involvement. Two of the concerns they found were (a) that schools did not seek parent input and (b) that teachers were not accessible to parents (Elbaum et al., 2016). If parents feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in the school, they may make less of an effort to be involved. Tadesse (2014) found that the parents in their study felt the teachers stereotyped refugee parents, assuming they were uneducated. This created the

perception of a less welcoming environment. These parent perceptions interfered with forging successful parent and teacher relationships.

Teacher perceptions can also negatively influence parent involvement. McDowall and Schaughency (2017) found that the decile for a school's demographics moderately correlated with teachers' ratings of parents' ability to help their students learn. Teachers rated parents as less able to help their children academically when the school community was less affluent or had a higher percentage of minority students. Parsons et al. (2018) also found this to be a concern. They wrote that "the school was engaged in perpetuating colorblind ideologies where the parents were seen as lacking the tools necessary to contribute to their children's education because of their race and the stereotypes associated with blackness" (Parsons et al. 2018, p. 132). They used the term *colorblind racism* to refer to the school's policy of ignoring race and of assuming that the white, middle-class way of parenting is the correct way (Parsons et al., 2018). There are a variety of barriers that must be addressed when attempting to increase parent participation at the local school. However, removing the barriers to involvement is not enough. It is also important to explore parents' motivations for participation.

Parent Motivation for Involvement

Grolnick (2015) found that parent motivation fell on a continuum from external motivation to intrinsic motivation, and that there were four types of motivation on that continuum: external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic (See Table 3). *External motivation* is based on rewards and punishments. For example, externally motivated parents may become involved to receive a certificate or to stop other parents from

hassling them. *Introjected motivation* is guilt-based motivation that has not become internalized (Zhang, Zhang, Song, & Gong, 2016). Parents who experience introjected motivation become involved because they think they ought to and feel guilty when they are not involved; *identified motivation* is based on the perceived value of the task (Grolnick, 2015).

Table 3.

Four types of motivation

Type	Characteristics	Examples
External	Parents attend to gain rewards or avoid punishments	Door prizes, food, social acclaim
Introjected	Parents feel guilty when they do not attend.	Parent-teacher conferences
Identified	Parents attend because they know the benefits of involvement.	Parent workshops on topics they have requested.
Intrinsic	Parents attend events that they enjoy.	Ice-cream socials, family movie nights

Note: Data from Grolnick, 2015.

Parents with identified motivation for parent involvement feel that it is important to be involved in their child's education. They become involved because they understand the potential benefits of involvement. Identified motivation is external motivation that has become internalized (Zhang et al., 2016). Fishman and Nickerson (2015) found that parents were more involved when their children asked them to be. It is possible that the child's request increases the value of the activity, creating an identified motivation. The fourth type of motivation, *intrinsic motivation,* influences parents to become involved because they enjoy it (Grolnick, 2015). Identified motivation is the most common, followed by intrinsic, with external and introjected third and fourth respectively

(Grolnick, 2015). Teachers and administrators who are trying to increase parent involvement to influence student achievement should consider the different types of motivation.

Identified motivation is the most beneficial for increasing parent involvement. Grolnick (2015) found that identified motivation is the only type that was related to higher cognitive involvement between parents and children ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). Increases in identified motivation have also been linked with increases in interpersonal and adaptive performance (Zhang et al., 2016). Grolnick also found that identified motivation was also the only type linked with children's self-worth ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), self-efficacy ($r = .17$, $p < .01$), and positive affect ($r = .36$, $p < .001$).

Highly autonomous, less controlled parent involvement activities were found to be more enjoyable, resulting in higher levels of participation (Grolnick, 2015). However, identified motivation was found to be a better predictor of work performance than intrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2016). This showed that parents participate in more events due intrinsic motivation, but that they may actually benefit more from events they attend due to identified motivation. This may be because the perceived benefits of involvement will keep parents involved even when the tasks are not enjoyable.

Grolnick (2015) found that external and introjected motivation were both negatively related to positive affect ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$ and $r = -.30$, $p < .001$ respectively). Parents were involved, but usually did not enjoy the involvement activity. Introjected motivation was unrelated to cognitive involvement ($r = -.05$), and negatively related to school and personal involvement ($r = -.18$ and $r = -.15$, $p < .05$). Although parents did

become involved at first, their involvement level decreased over time. Grolnick explained that techniques intended to coerce parents into involvement or to make them feel guilty for not being involved may actually decrease parent involvement.

Parents are more involved when they feel that they should be. The strongest motivation types for parent involvement were identified and intrinsic (Grolnick, 2015). Identified motivation, which is based on the perceived value of the task, was linked with positive results in school, and cognitive and personal involvement (Grolnick, 2015). For high involvement rates, parents need to believe that their involvement will have positive outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Gwernan-Jones et al. (2015) found that unmet expectations were the primary reason parents intervened in school. They discovered that parents expected their children to be happy, and when they perceived their children as unhappy in school, they used involvement as a method of intervention (Gwernan-Jones et al., 2015). This is an example of identified motivation. When parents believe involvement is a way of reaching their goals, they are more inclined to become involved (Grolnick, 2015). This builds on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research about role-construction.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that parents developed a set of beliefs about the expectations of their role as parents through interactions with other people around them. These beliefs then influence parents' actions. Parental role construction has been significantly correlated with both school based engagement and cognitive engagement between parents and children (Yamamoto et al., 2016). Parental role construction was also linked with higher teacher ratings of students' adaptive abilities in

school and lower ratings of problematic student behaviors (Kim, Sheridan, Kwon, & Kozial, 2013). There are great benefits to parent involvement. However, parents need to believe that they should be involved before they will choose to become involved.

Parents also need to understand what is expected of them and are less likely to become engaged when they are unclear about what they are being asked to do (Hindin & Mueller, 2016). In his seminal work on parent-teacher collaboration, Kaplan (1950) described three factors that influence the parent-teacher relationship: (a) parent anxiety, (b) teacher insensitivity, (c) and parents and teachers with different goals. The latter of these refers to parent and teacher role construction. The first two refer to efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to ones' beliefs about one's own ability, and it can influence parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Robinson (2017) found that most of the parents in his study felt that it was their responsibility to become involved, they were just unsure about how to become involved. If parents do not feel they are capable of effective involvement, they are less likely to participate (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Yamamoto et al., 2016). In addition, when parents have lower opinions of their own skills they are also less likely to view parent involvement as a beneficial use of time and effort (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Fishman and Nickerson (2015) found that the parents' self-reported level of education predicted their amount of school-based involvement. Less educated parents had less parent participation in the school. This may be because these parents feel insecure and uncomfortable talking with teachers or other parents (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). They may not have the self-efficacy for involvement.

Parents' beliefs about learning may also influence their involvement. If parents believe that their child's intelligence is fixed and there is nothing that parents or teachers can do to increase it, they tend to become disengaged from the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Conversely, parents with high levels of efficacy are more likely to be in positive congruent relationships with teachers (Minke et al., 2014).

Involvement can also influence parents' beliefs about learning. Eisenreich and Andreasen's (2016) research showed that attendance at parent workshops influenced parents' beliefs about how their children learned. After attending two math workshops, parents had shifted from preferring direct instruction to appreciating the concept of students constructing knowledge. This research may have implications for increasing parent efficacy by using workshops to shift parents' beliefs about learning.

High levels of self-efficacy are beneficial for some types of parent involvement. Parental self-efficacy has been positively correlated with helping with homework and cognitive engagement between parents and children (Yamamoto et al., 2016). Self-efficacy was found to be a strong positive predictor of home-based involvement, as well (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). However, it was also linked with less phone calls between parents and teachers (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992). This decrease in communication may indicate that when parents have positive self-efficacy, they feel less need to seek help or discuss student problems (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992).

There is debate about the influence of self-efficacy on school-based participation. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) found that higher levels of parental self-efficacy correlated

with more hours spent volunteering in the classroom and participating in educational activities. Yamamoto et al. (2016) also found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and school-based involvement, while Green et al. (2007) found self-efficacy to be "a small negative predictor of school-based involvement" (p. 504). Green et al. explained that this discrepancy might be caused by a strong role construction. Even when parents believe that are capable of involvement, they may not deem it necessary.

Role construction seems to have a greater influence on parental involvement than does self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Grolnick, 2015). Parents who feel very motivated to be involved without having a feeling of efficacy may seek help from the school or other resources. Curry et al. (2016) combined role construction and self-efficacy to create what they called "parent motivational beliefs" (p. 851). They found that schools can increase parents' motivational beliefs for involvement by encouraging and enhancing partnerships between parents in the community. Increasing the amount of contact between parents in the community improved both parent self-efficacy and parents' motivational beliefs about parent involvement. Park and Holloway (2016) considered this contact between parents to be another form of parent involvement (parent networking), which has benefits for both individual students and entire schools.

Along with role construction and self-efficacy, the third variable in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parent involvement model is the parents' perceived opportunities for involvement. This includes invitations from teachers and students, the school climate, and teachers' behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) discovered a positive, significant relationship between family

support services from the school and parent involvement. When more family supports are in place, more parents will become involved. However, many parents will wait for an invitation before becoming involved (Wanat, 2010). The more invited parents feel, the more involvement there will be in the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Wong, 2015). Wong (2015) also found that parents wanted to be involved more when they perceived teachers as friendly and open to discussion. However, the reverse was also true. Parents who perceived teachers as unfriendly or unavailable were less likely to want to be involved. In Robinson's (2017) study, parents felt that teachers and administration were "lukewarm about parental engagement" (p.12). This is concerning, because it can lead to decreased parent involvement.

Teacher invitation has been found to influence both home and school-based involvement (Green et al., 2007; Yamamoto et al., 2016), as well as parental cognitive involvement (Yamamoto et al., 2016). However, Fishman and Nickerson (2015) found differing results within the special education population. When working with parents of students with disabilities, Fishman and Nickerson found that the more welcoming parents found the school, the less involved they were at home. One potential explanation they gave for this is that these parents felt the school was adequately meeting all of their children's academic needs and that parental involvement was not needed.

Role construction, self-efficacy, and perceptions of teacher invitation do not equally influence parent involvement. Role construction is the most influential variable in motivating parents to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Grolnick, 2015). However, teacher and student invitation is the greatest predictor of school-based

involvement (Green et al., 2007). Also, with appropriate teacher and school invitation, schools can help change parents' motivational beliefs for involvement and help them gain confidence (Curry et al., 2016). Teacher invitation can influence parental role construction and parental self-efficacy.

There are different levels of invitation. McDowall and Schaughency (2017) described a multi-tiered school wide engagement model, with a general welcoming attitude toward all students and parents as the first tier. Tier 2 involved more specific invitations targeting chosen subgroups. Tier 3 involved specific individualized invitations to families needing more intensive support (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Specific invitations from teachers were found to be more influential than general invitations from schools (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Green et al., 2007). Of the three tiers, specific teacher invitation was the only significant predictor of involvement of parents with special education students (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). Specific teacher invitation was also found to help parents gain confidence and reconstruct their roles (Curry et al., 2016).

Self-efficacy, role construction, and teacher invitation all influence parents' motivation to be involved. When administrators and teachers are attempting to increase parent involvement, it is important to consider teacher invitation, parents' self-efficacy, and, parents' perceived roles. It is also important to understand the four types of motivation (external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic) and their respective benefits and drawbacks. Using the wrong type of motivation to increase parent involvement can have a negative effect on a school. Grolnick (2015) found that when parents become involved for more external or introjected reasons, they are more likely to have negative

involvement experiences, which may lead to negative experiences for their children and prevent future involvement.

Results of Poor Involvement

Not all parent involvement is beneficial. Lasater (2016) described two types of challenging parents: demanding and disengaged. Demanding parents are often over-involved and are viewed by teachers as commanding and threatening; disengaged parents are uninvolved in their child's education (Lasater, 2016). Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) referred to demanding parents as negative-active. These parents tend to have negative attitudes toward the school or education and are often very critical. They may have unrealistic expectations of the school and ask for resources or supports that teachers cannot provide (Schultz et al., 2016). Demanding parents may also have low self-efficacy and are often displeased with their child's developmental progress (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). This type of parent is more common in suburban school settings (Hindin & Mueller, 2016).

Disengaged parents are negative-passive (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). These under-involved parents do not meet with teachers and may not have the necessary skills to advocate for their children (Schultz et al., 2016). They are not involved in their child's education, possibly due to negative preconceived notions about school or a lack of communication skills (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). Robinson (2017) found that having a negative interaction with the school could create feelings of alienation that may cause a parent to become disengaged. Disengaged parenting is more common in urban school settings (Hindin & Mueller, 2016).

While Lasater (2016) found that demanding parents are often more stressful for teachers, Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) found that disengaged parents were more complicated to work with. Of the two groups, demanding parents are frequently more successful at achieving their goals (Lasater, 2016). Both demanding and disengaged parents can cause stress between teachers and parents, which leads to conflicts that may become difficult to resolve (Lasater, 2016). Unresolved conflicts can in turn lead to ongoing negative interactions between teachers and parents or cause anxiety and self-doubt in students (Lasater, 2016).

Another variable to consider when studying parent-teacher interactions is that teachers may also be parents. Lipsky, Friedman, and Harkema (2017) conducted a phenomenological study examining the experiences and interactions of what they termed parent-teachers and colleague-teachers. Parent-teachers were teachers who had children enrolled in the school where they taught; colleague-teachers worked at the school but did not have children in attendance. They found that parent-teachers frequently switched between their teacher role and their parent role throughout the school day.

When in the teacher role, parent-teachers expected to be treated like any other teacher; but when in the parent role, they wanted to be treated like any other parent. This role switching required colleague-teachers to make assumptions about which role the parent-teacher was currently using in every interaction and create professional boundaries to govern those interactions. While helping to create a familial community feeling in the school, relationships between colleague-teachers and parent-teachers caused anxiety and tension at both the individual and school level (Lipsky et al., 2017).

Teacher and Parent Perspectives

Many studies have been conducted on parent involvement since Kaplan's seminal work in 1950. Some of these studies have explored parent involvement from the perspectives of various stakeholders on the topic. McDowall and Schaughency (2017) surveyed teachers and principals in New Zealand to explore their perceptions of school-wide interventions intended to improve parent engagement. Fishman and Nickerson (2015) surveyed parents of special education students to explore their reasons for becoming involved. Curry et al. (2016) explored motivations for involvement by surveying parents of elementary, middle, and high school students in urban schools. Niehaus and Adelson (2014) studied data from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators to determine the influence of school support on parental involvement, and of parental involvement on students' academic and social-emotional skills.

Other studies have been conducted to explore the perceptions of both teachers and parents. Minke et al. (2014) quantitatively studied parent-teacher relationships from the perspectives of parents and teachers by looking at relationship congruence and its influence on the academic achievement of children with behavior disorders. Wong (2015) and Tadesse (2014) explored the perceptions of parents and teachers when studying the barriers to parent involvement with immigrants and refugees. Baker et al. (2016) conducted family and staff focus groups in schools that were implementing PBIS in order to explore their perceptions on opportunities for and barriers to involvement. Lipsky et al. (2017) used a phenomenological approach to explore the relationships of teachers with parent-teachers (teachers who have students attending the school where they work).

Parsons et al. (2018) used a narrative case study to explore teacher and parent perceptions of parental involvement and race.

Researchers have also conducted studies on students' perspectives about parent-teacher relationships (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015; Lasater, 2016). Lasater (2016) studied conflict in the parent-teacher relationship from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and students. Cheung and Pomerantz (2015) studied the benefits of parent involvement from the student's perspective by having seventh- and eighth-graders complete a set of questionnaires about their perceptions of their parents' involvement.

Research showed that parents and teachers may disagree on parent involvement.. Baker et al. (2016) found discrepancies in parents' and staffs' definitions of parental involvement. Parents felt that observing their children in the classroom, going to sporting events with their children, and teaching responsibility at home should be counted as involvement (Baker et al., 2016). Parents also wanted to be able to observe their children in the classroom and perceived school policies restricting this as unwelcoming (Baker et al., 2016). Wong (2015) found that teachers believed that many parents did not have the management and parenting skills necessary to become involved parents. Baker et al. (2016)'s study also noted this, finding that teachers felt that a large percentage of parents were too busy, too disinterested, or not educated enough to be involved in their child's education. Parents did list lack of knowledge about the subject matter being taught and lack of experience as major barriers to involvement (Wong, 2015). While both parents and teachers agreed that poor communication is a barrier to involvement, parents focused on the timeliness, quality, and clarity of information being sent home while teachers

focused on language issues and lack of adequate contact information to reach parents (Baker et al., 2016). It is important to improve teacher understanding of the needs and expectations of parents in regard to parent involvement in order to improve parent and teacher collaboration (Schultz et al., 2016).

Many studies have been conducted exploring the relationships between parents and teachers and how their perceptions influence those relationships. Parent self-efficacy was found to be a predictor of relationship congruence (Minke et al, 2014). Lower teacher self-efficacy, caused by a lack of adequate training in conflict resolution and building parent-partnerships, can also influence parent-teacher relationships (Lasater, 2016). Parent-teacher conflict, due in part to lower self-efficacy, is often left unresolved, leading to anxiety and self-doubt in students (Lasater, 2016). Role construction and teacher invitation were not found to be predictors of relationship congruence (Minke et al., 2016). However, teachers' perceptions can influence the parent-teacher relationship. Schultz et al. (2016) found that a teacher's perception of a parent was an important indicator of their home and school collaboration. Teachers' perceptions of the parent-teacher relationship also predicted teachers' ratings of children (Minke et al., 2014). When teachers felt they were in a positive, congruent relationship with parents, they were more likely to rate children positively in social skills and behavior. Conversely, teachers rated children's behavior as more problematic when they viewed their relationship with the parent as incongruent or non-positive (Minke et al., 2014). It is important for teachers and parents to understand how their beliefs and expectations influence their relationships.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement. By exploring parents' beliefs and perceptions about their involvement at the local school, I collected data that may be useful for increasing parent participation at educational school events. This data can be used to create professional development (PD) opportunities for teacher training and new parental involvement opportunities at the local school.

There is a need for teacher training in coming alongside parents (Jeynes, 2012) as well as for communication and conflict resolution and dealing with disengaged or demanding parents (Lasater, 2016; Wong, 2015). Teachers may also need to be made aware of which strategies are most beneficial for increasing parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992). In addision, it may be beneficial to provide training geared toward improving the school climate and teacher invitation practices at the local school.

The information gathered from this study helped determine the specific needs and wants of parents. Misconceptions about involvement and gaps in skills were identified which can be addressed with targeted training for teachers. During the study, parents also requested specific training, which can hopefully be addressed with new parent workshops. The unique expectations of parents can also become a part of teacher workshops. Ideally, the workshops will help teachers to more effectively invite parents to become involved and address the barriers preventing parent participation in the local school. By providing teachers with the skills they need, the workshops may lead to

increased parent participation. The workshops can then be adapted as needed and shared with other districts that are also attempting to increase parent participation.

Summary

The problem that prompted this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement.

Parent involvement has been found to be beneficial for students both academically and socially. However, there are many barriers that negatively influence both school-based and home-based involvement. When attempting to increase levels of participation, school leaders and teachers need to address these barriers as well as become aware of the four motivation types (external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic) and their different results. Parental role construction, self-efficacy, and perceptions of school and teacher invitation to become involved should also be considered.

In Section 2, I describe the research design and approach, data collection, and data analysis. In Section 3 I discuss the project designed to address the problem. Section 4 includes the researcher's reflections and the conclusions of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this section, I describe the research design and approach and explain my rationale for choosing it. I discuss the participants and sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis. This section concludes with the data analysis and identification of themes.

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement. To do this, I used a basic qualitative study design. This design was appropriate because it could provide a deeper and richer understanding of parent involvement at the local school by focusing on the perceptions of parents.

Creswell (2009) identified three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. While each has unique characteristics, Creswell proposed that they are on a continuum with qualitative and quantitative approaches on either end and the mixed methods approach in the middle. In a quantitative study, the researcher attempts to study and measure variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This type of research is used to test theories by exploring the relationship between the variables (Creswell, 2009). This type of design is used to study variables that can be measured and statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative researcher's purpose is to make predictions that can be generalized to other situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

In contrast, qualitative research is used to "seek a better understanding of complex situations" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 95). Rather than seeking to generalize the results,

the qualitative researcher is seeking to understand how people understand their experiences and what those experiences mean to them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus in qualitative studies is on characteristics and complexities of people or phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) and the meanings people ascribe to them (Creswell, 2009).

In qualitative research, the goal is to obtain a detailed understanding of a problem or phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Through this study, I hoped to gain a detailed understanding of parents' perceptions about parent involvement at the local school. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified four key characteristics of qualitative studies: (a) they are focused on understanding, (b) the researcher is the primary instrument, (c) they use an inductive process, and (d) they involve gathering rich descriptions. This study incorporated all four characteristics.

Creswell (2009) described five designs for qualitative studies: ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research. When using ethnography, the researcher is focused on "an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Data is primarily collected through observations and interviews. In grounded theory, the researcher uses a variety of data collection techniques to create an abstract theory (Creswell, 2009) of the study subjects. Case studies are used for more in-depth exploration of programs, events, or participants (Creswell, 2009). Phenomenological research is employed when a researcher extensively studies a small sample of subjects to identify their experiences of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Narrative research is used to conduct an in-depth study of one or more individuals. The research data is then presented in a story format.

I considered each of these designs for this study. Grounded theory designs are used to develop theories about interactions or processes (Creswell, 2012). This design was excluded because I was not seeking to generate a theory. Because of its narrow focus on a few subjects and its storytelling format (Creswell, 2012), narrative research design was also excluded. Ethnography was excluded due to its focus on a group with a shared culture (Creswell, 2012). In this study, I was looking at a group of parents and seeking a greater understanding about how they interact with the local school. The phenomenological approach was excluded because Creswell (2009) noted that it involves studying participants extensively over time..The case study design was excluded because, although this study was bounded by the local school, only one data source was needed to answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After reviewing these qualitative designs, I excluded them all and chose to use a basic qualitative design.

A basic qualitative design is described as qualitative "without declaring it a particular *type* of qualitative study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). As with all qualitative research, this study design is focused on understanding how participants interpret and make sense of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, in basic qualitative research, discovering and interpreting participants' meanings is the primary goal. This distinguishes the design from other qualitative designs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I wanted to understand parents' perceptions of their relationship and role with their child's school, the reasons they participate or do not participate, and factors which might increase their participation. My primary focus was to

understand how parents interpret and make sense of their participation experiences at the local school. This made the basic qualitative design the best fit for this study.

Creswell (2012) stated that there are five steps involved in data collection. The first step is to identify the site and participants needed for the study. The second step involves accessing and getting permission from the participants. These two steps are described in the next section. The third and fourth steps involve deciding on the type of data to be collected and designing instruments or protocols to gather that data. The fifth step is to collect the data as ethically as possible. These steps are discussed in the data collection and data analysis sections.

Participants

As I did not plan to make statistical generalizations from the results, it was not necessary to use random sampling for this study. I used non-random, purposeful sampling to select nine information-rich study participants. This enabled me to provided a description of parents' perceptions at the local school.

Selecting Participants

The sample for this study was drawn from a large suburban school in Massachusetts. It was a public K-4 school with 430 students enrolled (MDESE, n.d.). According to the school's profile, 52% of the students were classified as high needs, 21% as students with disabilities, and 38% as economically disadvantaged (MDESE, n.d.). In the school, there were 22 classrooms: four kindergartens, 5 first grades, 5 second grades, 4 third grades, and 4 fourth grades.

Volunteers were solicited and participants were chosen using the following criteria: they were parents of students who were attending the local school, who were in either third or fourth grade, and who had never been in my class. I excluded second graders because that was the grade that I was teaching. I also excluded the lower grades in order to minimize the potential for perceived coercion by not working with parents of children who may later have me as their teacher.

Qualitative research studies typically have small sample sizes, as larger samples may make it difficult to abstract the pertinent data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). However, the sample should be large enough to reach saturation, which Creswell (2012) described as the point where the researcher determines that further data will not provide further insights. The number of participants required to reach data saturation is highly dependent on context. Creswell suggested that 10-12 participants are sufficient to reach the point of data saturation. This study included nine participants. Eight of the participants were mothers; one was a father. One of the participants was also a teacher at the local school.

Access Procedures

I took several steps to gain access to my participants. First, as Creswell (2012) suggested I gained approval from two gatekeepers at the local school: the superintendent and the principal. Once I received this approval, I submitted an application to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) outlining my proposed study. I included information on the chosen methodology, the participants, the data collection, and the analysis procedures. I also identified potential concerns with the study, strategies for

recruiting and protecting participants, the informed consent process, and plans to disseminate study findings. My IRB approval number is 09-04-18-0551533.

Upon receiving all approvals, I sent volunteer request letters home with the third- and fourth-grade students. These letters included a brief description of the study, a clear description of the expectations for participants, criteria for selecting participants, and my contact information. Five volunteers responded to the request letter. However, only three of them qualified for the study, as two were parents of students I had previously taught. One of the disqualified volunteers then posted the letter on the parents' social media page. I sent home a second round of parent request letters, and gained six more volunteers, for a total of nine qualified participants.

When participants responded, I confirmed that they qualified for the study and then emailed them an informed consent form that explained their rights, along with any benefits or risks involved in participating in the study. This form also described the measures I would take to ensure the confidentiality of the study, as well as informed the participants that the interviews would be audiotaped. Participants were instructed to read the informed consent form carefully and to reply by email with the words, "I consent" if they still wished to participate in the study. Eight participants emailed, "I consent." One participant submitted a signed paper copy of the informed consent form. This printed form and a copy of the emails will stay with my records.

There was very little risk involved in this study. It was possible that participants might feel uncomfortable answering certain questions or being interviewed by a teacher at the school. However, the informed consent form stated that they had the right to refuse

to answer any question or to leave the study at any time. I also reminded participants of this at the beginning of each interview. During the interviews, no participants refused to answer any questions or asked to end the interview.

I assigned each participant a letter and labeled all data with that letter. While conducting the study, I saved the list of letters with the participants' names on a password-protected laptop. All audio recordings of interviews were stored on a password-protected laptop or in a locked file cabinet. The transcriptions of interviews were also saved on a password-protected laptop. After the study, all data was moved to a flash drive and has been stored in a locked file cabinet where it will be kept for at least 5 years. Hard copies of recordings, transcripts, researcher notes, and other data were also stored in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has access.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

Weiss (1994) defined an interview as a research partnership where the interviewer and the participant are working together to answer the research question. My background needs to be noted, as participants do not just see the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Participants also saw me as a teacher. I was a second-grade teacher at the local school and had been for 4 years. Many of the parents knew of me before I began conducting the study. I was not nor had I ever been in a supervisory position at the local school. However, I had had previous interactions with two of the participants. Previous interactions with one participant consisted mainly of brief conversations while passing in the hallway of the local school. As another participant was a teacher at the local school,

my interactions with them also included participating in the same staff meetings and trainings.

Ethical issues can be a concern when using qualitative interviews to collect data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the researcher, I was and am responsible to protect the participants' privacy and minimize any harm from the study. At the beginning of the interview, I engaged with participants to build a rapport and to help them feel comfortable. I briefly explained the study, the purpose for conducting it, and what I planned to do with the data gathered. I established boundaries and norms both to help the interviews go smoothly and to protect participants' rights. I informed participants that the information collected would not be used to evaluate or judge them but would only be used to answer the research questions. I also reminded participants that the data would be kept confidential.

Data Collection

This study was conducted to create a rich description of parents' perceptions of the parent involvement practices at the local school. When planning a research study, it is necessary to not only consider the research problem, but also the types of data needed and the best means of collecting and analyzing that data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this section I describe the method of data collection for the study. I then present the data analysis in the following section.

Interviews

Interviews were the sole strategy for data collection in this study. Interviews are useful for learning about the observations, experiences, and perceptions of other people

(Weiss, 1994). Opdenakker (2006) described four types of qualitative interview techniques: face-to-face, telephone, synchronous messaging, and email. Face-to-face interviews involve coordination of the researcher and participants' schedules and can include travel costs. However, meeting face-to-face enables the researcher to note social cues and body language and rephrase questions as necessary. This study used face-to-face interviews.

There were nine interviews, each lasting about 45 minutes and held outside of school hours. I gave parents a choice of places in town with private rooms where we could meet. One interview was held at a local inn, and seven were held in the study room at the local library. One interview was held at the local school per the participant's request. I also gave parents a choice of times. One parent chose to meet on a Saturday. The other eight interviews were held on weekday afternoons or early evenings. I conducted each interview, using two audio recorders to record them, as having an audio recording provides an accurate record of the interview (Creswell, 2012). I then transcribed the nine interviews.

The interviews began with a brief period of introduction to help develop a rapport with the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I then read a statement that briefly described the study and reminded the participants of their rights. I also told participants that the study summary would be made available at the end of the study and gave them a chance to ask any questions before we began.

During the first interviews, I took notes in the margins of my protocol guide. However, every time I began writing, the participant stopped talking. Because of this, I

did not take notes during any of the following interviews. Instead, I wrote my reflections afterward, while listening to a recording of the interview. Later after each interview, I reflected back on previous interviews to look for connections and differences between participants. I transcribed and coded the interviews, and then use those codes to create themes, which led me to the main findings of the study.

Interview Questions

The type of questions asked in an interview influence the type of data obtained. Open-ended questions are useful because they encourage participants to think creatively without limiting their alternatives (Wong & Yan, 2012) Closed or *yes* and *no* questions are more limiting and produce less data. My job was to create an environment where participants were encouraged to share their information and perceptions (Wong & Yan, 2012). To do this, I created an interview protocol guide with a list of open-ended questions that I then asked each participant (see Appendix B).

The interview questions were based on the three research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. The research questions were: (a) How do parents describe their role within their child's school; (b) What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events; and (c) What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation. These three questions guided the development of the interview questions by focusing on the constructs of parental role construction, parental efficacy, and teacher invitation. Interview questions were crafted to elicit data for each of the constructs and to encourage participants to give data-rich answers. The questions were

designed to give parents the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and perceptions of parent involvement in the local school

Creswell (2012) recommended using probes to both clarify and elaborate participant answers. I added a list of prompts that I used to elicit further information when a participant did not fully answer a question or provided information that led to further questions. When participants gave unclear or less detailed answers, I used a variety of probes to illicit more detailed information. I also used probes to encourage participants to remain on topic and to rephrase my questions until I had sufficient data.

Role of the Researcher

In this study I was the primary data collector. I collected and analyzed the data and interpreted the results. I was a second-grade teacher at the local school. However, I had no supervisory role over teachers or parents. I had taught second grade in the district for thirteen years. Prior to that, I taught third grade for a year. I was a Title I reading specialist before that. This was my fourth year working in the local school. While I had interacted with two of the participants in the school (one as a coworker and the other through brief conversations in the hall of the local school), I had not previously met the majority of participants.

Throughout the interviews, I reminded myself that part of my task was to watch the participants' body language, looking for signs of discomfort or deeper meaning (Tufford & Newman, 2010). I adjusted my own posture and tone accordingly. It is possible that participants were saying what they think I wanted to hear. However, the

interview questions were carefully crafted to decrease this possibility and to eliminate bias or leading questions.

It was important for me as a qualitative researcher to be aware of and confront my own prejudices and opinions about the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As both a parent and an elementary teacher, I did hold some assumptions about the topic being studied. I had to be aware of my own experiences and perceptions of parent involvement from both points of view. I also had to be aware of my own expectations. Throughout the study, I kept a reflective journal to maintain this awareness.

As a teacher in the local school, I had prior experience of the problem that could lead to bias in the study. One way I guarded against bias was by reflecting on my own subjectivity throughout the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I recorded these reflections in my researcher's journal after the interviews and during the other steps of data collection and analysis. To minimize bias, I also reflected on the interview questions, answering them in my researcher's journal at different times during the study. This helped me to become aware of my own preconceived ideas and thoughts so that I did not impose them on the study.

Data Analysis Results

The problem that prompted this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. The purpose was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement. Based on the data, I found that parents believed

that teachers and parents need to work together as a team. Parents also believed that it is important to support teachers physically and financially. However, some parents do not feel like welcome members on the school team. I also found that parents value transparency from the school. They want to know what is happening during the school day. In addition, they want two-way, open communications as well as academic workshops. Parents also believed that involvement can create social opportunities that benefit their children.

In this section, I describe the major themes and findings from my analysis of the interview data. I explain the themes and findings using the interview data, and I related them back to the conceptual framework and the research questions of the study. The research questions were the following:

RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school?

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events?

RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation.

An analysis of the resultant data led to the following four themes: (a) working as a team, (b) transparency, (c) parent involvement as social interaction, and (d) barriers to involvement.

Coding

Creswell (2012) stated that the first step of data coding is to read through all of the data, writing thoughts and ideas in the margins. The second step is to choose one

transcription and reread it looking for similar words and phrases. The third step is to identify text segments and assign codes that identify the meaning behind the segments. Saldana (2010) defined a code as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based…data"(p. 3). These codes can then be grouped and categorized to address redundancy and to keep the total number of codes manageable. The codes can then be used to organize the other transcriptions. By the end of the study, the list of codes should be reduced to categories of information from which themes may emerge (Saldana, 2010).

Saldana (2010) also recommended that novices use hard copies for coding. I began the coding process by transcribing all of the interviews verbatim. I then removed any unnecessary words or verbal identifiers (e.g.,. "you know," names, and gender specific pronouns.) After that, I listened to each interview again to confirm the accuracy of my transcriptions. Saldana (2010) suggested preparing the data by double spacing the transcript, using wide margins for notes and codes.. Following this suggestion, I printed the interview transcripts with a three-inch right-hand margin for notations. I then read through each interview carefully and assigned codes to sections of data. Saldana (2010) referred to this type of coding as lumping, a method which "gets to the essence of categorizing a phenomenon" (p.24) This process resulted in a large number of unique codes. Some of these codes were descriptive, using one to three words to sum up that section of data. Other codes were direct quotations from the data.

My third step was to look at similarities between the codes used on each interview transcript. Saldana (2010) recommended that researchers use the same codes repeatedly to help uncover patterns. I read through the unique codes and recoded items that fit together. For example, I combined the codes *best use of time* from Interview B, *time conflict* from Interview C, and *schedule conflict* from Interview D under the code *just too busy* taken from Interview A. This process resulted in 24 codes. I then organized the codes under the research questions. Because of the nature of the study questions, some of the codes under RQ2 are also listed under RQ3. This stage resulted in a total of 24 codes (See Table 4).

The next step was to determine the importance of each code. Saldana (2010) wrote that a code that appears less than three times may indicated that it is not important or is unrelated to the study. However, he also pointed out that occasionally codes that are only mentioned once are still important. For this step, I printed a clean copy of the interview transcripts and reread the data looking for instances of each code in the interviews. Looking at this data, I chose to remove the code *transparency*. I later brought this code back as a theme. I considered removing the codes *good mom* and *conflict* because they each were only mentioned in one or two interviews. However, they are important concepts in a study of parent involvement motivation.

After this, I evaluated how important each code was when considering the three constructs from the conceptual framework. This helped me to refine the number of codes. For example, *volunteering, fundraising, donating supplies,* and *attending meetings* could all be combined under the code *helping the school. Parent-teacher non-social interaction*

was combined with *team effort* under the code *working with school*. I also removed the code "*could do more*" and combined *conflict*, *not interested/pertinent*, *physical building*, and *well-organized* under the code *other barriers*. I added the code *lack of invitation* and included *friendly staff* within it.

Table 4

Comparison of Research Questions and Codes

Research Questions	Codes
RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school?	1. Team Effort 2. Initiate Communication 3. Volunteering 4. Fundraising 5. Attending Meetings 6. Donating Supplies 7. "Could do more"
RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events?	8. Social Interaction 9. "For the Kids" 10. Getting Information 11. "Where they are" 12. "Good mom" 13. Parent/Teacher Non-Social Interaction 14. "Didn't Know" 15. "Just busy" 16. Conflict 17. Not Interested/Pertinent 18. "Same faces" 19. "Outsider"
RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation.	[a] "Didn't Know" 20. Physical Building 21. Types of Communication 22. Transparency 23. Well-Organized [a] "Outsider" 24. Friendly Staff

Note: [a]These codes that are being mentioned a second time.

Once I knew which codes to work with, I found that some of the codes naturally grouped together creating the theme working as a team. Saldana (2010) stated that "a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (p. 13). The goal

is to have at least three major themes at the end of the study (Saldana, 2010). At this point, I began exploring the data again to identify other themes. I reread the raw data and renamed some of the codes. The code "*just busy*" became *time*, which combined with *lack of invitation* and *other barriers* to make up the theme barriers. *Good mom* became *social approval,* and *same faces* became *small social circle*. Once I had recoded that data, I saw how well these two codes fit together,,making the theme parent involvement for social interaction.

Findings

Four themes were revealed through the data analysis: (a) working as a team, (b) transparency, (c) parent involvement as social interaction, and (d) barriers. The first aligns with RQ1, all themes align with RQ2, and 1, 2, and 4 align with RQ3 (Table 5). Once themes were developed, different aspects of the data became apparent.

Table 5

Comparison of Themes, Codes, and Research Questions

Theme	Codes	Research Questions
Working as a Team	Working with the school Initiating Conversation Helping the School "Outsider"	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Transparency	"Where they are" Getting Information "Didn't know" Types of Communication	RQ2, RQ3
Parent Involvement as Social Interaction	Social Interaction "For the kids" Social Approval Small Social Circle	RQ2
Barriers	Time Lack of Invitation Other Barriers	RQ2, RQ3

Theme 1: Working as a Team

This first theme indicates that parents view themselves as being on a team with the teachers. “The teachers and the parents have to be working together to make sure that the child can access the curriculum and do the best that they can” (Participant B). Parents believed that parent involvement is important as a way to work with teachers to help their children. They believed that teachers and parents should be working together to help their children understand behavioral expectations and make academic gains. It was important to parents that they support teachers both physically and financially.

Codes. The four codes that made up this theme are (a) working with the school, (b) initiating conversation, (c) helping the school, and (d) “outsider.” These codes all have to do with the parents’ role construction. Throughout the interviews, participants spoke about wanting to work with the school and help their children’s teachers. This included financial and physical support, as well as emotional and educational. However, parents did not agree on whose role it was to initiate conversation. I placed the last code into this category because some parents struggled with feeling like an outsider when they wanted to be a part of the team.

Working with the school. Parents at the local school feel that their job is to support the teachers. Participants believe that working together with teachers benefits students. Participant B called the parent-teacher relationship symbiotic, and said, “The teachers and the parents have to be working together to make sure that the child can access the curriculum and do the best that they can.” Participant G stated that the school’s

job is to teach the children academics and social skills, “and then I need to back that up at home.”

Parents felt that for effective collaboration, there needs to be adequate communication. Participant G said, “I’ll do my part to do the best I can for the school as long as they do their part to keep me informed on what’s happening.” Parents want to know about student progress and behaviors. Parent E expressed an interest in receiving more progress reports throughout the school year. Parents also want to know teachers’ expectations so they can work more successfully with their children at home. Participant C said, “I don’t want to teach my son the way I know how to do [math]. I want to keep it consistent for him.” They added that with struggling learners “I think helping the parents be on the same page would be helpful.” Participant G pointed out that knowing the expectations enables them to hold their child to the same standards at home. Parents felt that shared expectations between parents and teachers could benefit their children behaviorally and socially as well. Participant C described how their child once had a difficult school year, despite successful communication with the teacher. “There was great communication, but I don’t think the expectations were the same at home as they were at school.” The following year, Participant C and their child’s teacher worked more collaboratively, sharing expectations. “We’re working together on how to handle it. And there have been no behavior issues. None.”

Parents feel that for the team to be successful, there also needs to be mutual understanding and support. Participant B said, “You need to know that you can go to [the teacher] to make sure your child is being successful, and that if they’re not, [the teacher

is] going to be open to helping you." Parents and teachers may see different aspects of the children, which can cause confusion. Participant A found it uncomfortable to be part of the problem-solving process. They said, "Sometimes I have trouble with that because what I can suggest might not necessarily work for someone who's got seventeen kids in the classroom. I'm just thinking about my one." They wanted the teacher to bring suggestions to them. "[The teachers] have to do what works best for [them], and I'm totally here to support [them]."

Participant C posited that by working together, parents and teachers could have a positive influence on the entire school. "If we can just draw in the parents and get on the same page…I think behaviorally we'd see a change. And academically, too…It's like a domino affect." By working with the school, parents feel they can help their children academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Initiating conversation. When asked how they would describe a highly involved parent, Participant F answered "someone who asks questions, reaches out via email or phone; they have an open dialogue" with the school. The parents often initiated this dialogue. Participant C said, "I've had great open communication with all of my kids' teachers so far," adding that teachers never made them feel silly for asking questions, and always responded to questions within 24 hours.

Not all participants agreed on who should initiate the conversation. Participant C took the initiative and checked in frequently with teachers to find out what and how their children are doing. They feel it is difficult for teachers to reach out to all parents, but that teachers can easily respond if the parents do the reaching out. "I don't try to annoy the

teachers but I do try to keep in close communication with them." Participant B, however, expressed frustration about having to initiate the conversation. They stated that they had not received any help from the school without asking for it. "My child needs math help, so I go to them and say, 'Hey, what can we do at home to supplement for math?" They expressed disappointment that the school had not first offered help. Other parents felt that who initiates should depend on the situation. Participant F said, "I hope that they would let me know if there's an issue. And when I have issues of my own, I try to reach out."

When they did initiate the conversation, parents wanted teachers to listen. Participant C noted that while it is not essential for teachers to do everything that parents ask of them, it is beneficial to know the situations and expectations at home. Participant C said, "When you know where a child is coming from and you know what the expectations are at home, it's easier for you to understand how to handle it in the classroom." A lack of response from teachers can create an unwelcoming environment in the school and disrupt the parent and teacher team. Participant E described how they felt after writing notes to teachers who never responded. Participant E said, "When you're trying to reach out and there's a problem and you're trying to help your child through it, it is a little off-putting to not be able to get a response from the teacher."

It is important to note that some participants were happy with the current level of communication at the local school. Participant F mentioned receiving weekly notes from the teacher about their child's behavior. They also talked about a daily communication log for another child. Participant F mentioned the agendas that third- and fourth-grade students use to log their homework assignments. All three were cited as ways the school

has successfully communicated with parents. Participant G talked about a contract that was sent home at the beginning of the school year that had to be signed. Participant I was content to be contacted only if there was a problem and did not want daily behavior updates.

Helping the school. One of the questions asked of participants was, "How would you describe a highly involved parent?" Answers included attending parents-group meetings, communicating with teachers, planning and attending school events, volunteering in the school and classroom, and donating supplies. Parents at the local school feel that their job is to support the local school. This support can be physical or financial. Parents also mentioned attending field day, chaperoning field trips, enhancing school grounds, and participating in fundraisers as ways to help and support their school.

Many teachers mentioned volunteering in the school as a way to physically support teachers. For example, Participant G talked about being a classroom reader for Community Reading Day. Participant H added that everyone can be involved in some way. They mentioned fundraisers and field days, as well as painting the school parking lot. Participant H stated, "There's usually something that each parent is comfortable doing." All participants agreed that a highly involved parent worked with and supported the school to benefit their children.

"Outsider." Despite wanting to be on a team with parents, some participants talked about feeling like outsiders in the school. Participant A mentioned that it felt like parents and teachers were running on different tracks, adding "I don't know that I can think of an instance where the school actually asked my opinion." Several participants

stated that there were few involvement opportunities available at the local school during the school day. Participant B felt that not being allowed into the school building to celebrate their child's birthday created an unwelcoming environment. They said, "It feels like they don't want the parents involved." This led to a sense that the parent was an outsider instead of a member of the team. "You feel like you're not allowed in. This is school space," stated Participant B. Participant I also noted this lack of welcome. "You can't just have the freedom to walk down [the hall] and explore the school, they said. "I understand you can't do that today, but you feel disconnected." Participant E also mentioned feeling like an outsider, but for a different reason. Their lack of efficacy prevented involvement and led to feelings of isolation among the other parents. "I'm a little hesitant to even attempt the meetings," said Participant E. "I feel like everybody else knows what's going on and I don't, and I feel like an outsider."

Theme 2: Transparency

Data indicated that parents at the local school want to be more informed about what is going on during the school day. They believed it is important to know and see what is happening to their children. They also believed that the school's main job, other than teaching their children, is to foster communication with parents.

Codes. The codes for this theme include (a) "where they are" (b) getting information, (c) "didn't know," and (d) types of communication. While the first theme showed what parents believed their role was, this theme showed what parents want from the school. Parents want to see what is happening with their children during the school day. They want to be given information about helping with homework, upcoming events,

and academic concerns instead of having to seek this information out. They also want the school to engage in consistent, timely, communication.

"Where they are." Parents wanted to know what is happening with their children during the school day. When asked what the school's responsibility is, Participant I answered, "transparency" and "keeping parents up-to-date." Participant I also mentioned the frustration they feel when their daughter comes home from school talking about some of the negative things that she saw and heard in the classroom, but they do not receive any information from the teacher or school. They want the school to be more of an "open book." Participant H also mentioned this idea of openness between the school and the parents, stating that it would help parents to be more consistent with the school.

Some parents wanted more information about the particulars of each day. Participant B talked about the difficulties of having a child who was unable to clearly explain what she saw and did during the day. Participant B stated that the child comes home and provides "little pieces of what they did during the day and then it doesn't make sense to me because I wasn't there." Participant B further explained that when they try to talk with their child about it, the child becomes frustrated because the parent does not understand. More information about the school day from the teacher could facilitate parent and child discussions.

When asked what they found welcoming about the school, Participant G mentioned the student artwork hanging in the hallways. "It makes it seem like the school is proud of the students and it'll make the students strive to work harder, I think." Participant H also commented on the student artwork, saying, "You like to see a lot of

kid's décor…to see what they're experiencing. Makes you feel better about where they are all day." Other things that made parents feel more comfortable about leaving their children at school included meeting the principal, interacting with the teachers, learning what children are learning, seeing where students sit in class, and seeing the playground. Being involved gives parents a chance to become familiar with the school and staff. Participant B said that being involved in events at the school gives them "a sense that I know where my child is when she's not home…It just makes me feel more comfortable."

Getting information. Some parents are currently looking for academic information and supports outside of the school, and they would like the school to hold workshops that meet these perceived needs. Parents talked about the different ways they were trying to meet these needs on their own. Participant D said that they use their phone to search for directions to complete the homework. However, their spouse "wouldn't have any idea of how to complete some of the worksheets. They could get the right answer, but the process part would be done wrong. And that's stressful." Participant F talked about reaching out to friends who are math tutors to get help. Both parents said they would like math and literacy workshops or parent letters explain what their students are learning in school. Participant A mentioned attending parents-group meetings because the school principal also attends, "so when you have questions there's someone there who can answer." Other participants mentioned using Google or YouTube. Despite the barriers to involvement, parents say they will attend workshops that meet these needs. Participant F stated that they would attend certain workshops, adding, "It definitely would be a priority for me. If they have a class on common core, I've got to go." When

asked what types of events they would attend, many parents stated that they would be interested in more workshops. The requested topics were math, the common core frameworks, the new literacy series, homework help, how to read the MCAS Report, and how to help students with ADHD.

"Didn't know." Some participants expressed concern over missing or late information. Participant C said that while their children come home and tell them all of the good things that happen at school, "they won't always tell you the other stuff." Parents need to hear about this from the teachers, and they benefit from hearing about it. Participant G explained how good communication with their child's teacher has shown them what is expected of their child at school and has enabled them to hold their child to those higher standards. They also talked about experiences they had where this communication was missing. Their child had a series of negative behaviors that started small and escalated until intervention was required. "It would just be easier if I had known," Participant G said. "We may have been able to prevent it."

Parent C referred to some school behavioral issue they heard about through their children and said, "I honestly think if there was more school-to-parent communication…I think the environment during the day would change." They explained how the school environment would improve if parents were made aware of the behaviors happening in the school and were shown how to handle situations at home the same way they are dealt with at school.

When asked if they had attended specific workshops, parents' responses also indicated a lack of information. When told about the summer gap workshop, Participant

C answered, “Oh, I would have gone to that one. I didn’t know about [it].” Other participants also mentioned not being aware of certain events. Participant I said that the problem may actually not be a lack of information, but of misplaced information. “A flyer will come home. You see it, and you put it on the fridge, and then you just inadvertently forget about it.” Using a variety of communication media may be beneficial for preventing lost information.

Types of communication. All parents agreed that communication is a large part of the school’s role. Some of the specific types of communication participants said they wanted are progress reports, face to face meetings, emails and phone calls when issues are still small, class schedules, study guides, parent, teacher, or student contracts, information about the teachers, monthly newsletters, and sources for learning about the curriculum and homework. One question that parents were asked is how they would like to be informed about school events. The suggestions included fliers, emails, reminder texts, Facebook posts, dates listed in the monthly newsletter, and the parents’ group website. Most parents preferred receiving flyers for event announcements. Participant A likes to have a separate flier for each event because they sit down as a family and decide which ones to attend, then post them on the fridge. Participant C found that they tend to read and forget emails. However, Participants B and E preferred electronic announcements because they were less likely to get lost. Participant E also liked being able to check the social media page during their breaks at work. This page is also another social involvement opportunity “because it does keep you updated and connected with other parents.” While Participant G found the paper flier to be the easier method, they

said that the parents' social media page is a good resource for questions. Participant I suggested that the school send out text reminders the day of events.

Almost all participants mentioned the need for good and consistent communication between parents and teachers, though they differed in the amounts and types of communication wanted. Some parents wanted to be informed about both the good and bad of the school day, while others would rather only be contacted with emergencies. Participant G explained how good communication with their child's teacher has shown them what is expected of their child at school and has enabled them to hold their child to those higher standards.

Teachers also need to be aware of the differing communication needs of parents. Some parents wanted frequent classroom updates, while others only wanted to be informed of negative issues. Also, some parents wanted to be a part of the conversation developing the solution while others wanted to be given the solution. Participant A said that they do not like when the teacher calls and asks how they would handle a situation. Participant A said, "I can tell you about [my child], but really you'll probably tell me more about her than I know because you see the children from a different standpoint than parents do." They recommended that teachers have suggestions in mind when they contact a parent with an issue.

Theme 3: Parent Involvement as Social Interaction

An analysis of the data indicated that parents believed that involvement has important social benefits. Parents wanted to attend events that encourage social interaction. They believed that it is important to be involved in the events their children

are interested in, and that opportunities should be provided to interact with both teachers and other parents.

Codes. The four codes for this theme are (a) social interaction, (b) "For the kids," (c) social approval, and (d) small social circle. These codes all address parent motivation for involvement, and they all have a social component. Parents chose to be involved because involvement provides an opportunity to interact socially, benefits their children, and garners social approval. The last code, small social circle, could be seen as a barrier to involvement. However, it was kept with this theme because of the social component and influence on parent motivation.

Social interaction. When asked to describe the benefits received from attending school events, most participants talked about social interactions. Involvement creates an opportunity to meet and interact with other parents and children. Participant A noted that outside of school events it can be hard to meet other parents because everybody is busy. Involvement activities can give parents a chance to mingle and exchange contact information. "You never know, you could meet your new best friend," Participant A said. Participant C appreciates this opportunity to meet the parents, but also likes to be involved because of the opportunities it provides to watch their child engage with other children. Participant E found that involvement opportunities helped organize play dates and interactions for their children, who were "kind of shy."

Involvement opportunities can also promote interactions between parents and teachers and between children and teachers. When asked to describe the perfect parent event, Participant B described it as an opportunity to meet the teachers. Participant G also

appreciated involvement as a chance to meet teachers and "get a feel for what they are like." Participant E suggested an open meet and greet between parents and teachers with other activities set up so that parents can watch the teachers and students interacting.

For the kids. Parent involvement does not look the same to all parents. When asked to define involvement, most participants mentioned attendance at the parents' group meetings. Participant D added that involvement includes what happens at home as well. An involved parent is a parent "that engages with their child, not just academics…Just trying to make them the best they can be." They stated that parent involvement also includes talk and play.

Parents at the local school chose to participate in the events their children wanted to attend. Participant A said that these events were "not necessarily what I want to spend my time doing. But I do it because it's my way of supporting the kids with what their interests are." Participant I said it more simply: "It's important to her, it's important to me." Parents were involved when their children wanted them to be involved. Participant G found involvement opportunities rewarding because they bring together their daughter's school life and family life and help her learn and grow emotionally. Their daughter "loves when mommy and daddy can come to something and do something special with her like that." Parents also talked about avoiding some events because the children were not interested. Participant A said their family skips the math nights at the school for this reason, "Just because I think it would be more murderous than fun trying to drag the kids through what they would look at as more schoolwork."

Social approval. When asked to describe a highly-involved parent, Participant A said that it was "probably someone who's well-known in the community for the work they're giving back." Parents see involvement as a way to give back to the school and the community. It is also a way to acquire social approval. Participant D commented that involvement makes them look good in the community. "They look at me as though I love this school. I like being here and I'm a good mom because I go to these things." A lack of involvement can also lead to a loss of social approval. Participant I stated, "I do have an issue that nobody shows up. Especially when people are putting their effort in. It's almost disrespectful." At least to this parent, involvement is a parental responsibility in response to the work the school and other parents have done. Participant I said, "A lot of money and a lot of time goes into [the events] so it's very disappointing when people don't show up for it." Participant B explained that being involved "helps the overall community, not just your grade, not just the class that your child is in, but it helps the whole school."

Small social circle. Some parents believe there is a lack of involvement at the local school that could be discouraging the involvement of other parents. Both a lack of passion and a passion for parent involvement can be contagious. Participant A noted, "Sometimes the parents that are most involved can pass the excitement on to other parents to try to get more people involved." Participant I described the excitement and frenzy that built up before a school dance held the year before. "Everybody dressed up for it. It was crazy. But everybody wanted to be a part of it." They stated that people were posting pictures of the event online and inciting excitement, adding that so many people attended the dance that families had to be turned away at the door.

However, a lack of interest in parent involvement can also be shared. As Participant I stated, “I think people get in that mindset of, ‘Oh, nobody else is doing it. Why am I?” Parents are already very busy and may begin to question the importance of an event that other parents have chosen not to attend. Participant A said, “I don’t know that there’s as much involvement as there could be. I’m starting to notice it’s the same faces at all of the events.” Participant H also noticed this smaller circle in sports and at parents’ meetings. Participant G appreciates the wisdom and experience of this involved core of parents, because if you have questions “you can ask in the group…You have the parents who are more involved physically in the school so they’re able to answer those questions without you having to bother the teacher or the principal.” However, this small circle of involved parents can lead to too few people doing too much work and can cause other parents to step back from involvement. Participant H said that with a small group of parents “things run stale...It’s nice to have the different inputs and extra hands.”

However, as Participant I noticed, over-involved parents can also be a concern. They mentioned that some parents monopolize teachers, so that “[the teachers] can’t even communicate with other parents because they’re so entwined in [the parent’s] world.” Over-involved parents can also decrease the involvement of other parents. When talking about highly involved parents, Participant A stated that “I feel like sometimes if they make it look like it was so easy, parents pull back. ‘Well, they don’t need me. They’ve got it under control.’” Other parents may not volunteer to help out in the parents’ group because they feel redundant.

Theme 4: Barriers to Involvement

The data indicated that parents at the local school believed parent involvement is important and would like to be more involved. When asked to rate their own level of involvement, all parents said they could be doing more. The biggest barriers to involvement at the local school were (a) time and (b) a perceived lack of invitation. Parents also believed that it would be beneficial if the school provided involvement opportunities that met their perceived needs and to which the whole family was invited.

Codes. The three codes in this theme are (a) time, (b) lack of invitation, and (c) other barriers. The first two, time and lack of invitation, were the most commonly mentioned barriers to parent involvement at the local school. The other code includes obstacles to effective involvement that parents mentioned as reasons for not attending school events.

Time. All participants gave examples of events they had to miss because of a lack of time. Participant A talked about juggling the busy schedules of their children. Participant G talked about a workshop on behavior that they were very interested in attending but could not because of a prior commitment. Participant H noted that with a finite amount of time, parents need to ration their time and they often do not want to spend it at meetings and workshops. Parent F talked about how education is a priority in their household, but "there's a lot of things that are a priority. There's just a lot of things. I have to work. I have to make dinner and eat. There's everything you have to do." Participant A also noted the lack of time. They had students in three different schools and struggled to balance the amount of time they were involved at each, "which sometimes

makes it feel like I really didn't do anything other than stand in the background." Sports was also mentioned as conflicting with school events,. Participant H commented, "usually something's overlapping so you have to choose where you're going." However, the right invitations can help parents make this choice.

Lack of invitation. Participant B stated that it is the job of the administrator and the teacher to create a welcoming environment. Participants were asked about how welcome they felt at the local school and what features made them feel welcome or not welcome. Participant A stated that the staff was very welcoming and encouraging. Participant C commented on the smiling faces in the building. Participant B added that teachers at the school wanted to help their child and were always available to talk about concerns. Other things parents found welcoming were the monthly newsletters from the principal and teachers, the sign and flowers in front of the school, student artwork hanging in the halls, and staff members who know their children by name. Participant D said that having a large teacher presence at school events would also be welcoming.

A feature that parents found unwelcoming about the school is a lack of parent involvement in classrooms during the day. Participant D said, "Just not allowing a lot of volunteers to come in. That's kind of unwelcoming." Conversely, some parents talked about specific invitations they had received to be involved during the school day. Three parents mentioned a Flat Stanley project. After reading the book Flat Stanley at school, students created paper dolls that they sent to friends and relatives all around the world. Then, as a family at home, they created a project showcasing his travels. Parents were invited into the classroom to see the projects being presented. Participant G enjoyed this

opportunity for involvement, and explained, “I thought that was really neat because they had worked really hard at that project and they invited us parents to go in to check all this out. That was probably one of my best ones.”

Other barriers. Other barriers to involvement were only mentioned by one or two parents. These were the physical building, student unwillingness, parent-teacher conflict, role confusion, and parent’s comfort level. Not including the whole family at events was also mentioned as a barrier.

Parents were asked what they found unwelcoming about the school. While Participant G found new security protocols in the building welcoming, showing that their child was being kept safe, Participant I found them unwelcoming. They talked about having to be buzzed into the school building and then standing just inside the door in a large empty, open area and not knowing where to go. Parent F mentioned that the small parking lot can create an unwelcoming feeling. “I’ve had a couple of issues parking in the past. Especially in the winter when there’s snow and ice and you get even more limited.”.

Participant D talked about how she wanted to be more involved, but that their child did not want them doing school stuff together. Participant G talked about an unresolved issue with a teacher. Their child’s behavior had become a concern in the classroom, and the parents were not informed until it was a problem. “If I don’t know until it becomes a bigger issue, it’s hard to try to navigate around that and to help the teacher to help my child,” Participant G said. They felt that much of the behavior could have been prevented by better communication. This led to unresolved conflict between the parent and the teacher. Because of this conflict, the parent chose not to participate in

field day that year. Participant D, both a teacher and a parent at the school, talked about the confusion this double role sometimes caused. When they were attending a school event as a parent, other parents often still saw them as a teacher. Occasionally parents of students wanted to use the event to talk about their child's academic progress. This led to discomfort for Participant D. Another barrier to involvement was parents' comfort level. Participant E explained that they felt uncomfortable going to meetings and events. They want to be more involved, "but between schedules and being a little bit of a shyer person, it's kind of scary." If only one parent is invited to events, they will not be attending..

In order to explore possible motivations and barriers to involvement, parents were asked to describe the best and worst events they had attended at the school. When describing the best events, features included (a) they were well-organized events, (b) they included parents and children, (c) they involved interaction with the child's teacher, and (d) they were fun. Participant E also noted that more organized events encourage interaction between parents, which is beneficial for shy people. They then specified, "As long as they have something to do, so we're not just standing there forced to be awkward." Another motivator was food. Several parents mentioned an ice cream social and a pancake breakfast. Being able to bring the entire family was also mentioned. Participant D talked about the need to find childcare for their younger child. Parent E talked about how the school dances were split by grade level this year. Their students were each invited to a different dance. "So instead of taking two…we just didn't do either of them." Participant E also mentioned that it was easier for shyer parents to attend

workshops if they can bring their spouse. The worst events parents had attended were described as more chaotic and less structured.

When asked to describe the perfect parent event, Participant B described it as an opportunity to meet the teachers and learn about the curriculum and specific information that parents will need to know. Participant E suggested an open meet and greet between parents and teachers with other activities set up so that parents can watch the teachers and students interacting. Participant A suggested that the type of event was less important than invitation. "As long as it's posed positively." Parents want to be involved in the school and in the school lives of their children. It is up to the school to provide the right opportunities and invitations to allow that to happen.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the data collection and analysis stages, it was important to ensure the accuracy of any findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2012). Trustworthiness refers to the amount of trust a reader can have that the researcher gathered, analyzed, and shared the data ethically (Carlson, 2010). For this study, I used five methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the study: an audit trail, reflexivity, rich description, member checking, and discrepant cases.

Creating the audit trail involved carefully documenting all stages of the study (Carlson, 2010). Though many researchers do not actually have an auditor looking at their research, it is beneficial to keep field notes, journals, calendars, and drafts. Carlson (2010) wrote that audio recordings should be kept for three to five years after the study.

I documented each step of the research process from data collection, through analysis, to written report. Much of this documentation is explained in this report. Using interview protocol guides also helped with the accuracy of my study, as they ensured that I asked the same questions and used the same terminology with all participants. Another strategy to increase trustworthiness is reflexivity. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the data collection instrument. The goal of reflexivity is to reduce the researcher's influence on the study and study participants (Carlson, 2010). By keeping a reflexive journal in which I noted my feelings, thoughts, questions, and assumptions at each stage of the study, I remained aware of my influence on the study.

The third strategy that I employed to increase the trustworthiness of this study was thick and rich descriptions. In qualitative studies, the goal is that a study can be corroborated in a new, but similar, setting (Carlson, 2010). I included detailed descriptions of the participants, local setting, and data collection and analysis methods, so that the reader could understand each stage of the study. This will enable other researchers to corroborate the study.

I also used member checking, which involves bringing findings to participants to check for accuracy (Creswell, 2012). Synthesized member checking is a method designed to reduce the bias of a study with minimal harm to the participants (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Using this method, the researcher prepares a summary of the data listing the major themes with data quotes for each theme and sends it to participants with a request for feedback (Birt et al., 2016). The researcher then gathers the responses, adds the new data, and integrates the findings (Birt et al., 2016).

After coding the data, labeling text segments, and determining the main themes, I created a synthesis of the interviews and themes. I then provided this synthesis to participants. Carlson (2010) recommended that participants should be given precise directions for member checking. I asked participants to read through the table carefully with three questions in mind: 1) Do the themes match your perceptions and experiences? 2) Is there anything here that you disagree with? 3) Is there anything that you would like to add? Participants were asked to highlight sections and add their comments before returning the synthesis to me. This member checking process helped confirm the accuracy of my findings, while giving participants a chance to expand upon what they said in the interview. Having participants reflect upon my early findings improved the credibility of my study.

Another strategy that I used for ensuring the credibility of my study was discrepant case analysis. Discrepant case analysis is a process in which the researcher purposely looks for data that challenges the emergent findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While looking for patterns and connections between the interviews, I was also looking for phrases or experiences that were uniquely different. I searched for contradictory evidence that did not fit the main themes created from the coding categories. This analysis showed that while not every participant mentioned each of the themes and findings in their interview, no participant expressed views contrary to the themes. Also, with the exception of mentioning shyness, parent-teacher conflict, and limited parking as barriers to involvement, no participant mentioned experiences that

were uniquely different from the other participants. I found no discrepant cases in this study.

Discussion of Findings

When considering the study's conceptual framework, the first and third themes relate to parental role construction. The second theme relates to teacher invitation. The fourth theme relates to both parent self-efficacy and teacher invitation. These themes led to the development of the three findings of the study. Table 6 shows these findings aligned to the research questions.

Table 6

Findings related to research questions

Research Questions	Findings
RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school?	Parents believe that their role is to be a team player with teachers, as well as to support the school financially and physically.
RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events?	Parents believe that involvement has many benefits, including social interaction and knowledge, and would like to be more involved. However, the greatest barrier to involvement is time.
RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation.	Parents feel that administrators and teachers should increase open, two-way communication with parents, create academic workshops based on parents' perceived needs, provide opportunities for parents to be involved during the school day, and design events welcoming to the entire family.

The framework for this study is based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) three motivational constructs for parent involvement: (a) parental role construction, (b) parental efficacy, and (c) invitation and involvement opportunities provided by the school. In this section, I show how the data and themes from this study fit into these constructs, and then relate this data back to previous research on the topic.

Themes and motivational constructs. The four themes of this study relate to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) motivational constructs. The first and third themes, working as a team and parent involvement as social interaction, both relate to parental role construction. The second theme, transparency, relates to invitation and involvement opportunities provided by the school. The fourth theme, barriers, is related to parental self-efficacy. When parents present with high self-efficacy, the barriers will have less of an impact on involvement. This theme also relates to invitation at the local school.

Parental role construction. The first finding indicated that parents believe that their role is to be a team player with teachers, as well as to support the school financially and physically. This finding answered the first research question: How do parents describe their role within their child's school? Parents believe that the school's job is to teach children and to communicate effectively with parents. The parents' job is to support the teachers. Participants also believed that involvement was socially beneficial for both parents and children. Many participants mentioned using school events as opportunities to meet and interact with other parents. Park and Halloway (2017) called this type of involvement parent networking, and found it was strongly related to school-wide achievement.

In their studies on role construction, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that if the groups parents belong to value involvement, then parents are more likely to be involved. Conversely, if those groups did not value involvement, parents were less likely to be involved. The ability of parents to spread both a passion for involvement and a lack

of interest was noted during this study. Many participants were concerned that the same people seem to be attending all of the events. This is both diminishing their opportunities to meet new parents and negatively influencing their desire to attend future events.

It was also noted that parents want to do the activities that their children are interested in doing. This agreed with Fishman and Nickerson's (2015) finding that parents were more involved when their children asked them to be. All of the events that participants described as successful included interaction with their children. Many participants said that they attended these events because their child wanted to go.

Parental self-efficacy. All of the parents in this study stated that they could be more involved and mentioned the various barriers that hindered further involvement. However, they were all involved parents. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) found that parents with higher self-efficacy tend to persevere in involvement opportunities despite the barriers. This may have been evidenced in this study by the involvement activities participants mentioned attending despite the barriers they listed.

The second finding indicated that parents believe that involvement has many benefits, including social interaction and knowledge, and would like to be more involved. This finding answered the second research question: What are the parents' reasons for participating and not participating in school events? Most parents chose to participate because it benefited their children, and some chose to participate because they enjoyed the events. This agrees with Grolnick's (2015) finding that the most common form of motivation was identified motivation, followed by intrinsic motivation. One parent in this study talked about being involved because it is what good parents were supposed to do.

This may have been an example of introjected motivation, when parents become motivated because they feel they ought to and feel guilty when they are not involved.

All of the parents in this study stated that they could be more involved. The greatest barrier to their involvement was time. This is the same result Wong (2015) had found. Time spent on parent involvement is time that cannot be spent doing other activities that parents also value (Baker et al., 2016). However, parents were willing to work around this barrier if they thought the event was worthwhile.

A lack of efficacy did not appear to be the case for most participants. Robinson (2017) found that many parents who want to be involved are unsure how to do so. Other researchers also found that, if parents do not feel capable of involvement, they will likely not become involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Yamamoto et al., 2016). Many participants in this study expressed frustration about not being able to volunteer in the classroom and interact with their children during the school day. Although they felt that these were important activities, participants did not know how to convince the school of their importance. However, this frustration did not prevent parents from becoming involved in other ways. Participants talked about donating supplies, coaching sports teams, painting the school parking lot, attending school events, and helping with homework. One parent talked about being shy and avoiding events that they had to attend alone. This may have been an example of lower self-efficacy for involvement.

Yamamoto et el. (2016) also found that parents' self-efficacy was positively correlated with homework help. Parents showed a high efficacy here as well. Several participants in this study talked about lacking the skills required for helping their children

with homework. Wong (2015) found that parents perceived their own lack of knowledge as a barrier to involvement. However, while participants mentioned a lack of skills, they did not see it as a barrier. Instead of letting their lack of knowledge or understanding prevent them from working with their children, they used different strategies to find the needed information. Some used the Internet to find answers and resources. One called a tutor friend. Most participants stated that they would be interested in attending a workshop on homework help, the reading curriculum, or math. However, none of the participants mentioned asking for homework help from their child's teacher. One participant said that she did not want to look foolish for not knowing the answer; others stated that they did not want to bother the teacher. This could be an indication of a lower efficacy for parent-teacher communication. It also speaks to parents' perceptions on invitation at the local school.

Perceptions of invitation and involvement opportunities. The third finding indicated that parents feel that administrators and teachers should increase open, two-way communication with parents, create academic workshops based on parents perceived needs, provide opportunities for parents to be involved during the school day, and design events welcoming to the entire family. This finding answered the third research question: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation? Lasater (2016) and Hindin and Mueller (2016) both found that a lack of teacher training was a barrier to parent involvement. While this lack was not mentioned during the interviews for this study, many participants mentioned a lack of invitation and volunteer opportunities within the school. Parent perceptions of

teacher invitation can influence parental involvement (Yamamoto et al., 2016). More than half of the participants in this study did not feel invited, or even welcomed, into the school building. Participants are willing to overcome the time barrier to attend workshops that are aligned to their specific needs. However, none of the participants had been asked by the school what they needed. This agrees with Elbaum et al.'s (2016) finding that many parents felt that schools did not seek parent input and were not accessible to parents.

Robinson (2017) also found that parents did not perceive teachers and schools to be excited about involvement. Baker et al. (2016) found differences in parents' and schools' definitions of parental involvement. Participants in this study mentioned being frustrated by not being allowed to see their children during the school day. This lined up with Baker et al.'s (2016) finding that parents wanted to observe their children in the school and felt that school policies restricting this were unwelcoming (Baker et al., 2016). In McDowall and Schaughency's (2017) multi-tiered school wide engagement model, they described Tier 1 as a general welcoming attitude toward all students and parents. Other than the lack of volunteer opportunities, most participants in this study found the teachers and office staff friendly and the school welcoming. The second tier of McDowall and Schaughency's (2017) model involved invitations targeting chosen subgroups, and the third tier involved invitations to families needing more intensive support (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). These are the types of invitations that parents seem to find lacking at the local school. Fishman and Nickerson (2015) found that specific invitations from teachers were more influential than general invitations from schools. When talking

about successful parent involvement experiences, three of this study's participants talked about an event they attended because of a specific invitation from a teacher. All nine also mentioned attending general school-wide events with the whole family such as the Ice Cream Social and a Movie Night.

All participants also mentioned a need for clear, consistent communication between the school and the home. Robinson (2017) stated that a negative interaction with the school could cause a parent to become disengaged. An example of this disengagement was seen in this study when one parent talked about avoiding a fun engagement opportunity because of conflict with a teacher. Lasater (2016) noted that unresolved conflict between parents and teachers can escalate and negatively influence the students. In this case, the conflict might have been prevented with earlier communication between the parent and the teacher before the child's behavior escalated. Parents want to be informed of concerns early and included in the solution finding process. They also want transparency about what is going on during the school day.

Conclusion

In this study I used basic qualitative design to explore the perceptions of parents at a local elementary school using purposeful sampling to select and interview nine parent participants. I then used the obtained data to create a rich, detailed description of the perceptions of parents about parent involvement and related it back to the available research. I then used those findings to answer the three research questions.

RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school? Finding 1 indicated that parents believe that their role is to be a team player with teachers. Parents

see their role within the school to be supportive, financially, physically, and academically.

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events? Finding 2 indicated that parents believe that involvement has many benefits, including social interaction and knowledge, and would like to be more involved. However, the greatest barriers to involvement are time and perceived lack of invitation. Other barriers that also interfere include lack of childcare, shyness, and lack of interest in available activities. However, parents are willing to work at overcoming these benefits if they value the event's focus or their children want to attend.

RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation? Finding 3 indicated that parents feel that administrators and teachers should increase open communication with parents, create academic workshops based on parents' perceived needs, provide opportunities for parents to be involved during the school day, and design events welcoming to the entire family. If the school is able to meet these four criteria, parent involvement may increase at the local school.

Based on my findings, it is apparent that parents are willing to, and want to, participate more at the local school in order to benefit their children socially and academically. I will develop a PD opportunity for teachers to facilitate parent involvement by helping teachers understand what parents want and how to create involvement opportunities. This PD will provide the strategies that teachers need to

develop effective parent-teacher teams. In section 3 I use these findings to create a project that will train and equip teachers to more effectively engage parents.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Using a basic qualitative study, I examined the perceptions of parents at the local school about parent involvement. The findings showed that parents valued involvement with the local school, but did not always feel welcomed and invited. Parents wanted more effective and more consistent communication with the school, as well as more opportunities to become involved during the school day. These findings led to the development of a 3-day PD opportunity for teachers that is described in this section. This PD (see Appendix A) can also be broken into modules that can be taught over the course of a school year, with embedded online support for ongoing practice between modules. The 3 days of the workshop each begin with guided reflection followed by direct instruction. Opportunities to reflect and collaborate are built into the workshop to encourage teachers to apply what they learn. Each module ends with an opportunity to ask questions and reflect on learning. The third afternoon of the workshop will be spent designing a parent event proposal and presenting it to the workshop participants. An online forum will be provided for any interested teachers to continue to share and discuss the strategies they implement after the PD.

The purpose of this PD is to build teacher confidence and to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to more effectively involve parents in the local school. The topics are based on the findings of the study and include parent motivation, setting expectations, overcoming barriers, effective communication, communication media, social capital and parent networking, teacher invitation, and transparency. The

goal of this project is to equip teachers with specific strategies to invite and engage parents to participate in the local school. In this section I share the rationale behind the genre choice (PD), provide a review of current literature as it relates to this genre and the study results, and describe the program and evaluation methods.

Rationale

The problem that prompted this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. Through examining the perceptions of parents at the local school, I found that parents valued involvement and believed that their role was to be a team player with teachers. However, some parents did not feel welcomed by teachers, and most parents felt that the school should increase open communications with parents. Parents also wanted more opportunities to be involved during the school day.

The results of this study could be beneficial for developing both teacher-training opportunities and needs-based parent workshops. While needs-based parent workshops might be helpful to some parents in the district, teacher training could have a greater influence by preparing teachers to use engaging strategies to include all parents. A PD offering for teachers can address parent concerns by training teachers to more effectively communicate with and involve parents. This PD will also give teachers experience with creating and implementing a needs-based parent workshop. Enhancing parent and teacher collaboration and improving teacher invitation practices should increase parent engagement at the local school.

There will be guided reflection and small-group discussions embedded throughout this PD opportunity, each followed by a whole-group discussion. Guided reflection has been shown to support practical knowledge construction based on experience and to help learners internalize new concepts into theories of action (Allas, Leijen, & Toom, 2016). As teachers think about and discuss what they are learning, knowledge becomes internalized into their teaching schema. By starting with small-group discussions, teachers will have an opportunity to interact with peers first, which will allow them to talk more freely without feeling they are being evaluated (Allas et al., 2016). The whole-group discussion will then give them the benefit of hearing from the other small groups and from the facilitator.

Hall (2017) found that an essential component of PD is active learning. They recommended breaking lectures into 20-minute sections, followed by opportunities to interact with new information. This workshop involves multiple brief lectures with frequent opportunities for interaction with colleagues to collaborate and brainstorm ways to implement the new knowledge and skills into professional practice.

Due to the available time in the school calendar, this PD will be presented over a period of 3 days. Pharis, Wu, Sullivan, and Moore (2019) suggested that teacher training should be done in small steps over a long period of time, with the most effective PD continuing throughout the school year. It takes time for teachers to internalize collaboratively constructed knowledge (Allas et al., 2016). To address this, there will be a voluntary online component where teachers can continue to interact and discuss strategy implementation after the 3-day workshop. This will provide teachers with time to

internalize and act upon the new information with online guidance from peers. Online collaboration has been found to enhance teacher PD by increasing motivation and engagement (Acar & Yildiz, 2016). For this project, the online component will include a document section for handouts and lists created during the PD and a discussion forum where teachers can post their own suggestions and experiences implementing strategies. Videos can also be shared on this forum.

Teachers learn to more effectively implement new strategies when watching them being modeled by their peers (Acar & Yildiz, 2016). Ritchie, Phillips, and Garrett (2016) recommended the use of demonstration classrooms where skilled teachers can model the strategies being taught. As part of this PD, teachers will be asked to design and present a parent workshop using the knowledge and strategies gleaned from the PD.

Through the use of guided reflection and discussion, combined with research-based lectures and modeling of successful strategies, this PD will help equip teachers to effectively communicate with and engage parents. The goal of this PD is to equip teachers with specific strategies to invite and engage parents to participate and to prepare teachers to address many of the parent needs discovered during this study. Having parents' needs met should, in turn, help increase parent engagement at the local school.

Review of the Literature

In this review of the literature, I expanded upon the results of my study by connecting my findings to the current research in order to equip teachers to help parents become more effectively involved. I also reviewed current best practices in PD. I began my research using the search terms *professional development* and *elementary teachers* in

the Education Source database, limited to peer-reviewed articles published within the past 5 years. This resulted in 8,104 articles, many not relevant to the topic. I changed the second search term to *elementary teachers* and narrowed it down to 342 articles. I also searched using the terms *best practices* and *professional development*. This resulted in 212 articles. I continued searching using terms related to PD such as *guided reflection* and terms related to my findings such as *parent and teacher collaboration*, *communication*, *barriers,* and *school transparency*.

In this section, I synthesize what I found in the literature. I begin with a review of current research on PD best practices. Then I discuss the current research related to each of the four themes from this study: (a) working as a team, (b) transparency, (c) parent involvement as social interaction, and (d) barriers to involvement.

Professional Development

Hall (2017) conceived five "practical points" for effective implementation of PD: (a) inspiration, (b) aspiration, (c) experimentation, (d) reflection, and (e) exploration. Inspiration involves creating a vision of what should be learned or taught. Aspiration involves discovering the steps to take to reach that vision. This is followed by experimentation, reflection, and reflection-based adjustments. The last step, exploration, is ongoing as teachers continue to explore, reflect, and adjust practices. These steps are enhanced by interactions with other learners. Hall (2017) recommended observing other teachers co-teaching and participating in discussions with colleagues.

Discussion is a large part of learning (Gartmeier, Gebhardt, & Dotger, 2016; Pharis et al., 2019). Gartmeier et al. (2016) found that teachers' level of conversation

competence was related to the time they spent communicating with colleagues about their parent interactions. Teachers with higher confidence in their parent communication skills engaged more in discussions with their peers about their parent contact experiences and related issues. Teachers benefit from interacting with their peers in school-based professional learning communities where peer teachers can share their thoughts and perceptions on teaching and collaborating on classroom strategies (Pharis et al., 2019). Gartmeier et al. (2016) recommended that schools create more opportunities for teachers to purposefully share and reflect together on their experiences with parents. Peer observation followed by discussion and feedback enhanced the professional learning of both the observer and the observed (Hall, 2017). Teachers want, and benefit from, support and authentic feedback from peers about their effectiveness (Pharis et al., 2019). This authentic feedback can both stimulate discussion and encourage reflection.

Reflections, both oral and written, are beneficial for learning (Allas et al., 2016). Oral reflection usually involves context related knowledge, whereas written reflection tends to involve inferential knowledge and theoretical reasoning (Allas et al., 2016). Both enhance learning. Reflection is a key component of effective PD and enables teachers to learn through questioning and reframing new concepts and planning how they can be implemented (Hall, 2017). Reflection can be used by both the presenter and the learner to analyze assumptions and beliefs that may interfere with new learning (Hall, 2017). Reflection also helps learners to internalize new concepts and skills (Allas et al., 2016). Often, this takes time.

Pharis et al. (2019) found that teachers benefitted from PD that was gradual and continuous. Teachers tended to be anxious at the beginning of a PD opportunity and often find change difficult and can feel threatened by learning many new strategies in a short period of time (Pharis et al., 2019). Analyzing long-held assumptions can be uncomfortable, as can implementing skills for the first time (Hall, 2017). Over time, through reflection and discussion, the knowledge and skills presented and practiced become comfortable and then internalized by the learner (Allas et al., 2016).

Reflection and discussion do not have to be face to face. Online discussions can also be beneficial. Online collaboration between teachers can provide insights about their strengths and weaknesses (Acar & Yildiz, 2016). This collaboration helps teachers both improve on their strengths and strengthen their weaker areas (Acar & Yildiz, 2016). Acar and Yildiz (2016) recommended that teacher-training programs include an online collaboration component. Although their study did not include parent involvement, Acar and Yildiz found that using social media to collaborate online with other teachers also improved parent and teacher interactions.

Working as a Team

The first finding of this study was that parents believed their role was to be a team player with teachers, as well as to support the school financially and physically. Parent and teacher collaboration can emotionally benefit both parties. Successful collaboration can make teachers feel validated and appreciated by parents (Mereoiu, Abercrombie, Murray, & Tong, 2016) and make parents feel empowered by teachers to work more effectively with their children at home (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Parents can provide

essential information about their children that can help teachers make decisions and select strategies. When teachers acknowledge this and include parents as partners in educational decisions, parent confidence increases (Curry & Holter, 2019) and parents are more likely to become involved in their child's learning (Gerzel-Short, 2018). However, the greatest benefit of collaboration, for both parents and teachers, can be improved student outcomes (Mereoiu et al., 2016). With the possibility of achieving the above-mentioned benefits, it is essential that educators make successful and effective parent-teacher collaboration a priority (Lohmann, Hathcote, & Boothe, 2018). The following strategies would be beneficial for increasing parent-teacher collaboration: (a) improving communication skills, (b) setting clear expectations, (c) creating insider opportunities, and (d) participating in trust-building activities.

Improving communication skills. Effective collaboration between teachers and parents can be increased through positive, planned parent and teacher communication (Lohmann et al., 2018). Many parents and teachers do not know how to communicate effectively. Gartmeier et al. (2016) found that only about 24% of the 677 secondary teachers in their study rated themselves as highly proficient in parent communication. Deslandes, Barma, and Morin (2015) found that teachers feel they lack the time, training, and resources required to successfully collaborate with parents. At the same time, parents often feel intimidated communicating with teachers (Mereoiu et al., 2016). Without adequate communication skills, effective collaboration between the two groups will be difficult to achieve.

Gartmeier et al. (2016) found that teachers who self-rated into a low confidence group paid less attention to making sure that they were accurately understanding parents. This can affect the parent-teacher relationship. When working with highly demanding parents, less confident teachers may choose to become problem solvers instead of communicators (Gartmeier et al., 2016). This could be why Stevens and Patel (2015) found that parents rated schools as best at giving specific information and worst at providing explanations. Gartmeier et al. (2016) found that "paying too much attention to problem solving could indicate a shortcut strategy…characterized through proposing readymade solutions" (p. 214). Teachers become problem solvers and information providers, but do not always understand what parents need or seriously consider their viewpoints (Gartmeier et al., 2016). By quickly suggesting solutions to please the parents, teachers may also unwittingly make commitments they will find difficult to complete. These commitments may then increase the expectations of the parents (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Instead, teachers should be including parents in problem-solving discussions (Gerzel-Short, 2018).

Communication skills can be improved by learning specific skills. Many teachers need to be taught how to effectively communicate with parents under limiting time constraints (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Other communication skills include knowing how to summarize the information to be shared and how to include parents when setting the goals for the conversation (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Avoiding professional jargon and acronyms can help make parent-teacher communication less intimidating for parents (Gerzel-Short, 2018; Mereoiu et al., 2016). Communication skills can also be improved

through practice. In a study of preservice teachers, Bofferding, Kastberg, and Hoffman (2016) found that having preservice teachers work at a family math night made them feel more confident about working with parents in the future. The experience also gave them a greater understanding of the parents' perspectives (Bofferding et al., 2016).

Setting clear expectations. Teachers and parents have unique perspectives and do not always share the same goals for collaboration (Deslandes et al., 2015; Mereoiu et al., 2016). Deslandes et al. (2015) found that teachers' expectations were more traditional, wanting parents to provide school supplies, supervise homework, motivate their children to do well in school, and contact the teachers with concerns. Parents, on the other hand, want to collaborate with the schools (Gerzel-Short, 2018). They also want to be considered a source of cultural experience and knowledge about their children (Bofferding et al., 2016). Gerzel-Short (2018) found that parents were frustrated that teachers wanted them to attend school events but were not helping parents understand how their children were performing in school or teaching them how to help with homework. Parents and teachers often enter partnerships with differing perspectives on what would benefit the students and on what should be made a priority for discussion (Mereoiu et al., 2016). Even among teachers, the expectations for the parent-teacher relationship can vary greatly (Deslandes et al., 2015).

Roles and expectations also vary among parents. In their work with parent focus groups, Curry and Holter (2019) found that parents were evenly divided between two roles. Half of the parents they talked with felt that their primary role was to prepare their children to learn in the classroom. The other half felt that their role was to extend the

learning taking place within the classroom. Other parents act more like clients then team members (Deslandes et al., 2015). These parents may contact the school principal with issues instead of communicating with the teacher and place all responsibility for student achievement on the teacher instead of on the child. While teachers often view these parents negatively, the parents may find it essential to act as a client, feeling a "need to be assertive in order to ensure the educational needs of their children are being addressed" (Mereoiu et al., 2016, p. 7). These parents need support from the school to more effectively and appropriately engage with teachers (Gerzel-Short, 2018).

In order to successfully collaborate, teachers need to be aware of their own expectations and be able to clearly explain what they expect from parents. In one study, teachers had unofficially adopted a policy where they would only contact the parents if there were problems (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). The parents began to follow the same policy, and teachers became concerned about a lack of communication (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). However, it was actually a lack of clear expectations. In order to create a parent-teacher team, schools and families must agree on what their respective roles are in the collaborative relationship (Deslandes et al., 2015). Teachers can improve the quality of parent-teacher communication by clearly outlining their expectations and showing parents what they expect.(Lohmann et al., 2018).

To collaborate effectively, teachers also need to feel supported by the school. Deslandes et al. (2015) found that some teachers do not want to increase parent-teacher communication because they feel a lack of support from their administration. Once both parties are provided with sufficient support and opportunities to collaborate, parents can

shift from being clients to being teachers in the home (Gerzel-Short, 2018) and teachers can become risk-takers to encourage collaboration.

Creating insider opportunities. Instead of feeling supported, some of the participants in the current study felt like outsiders within the school. Mereoiu et al. (2016) noted this in their study of parents of children with disabilities. They found that parents felt a lack of empathy from the school and stated that school employees did not always take individual family and student needs into consideration (Mereoiu et al., 2016). By creating insider opportunities, teachers can decrease parents' perceptions of being an outsider and encourage collaboration. Some insider opportunities participants mentioned include painting the school playground, reading books to classrooms, and providing supplies and snacks. Other suggestions include making photocopies or working in the school cafeteria (Snell, 2018).

Participating in trust-building activities. In a study conducted in Poland, Rusnak (2018) found that trust was a key factor influencing how teachers and parents engaged. While there are clear cultural differences between the United States and Poland, this study points to the importance of a trusting relationship between parents and teachers. Distrust can cause parents and teachers to act as spectators in their relationship instead of becoming active participants (Rusnak, 2018). Rusnak stated that it is the school's job to initiate activities that can create trust. When implemented effectively, parent-teacher collaboration can strengthen relationships between the groups (Mereoiu et al., 2016). Perspective taking is the act of seeing a situation from another person's point of view. This, in turn, helps build the trust between them (Mereoiu et al., 2016).

Trust is built while forging relationships with parents (Poynton, Kirkland, & Makela, 2018; Samuels, 2018). It is important to validate the belief that parents can make important contributions (Poynton et al., 2018). Samuels (2018) noted that often at educational meetings, school staff members are addressed by their title while parents are simply called mom or dad. They need to become equal members of the team. Trust can also be built by attending events and making personal connections with parents, interacting over positive issues, and initiating two-way communication with parents (Poynton et al., 2018). By building the trust between them, teachers and parents can become effective collaborators.

School Transparency

The second finding of the study was that parents felt that administrators and teachers should increase open communication with parents and provide opportunities for parents to be involved during the school day. Parents wanted the local school to be transparent about what was going on while their children were at school. Bofferding et al. (2016) and Snell (2018) also found this desire to know what is happening during the school day. Parents want to be told both how their children are doing and what their children are learning in the classroom (Bofferding et al., 2016). Snell (2018) pointed out that this desire to know is not always routed in a mistrust of the teachers, but out of a desire to know how children are spending their time and how parents can be supportive. As the school's transparency increases, accountability and trust will also increase (Bozbayinder, 2016). Not only does this enhance the parent-teacher relationship, it can also positively influence the behaviors and attitudes of teachers toward the school and

administration (Bozbayinder, 2016). The following strategies would be beneficial for increasing school transparency: (a) data sharing, (b) starting the conversation, (c) using multiple communication media, and (d) supporting generativity.

Data sharing. Schools are responsible for informing parents of school and student performance. Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Massachusetts adopted a descriptive rating plan for its schools using the terms *needs improvement*, *average*, *good*, *great*, and *excellent* to indicate their overall performance (Education Commission of the States, 2019). This information is available to parents on both the state and district websites. Murray and Howe (2017) pointed out that it has been suggested that school rating systems can be a tool for increasing parent involvement. However, these authors' concern is that the rating systems may actually suppress parental participation. Parents are usually not familiar with how these ratings are calculated and what they really mean (Murray & Howe, 2017). Rating systems can prevent parents from critically thinking about schools and parents may actually develop negative opinions about schools and avoid interacting with school leaders (Murray & Howe, 2017, p. 10). Though meant to increase accountability and transparency, the school ratings may actually decrease parent involvement.

However, data can be used more effectively. Parents and teachers can collaborate to make data-driven decisions. Although most schools use data to make important decisions about students and policies, parents are not always invited to be a part of the discussion (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Parents are the child's first teacher and should be considered a valuable resource (Parker & Reid, 2017). Sharing data with parents can help

all stakeholders. Having a greater understanding of their child's performance can enable parents to more effectively participate in conversations about appropriate strategies for student success (Parker & Reid, 2017). Schools can also glean valuable insights from parents that can be used to shape students' educational outcomes (Elbaum et al., 2016). Parent-teacher relationships are improved as parents and teachers use student data to find common objectives and problem solve together (Gerzel-Short, 2018).

Starting the conversation. At the teacher level, transparency also includes ongoing communication with parents. In a national survey of 14,075 parents of school-aged children conducted in 2015-2016, 89% of parents reported receiving "newsletters, memos, e-mail, or notices addressed to all parents from their child's school" (McQuiggan, Megra, & Grady, 2017, p. 3). Sixty-two percent of the parents surveyed reported receiving notes or emails pertaining to their children, and 42% reported receiving phone calls from the school (McQuiggan et al., 2017). However, this only shows one side of the conversation.

Successful communication is two-way. Deslandes et al. (2015) noted that while teachers in their study used multiple modalities to communicate with parents, they rarely received positive feedback from those parents, which negatively affected teachers' motivation. Without receiving positive feedback, teachers began to question the efficacy of their attempts to communicate with parents (Deslandes et al., 2015).

As noticed in this study, there is also sometimes confusion over who should initiate the conversation. In an ethnographic study of kindergarten teachers and parents, Conus and Fahrni (2019) found that parents considered initiating regular communication

to be the teacher's job. Teachers, however, focused only on the importance of contacting parents when problems arose. The teachers saw their role as being available and responding when parents initiated the conversation (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). When letting parents initiate the conversation, it is important for teachers to truly be available. Elbaum et al. (2016) found that many parents accepted responsibility for initiating communications but became frustrated when teachers did not quickly respond, interpreting a delayed response as disinterest. Teachers need to respond quickly and adequately when parents reach out. They also need to be willing to initiate conversations about positive events as well as concerns (Poynton et al., 2018). Parents feel more involved when they receive consistent updates about their child's progress (Elbaum et al., 2016).

Using multiple communication media. The medium that teachers and parents use can influence the complexity of the communication (Mawhinney & Kochkina, 2019). Different teachers often prefer different modes of communication (Deslandes et al., 2015). It is the same with parents. The participants of this study mentioned wanting to receive information in emails, newsletters, by text, and on social media. In a survey of 1,349 parents of school-aged children, Thompson, Mazer, and Flood Grady (2015) found that most parents preferred communicating via email because of the convenience and easy access due to smartphones. The asynchronicity of email also gives parents and teachers time to reflect before responding, though meaning can sometimes be misconstrued when dealing with more complex topics (Thompson et al., 2015). Emails create a way of documenting the conversation (Deslandes et al., 2015). Texting, a near

synchronous medium, can be used when simple answers are needed quickly (Mawhinney & Kochkina, 2019). Because of the availability of text translation applications, texting and email can also be beneficial for parents who speak other languages (Snell, 2018). However, when the topic is more personal or more complex, parents seem to prefer phone calls or face-to-face communication (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Face-to-face communication enables parents to feel more invested and accountable, which often leads to more involvement (Gerzel-Short, 2018).

Thompson et al. (2015) encouraged teachers to consider using various methods of communication when reaching out to parents, including emailing, phoning, texting, and using social media. Baker et al. (2016) found that parents wanted more communication about upcoming events, asking that schools use multiple media to inform them of each event (Baker et al., 2016). In this study, participants suggested that flyers continue to be used to inform parents of upcoming events, and that social media and emails be used as the event date approaches. Some participants also mentioned the possibility of using phone calls or texts on the day of the event. People tended to gravitate toward specific communication media depending on the type of question they are asking (Mawhinney & Kochkina, 2019). To more effectively encourage parental participation, teachers should have a variety of communication options available.

Supporting generativity. Generativity, related to parental role construction, includes a parents' motivation to give back to their families, schools, and communities (Stevens & Patel, 2015). It has been positively associated with volunteerism and community involvement. According to the findings of this study, local parents wanted to

be involved in the community and the school. Transparency includes letting parents be a part of their child's school day. This could include bringing the parents into the classroom or bringing the classroom to the parents via websites and social media. It could also include making parents aware of any insider opportunities available in the classroom or school.

Parent Involvement as Social Interaction

The third finding of this study was that parents believed that involvement has many benefits, including social interaction and knowledge, and would like to be more involved. Parents wanted more involvement opportunities that they could attend with their families and they wanted time to interact with their children, with their children's teachers, and with other parents. Often participants stated that parent involvement was for the benefit of and at the request of their children. Several participants also mentioned that parent involvement opportunities were a way for them to meet other parents. Two strategies for using social interaction to increase parent involvement are (a) creating parent networks and (b) building events into the school day where parents, teachers, and students can interact.

Creating parent networks. When attempting to increase parent engagement, most schools focus on increasing and improving the interactions between parents and school personnel (Li & Fischer, 2017). However, it is also important to increase interactions between parents, because this increases parents' social capital. This social capital, related to self-efficacy, includes parents' beliefs about having the means to achieve what they want to accomplish, including nontangible resources, behavioral

norms, trust, and social networks (Stevens & Patel, 2015). Parents can use social capital to navigate the field of education and ensure their children's academic needs are met (Lareau, Evans, & Yee, 2016). Increased social capital can provide parents with support systems, access to essential information about the school and homework help, and help with parenting responsibilities (Curry & Holter, 2019). By increasing the networks between parents, and thus increasing their social capital, teachers can also increase the likelihood of their involvement within the school (Li & Fischer, 2017). When students are failing academically, it is important to determine if the school has blocked the development of parents' social capital through a lack of involvement opportunities (Stevens & Patel, 2015).

It is also important to look at the specific needs of the population. Parent networks and parent involvement were both found to be negatively influenced by students changing schools between first and third grade (Li & Fischer, 2017). Parent involvement is positively associated with parents' age and SES (Li & Fischer, 2017). Race, number of biological parents in the house, and number of children all negatively influence parent involvement (Li & Fischer, 2017). While these are not factors that teachers have any influence over, they are indicators that teachers can watch for. Schools need to help connect at-risk parents socially. This can be done through using social media, helping connect parents with similar backgrounds, or hosting events at the school.

Building events into the school day. Snell (2018) recommends creating parent events where students demonstrate their academic learning and achievements. Parents can be invited into the classroom to see completed projects or watch their students

perform. When asked about their favorite parent events at the local school, several participants mentioned events they had attended during the school day. One popular event was a showcase of student work that had been completed in collaboration with family members. Another parent mentioned a classroom presentation where the students recited poems. Many parents also mentioned the school-wide music concert. Participants expressed appreciation of the opportunities to see what their children are involved in during the school day.

Barriers to Involvement

The findings of this study indicated that parents at the local school want to be more involved but were experiencing several barriers to involvement. Both structural and socio-psychological barriers can prevent parents from becoming more involved (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). The biggest structural barrier mentioned in this study was time. Involvement opportunities often conflict with parents' work schedules or with other events (Baker et al., 2016). Participants also mentioned different family members having conflicting schedules. Li and Fischer (2017) found that as the number of children in a family increases, the rate of parent involvement decreases. Parents may have to find childcare, as well as coordinate the schedules of family members, and still find time to feed everyone (Baker et al., 2016). Other structural barriers mentioned were the size of the school parking lot and the emptiness of the front lobby. The most-mentioned socio-psychological barrier was a perceived sense that parents were not welcome in the building. Other mentioned barriers were a lack of interest in the types of events held, parent shyness, and a perceived lack of teacher invitation.

Some of these barriers can only be addressed at a school or district level. However, teachers can influence many of them by how they interact with parents. Positive and intentional communication can help parents overcome many of the barriers to involvement (Lohmann et al., 2018). Other strategies that teachers can implement to overcome the barriers inhibiting parent involvement include (a) conducting teacher attitude checks, (b) sharing information, and (c) improving teacher invitation practices.

Conducting teacher attitude checks. Teachers' attitudes and actions can influence parent involvement levels (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). Teachers may have preconceived notions about parents and whether or not they want parents to be involved and to what extent (Gerzel-Short, 2018). While parent involvement is beneficial for students, parents, and teachers, it is not essential for the daily management of the classroom routines (Elbaum et al., 2016). Some teachers may be afraid of having parents interrupting those routines. Before they can increase parent participation, teachers need to identify their own preconceived ideas and determine whether or not, and how, they want parents to be involved.

Sharing information. Parent frustration over not understanding their children's academic work can also diminish parent involvement (Gerzel-Short, 2018). When teachers send work home, they need to ensure that parents have the emotional, physical, and educational resources necessary to help their children complete it (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Participants in this study frequently mentioned the math program being used at the local school, expressing their frustration at not being able to help their children with homework. In Bofferding et al.'s (2016) survey, 40% of respondents indicated that they

supported the new math strategies that teachers were using and wanted to be able to reinforce the learning at home, but they needed more information. Many parents also want to know specific learning strategies that they can use with their children (Gerzel-Short, 2018). Teachers can get this information to parents through newsletters, website and video links, and parent workshops.

Participants of this study wanted the local school to hold academic workshops around the math and reading curricula, reading MCAS reports, and helping with homework. Parent workshops should be needs based. Participants stated that one reason for not attending school events was that they or their children were not interested. However, when parents perceive the importance, they are motivated to overcome the barriers and attend meetings and workshops. McQuiggan et al. (2017) found that 79% of respondents stated that they had attended a school or class event, 89% mentioned attending meetings for the school or parent group, and 78% mentioned attending parent conferences. Parents will attend if the workshop addresses their perceived needs. They will also attend if they feel personally invited.

Improving teacher invitation practices. The participants in this study talked about selecting events to attend based on the preferences of their children. Parents tend to be more involved in school events when their children personally invite them to attend (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). Specific teacher invitation and ongoing, direct communication are also influential in motivating parents to become involved (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). Teachers can influence parent involvement rates by personally inviting

parents to attend meetings and events, and by explaining why that participation is both important and desired.

Conclusion

The review of the literature indicated that parents want to collaborate with teachers and that teachers want parents to become more involved. By honing their communication skills, setting clear expectations, and working to build the trust between them, teachers can equip parents to become collaborators with the school. Through initiating conversations with parents and sharing data and information through a variety of communication media, teachers can create the transparency that parents want. Teachers can also work to strengthen parent social capital by encouraging interactions between parents. Finally, by creating a variety of opportunities for parents to enter the school and by personally inviting them to attend, teachers can help increase parental participation and involvement at the local school.

Project Description

After conducting the literature review, I have created a PD opportunity for teachers that incorporates the above findings using research-based methods. Through this PD, I hope to build teacher confidence and equip teachers to more effectively involve parents in the local school. In this section, I describe the study as well as resources for and barriers to implementation.

The Study and Timeline

This PD is a 3-day workshop for teachers. The purpose of the PD is to build teacher confidence and to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to

more effectively involve parents in the local school. The goal is to equip teachers with specific strategies to invite and engage parents to participate. This will be done through guided reflection, facilitator lectures, and opportunities to share, practice, and model strategies (See Table 7).

Table 7

Workshop topics and activities

Day	Topics	Activities
One	Parent Involvement and Motivation	Guided Reflection, Define Involvement, PowerPoint with Lecture, Handout, Group Brainstorm
	Setting Expectations	Guided Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Setting Expectations Activity, Write a Newsletter
	Overcoming Barriers	Group Brainstorm, PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Work, Guided Reflection
Two	Communication	Best and Worst, Article Discussion: The Four A's, Role Playing
	Communication Media	Reflection Activity, PowerPoint with Lecture, Gallery Walk, Website Exploration and Peer Sharing
	Social Capital and Parent Networking	PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Activity, Trust Self-Assessment, Writing Action Steps, Reflect and Share
Three	Teacher Invitation	Guided Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Small Group Discussion, Article with Anchor Chart Activity,
	Transparency	Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Discussion
	Presentations	Design and Present a Parent Event

Resources Needed and Existing Supports

Many physical resources will be needed to conduct this workshop. I will need a space large enough to accommodate the participants, with a SMART board or projection system to display the PowerPoints. Participants will also need tables or desks where they can work in small groups. I will need access to the internet on Day 2 of the workshop. Although not necessary, it would be beneficial for participants to have access to computers for the work sessions built in throughout the workshop. Other necessary materials include photocopies of handouts and slides for participants, chart paper, post-its, poster markers, a timer, tape, and writing paper and utensils.

There are several existing supports for implementing this project in the local school. If my proposal is accepted by the PDC, they will advertise the PD opportunity to members of the district and provide an adequate workspace. If enough members sign up for the PD, the PDC will then provide a stipend enabling me to provide the materials needed to implement the workshop.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions

There are some potential barriers to implementing this workshop. The largest barrier is the PDC. If the committee does not approve this workshop, it will not be implemented as it is written. However, it may still be possible to implement a smaller version of the training at grade-level or faculty meetings. It may also be possible to find an outside site and conduct the workshop without support from the local school district.

Another barrier to implementation is time. It is difficult find time for daylong PD opportunities during the school year and many teachers are hesitant to commit to

workshops over vacation without receiving compensation. While it may be possible to find grant funds to financially compensate teachers for attending, I am not anticipating doing so. However, if the workshop is approved by the PDC, participants will receive Professional Development Points (PDPs) toward their next recertification. Another option is to break the 3-day workshop into a series of ten modules that can be implemented after school throughout the school year. This would give participants time to practice implementing new strategies in their classroom between sessions, and would still provide them with PDPs upon completion of the last module.

My Roles and Responsibilities

As project creator and facilitator, I will have many responsibilities. My first is to get approval from the PDC. To do this, I will use my research to show the need for this PD opportunity and the qualifications of my workshop to address this need. Then, upon approval, I will organize the workspace and gather the necessary materials.

During the workshop, I will be a facilitator. As a current teacher in the district, I know that the teachers in the local district have a wealth of experience and knowledge that I hope to draw upon during the workshop. My goal is to increase their confidence and equip them with specific strategies to increase parent involvement and meet the felt needs of local parents. To do this, I will encourage reflection and group discussions, guiding them to discover their own expectations and uncover their assumptions. I will share the current research behind parents' motivations and involvement, then work with participants as they discover new ways to use this research in their own classrooms to more effectively engage the parents they work with..

Project Evaluation Plan

This workshop will use both formative and summative evaluation to assess its success. The evaluation data will be used to modify the workshop to better address participant learning in future implementations.

Formative Evaluation

The goal of formative evaluation is to collect evidence and ascertain how well students are learning in order to appropriately adjust teaching practices (Lyon, Olah, & Wylie, 2019). Formative evaluation can be beneficial for both the instructor and the students. I will be using on-going formative evaluation throughout this workshop, as well as providing many opportunities for participants to ask questions.

Formative evaluation often involves reflection, self-assessment, feedback, and structured discussion – all strategies that have been found to positively influence student learning (Center on School Turnaround at WestEd., 2018). All four strategies have been built into this PD. Each session of this workshop will include opportunities for guided reflection. There will be several opportunities for small group and whole group discussions throughout the three days. The workshop will begin with a self-reflection activity where participants will rate their current parent involvement practices. Some of the guided reflection activities will also encourage participants to rate their practices and their learning. Throughout these activities, I will be observing participants and checking for both interest and understanding, and I will adjust my practices accordingly.

At the end of each day, participants will be asked to fill out an exit ticket where they will both reflect on learning and provide feedback on the workshop. The Day 1 and Day 2 Exit Tickets will be a 3-2-1 activity consisting of the following assignments:

1. Write three specific things that you learned today.
2. Write two strategies you would like to try implementing.
3. Write one suggestion to help improve this workshop.

The Day 3 Exit Ticket will involve a slightly more in-depth evaluation of the workshop. These Exit Tickets will provide insights into what concepts and activities were most valued by participants as well as what parts of the workshop need to be changed.

Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation is conducted at the end of a program to determine its effectiveness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This evaluation will provide feedback on how well the PD met its goal and what changes need to be made before future implementation attempts are made. There will be two facets of the summative evaluation: (a) the capstone presentations and (b) the Day 3 Exit Ticket.

On the third day of the workshop, participants will be asked to synthesize the knowledge and strategies they have learned during the workshop to create and present a parent event. This capstone presentation will be an opportunity for participants to showcase their learning as well as model best practices. It will also be an opportunity for me, as a facilitator, to assess their understanding and learning.

After the capstone presentation, participants will be asked to complete the Day 3 Exit Ticket, a workshop evaluation. This evaluation contains 18 questions. Fourteen

questions ask the participant to rate the content, design, instructor, and results of the workshop using a Likert-type scale. The remaining four questions are open response:

1. What improvements would you recommend to this workshop?
2. What was most valuable about this workshop?
3. What was least valuable about this workshop?
4. Other comments?

There will be a place for participants to write their name on the evaluation form, but it will state that this is optional. The results of this survey will enable me to reflect upon the workshop and analyze its success. Combined with the capstone presentations and formative assessment, the survey results will help me determine how to structure future PD offerings on the subject.

Goals and Stakeholders

There are several people who will benefit from this workshop: teachers, parents, administrators, and students. The purpose of this PD is to build teacher confidence and to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to more effectively involve parents in the local school. The topics for the workshop were chosen to address the felt needs of local parents. The topic of the study (parent involvement) was chosen because of its impact on student learning. However, the key stakeholders for this PD are teachers and the PDC.

Teachers. The main stakeholders of this study will be the teachers who participate in this workshop. All teachers in the district, K-12, will be invited to participate and the first 25 who register will be accepted. The goal of this project is to

equip teachers with specific strategies to invite and engage parents to participate in the local school. To determine if this goal was met, I will use formative and summative assessments asking teachers to reflect upon their learning and their confidence levels. Through the capstone presentation, I will observe some of the strategies participants are planning to implement. Research shows that if the workshop is successful, the next logical step should be increased parent involvement, in turn followed by an increase in student learning.

Professional Development Committee. Because they have to give approval for its implementation in the district, the PDC is critical to the success of this workshop. They will be invited to attend the presentations on Day 3. This will give them an opportunity to see the value of the workshop in the parent events teachers create. After completing the summative evaluation and analyzing the data, I will provide the committee with a summary of the results along with my suggestions for improvement. This can guide their recommendations for future implementation of the workshop.

Project Implications

Social Change

The goal of this project is to equip teachers with specific strategies to invite and engage parents to participate in the local school. Teachers who understand the felt needs of the parents they work with and who have the knowledge, strategies, and confidence to address those needs can be strong agents of social change. This PD will encourage teachers to reflect on their assumptions and expectations while showing them how to communicate clearly and consistently with parents and other members of the community.

This PD has the potential to help teachers and parents form partnerships that will benefit all of the children in school district, helping them academically, socially, and emotionally. Helping the children helps the whole community. This can have long-term social change implications for the district and greater community.

Local stakeholders. My research shows that parents at the local school believed that teachers and parents need to work together as a team, but some parents do not feel like welcome members on the school team. I also found that parents value transparency from the school and want open communication and academic workshops. Parents also believed that involvement can create social opportunities that benefit their children. By incorporating these findings into the PD opportunity for teachers, I am hoping to equip teachers to more effective meet these parent needs and invite parents into the local school.

This PD has the potential to increase teacher confidence and communication skills, equipping them to become risk-takers and to initiate effective conversations with parents. By preparing teachers to meet the felt needs of the local parents, this PD also has the potential to help create strong parent, teacher, and community partnerships that can benefit everyone involved. These partnerships can enhance student learning and increase parents' social capital. This PD also has the potential to increase connections between teachers and stimulate discussion and reflection about current practices, assumptions, and expectations that might lead to growth and positive change. This PD could also be beneficial to other schools in the district and the surrounding districts that have a need to increase parent engagement.

Larger context. In the larger context, I believe this PD can have significant value for teachers and parents throughout the country. While the findings behind this PD were based on the parents' needs in the local school, most of my findings lined up with previous research on the topic. This seems to indicate that the workshop will also benefit teachers and parents in other locations. Improved teacher confidence and effective parent involvement strategies can be beneficial to all schools that want to increase parent participation and engagement and encourage successful parent-teacher collaboration. The research-based strategies and activities in this workshop could be implemented in any district with teachers of any grade level, helping teachers engage parents across the nation.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Using a basic qualitative study, I explored the perceptions of parents about parent involvement at the local school. I found that parents believed involvement was important for several reasons, and they wanted more opportunities to be involved. They also wanted to be on a collaborative team with teachers and to have consistent and effective communication with the school. I used these findings to create a 3-day workshop for teachers. In this section, I discuss the project strengths and limitations, describe the implications of the study and the project, and recommend alternative approaches and future studies.

Project Strengths and Limitations

There are strengths and limitations of any project. The strengths for this study include its grounding in the conceptual framework and findings of the study, the research-based practices involved in the PD, and the final project participants will have upon completion of the workshop. The limitations include the need for administrative support for effectiveness, the timeframe of the workshop, and the potential limitation of a discussion-based format. These are described in more detail below, along with potential solutions for the limitations.

Strengths

One of the strengths of this project is its grounding on the conceptual framework and findings of this study. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research into the motivations behind parent involvement showed that role construction, self-efficacy, and perceptions of invitations influence involvement levels. Although role construction and

self-efficacy have a strong influence on parent involvement, Curry et al., (2016) found that through effective invitation, teachers can influence both parent role construction and parental self-efficacy. This program is built on that framework.

This project is also built upon the findings of this study. After interviewing nine parents at the local school, I analyzed their responses to determine parents' perceptions of involvement. I found that parents believed their role was to be a team player with the teachers, that they believed involvement was important and wanted to be more involved, and that they wanted more effective communication and opportunities to interact with the local school. These findings guided me as I developed a PD that could meet parents' needs by building teachers' confidence while providing them with new strategies and skills to more effectively invite parents to be involved.

Another strength of this study is the use of research-based teaching practices throughout the 3-day workshop, such as guided reflection, discussions, and active learning. Guided reflection is an essential component of this PD. Reflection can support knowledge construction and help learners internalize new concepts (Allas et al., 2016). It also helps learners identify their own assumptions and beliefs that may interfere with learning or performance (Hall, 2017).

Discussion is another strategy that has been found effective for PD (Gartmeier et al., 2016). Throughout this PD, there are many opportunities for small- and whole-group discussions where teachers can share their prior knowledge and experiences while learning from that of colleagues. They both provide authentic and immediate feedback and can help teachers learn collaboratively.

Active learning is another effective PD strategy that gives participants an opportunity to interact with their new learning (Hall, 2017). Several activities are built into this PD to provide opportunities to interact with the new content. On the second day, learners will participate in a gallery walk about the strengths and limitations of different types of communication and then participate in a role-playing game. On the third day, participants will create their own parent event and model it for the group.

Another strength of this PD is the final product. At the end of the 3-day workshop, learners will have a variety of participant-made resources to bring back into their schools and classrooms. These include a clear, working definition of parent involvement, a newsletter explaining their expectations to parents, a list of potential insider opportunities with potential barriers and potential solutions, and a detailed description of a needs-based parent event. Participants will also have access to some of the work done by other participants during the workshop

Limitations

Although it has many strengths, this PD also has limitations. These involve the need for administrative support in order to be successful, the timeframe of the PD, and the requirements of a discussion-based PD.

This PD was designed to help individual teachers gain confidence and skills to more effectively involve the parents they interact with. However, while teachers can create insider opportunities and improve their invitation practices, they may not be able to influence school policies that limit parent involvement. Also, some teachers may need to feel supported by their administrators to be willing to increase parent-teacher

communication (Deslandes et al., 2015). Without adequate support from administrators, participants may not be able to implement many of the beneficial strategies gleaned from this workshop. To help address this, I will invite and encourage administrators from the local school to attend the PD.

The timeframe for this PD is another limitation. Learners benefit most from continuous and gradual PD (Pharis et al., 2019). Because of the design of the workshop, participants will be exposed to many new ideas and concepts in a short 3-day period, which can be overwhelming for some learners. To compensate for this, there will be frequent opportunities for reflection, discussion, and experimentation with the new information. Also, participants will be invited to join an online forum where they can continue to interact with the other participants after the workshop has ended.

Another potential limitation of this study involves the discussion-based format. If there are too few participants, or if participants choose not to actively participate, this format may not be successful. It will depend on the facilitator to recruit enough participants for successful collaboration and to motivate and encourage full participation among learners.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem that prompted this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. I used a basic qualitative study to interview nine parents at the local school and explore their experiences and perceptions of parent involvement. This led to the findings that parents believe involvement is important, that

they want to collaborate with teachers, and that they want to have more opportunities to be involved with the local school and improve communication. I used these findings to create a workshop equipping teachers to create involvement opportunities and more effectively invite parents into involvement. For this PD, I focused on the teachers. Two alternative definitions and solutions for this problem could be found by focusing on the other stakeholders: the parents and the administrators.

Parents

Through the nine parent interviews, I found that, although local parents wanted to be more involved, they listed many barriers to involvement including time, lack of welcome and invitation at the local school, and family responsibilities. A simple alternative solution to the problem would be to create parent events with the attributes that parents mentioned. This could include events that the whole family would be invited to where food could be offered, where there would be a social component, and where there would be breakout session training in one of the following areas: homework help, common core math, the new reading series, or reading an MCAS report. Local parents want events incorporating social interaction between parents, teachers, and students. This workshop would incorporate that. The hope is that the social component and promise of food would motivate people to attend.

A more complex alternative solution to this problem might be creating a parent workshop. This workshop could provide specific training in effective communication and teach parents how to be proactive and initiate conversations. The facilitator could also provide strategies and resources for overcoming the current barriers to involvement as

well as information on which types of involvement are more beneficial for student success. This type of workshop would also increase parents' social capital by forging connections between participants. With training and increased social capital, parents' role constructions and self-efficacy could be influenced, in turn leading to increased parent involvement. Creating a parent workshop would help address the problem by training parents in effective involvement practices. It would also address the findings of this study by helping parents to initiate and continue effective communication with the school. Any barriers to involvement will need to be carefully explored and addressed to encourage parent attendance at the workshop.

Administration

The lack of parent engagement that prompted this study could be due to current policies and practices at the local school. Having administrators who are not enthusiastic about parent involvement can lead to decreased involvement (Robinson, 2017). Also, a lack of support from administrators can influence the degree to which teachers will become risk-takers when trying to involve parents (Deslandes et al., 2015). The problem of a lack of engagement may indicate that there is not enough support from the administration to encourage and facilitate involvement.

An alternative solution to the problem of low participation rates could be to create a parent involvement handbook. This handbook could clearly explain the expectations of administrators at the local school in regard to parent involvement. In it, there could be a list of current involvement opportunities, along with guidelines and requirements for participation. This handbook could include the specific steps parents must take to

volunteer at the local school and explain the benefits of volunteering. Creating a handbook would help to solve the problem of a lack of engagement by encouraging the administrators to explore their own expectations and assumptions about involvement and to clearly articulate them for parents. It would also address one of the main findings of this study: Parents wanted clear and consistent communication with the school. A handbook defining and explaining the school's parent involvement policy would begin to address that need.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

I have learned and grown throughout the design, implementation, and analysis stages of this study, as well as throughout the research and development of this project. I feel like I started as a novice and ended as a program developer. My skills as a scholar, as a researcher, and as a teacher have all improved as a direct result of this work.

Reflective Analysis of Personal Learning

I have grown significantly through researching for and creating this project. The research has given me new insights and strategies that I can bring into my own classroom as a practitioner. The process of researching, analyzing, explaining, writing, editing, and revising has enhanced my critical thinking, communication, and writing skills as well as given me confidence as a both a scholar and a presenter. The work designing and tweaking PowerPoints and searching for research-based and engaging teaching practices to use with adults has taught me new skills that will be useful throughout my teaching career. While it was an incredibly challenging project, it was just as incredibly rewarding.

Growth as a scholar. As a scholar, I grew in confidence as well as skills. Through the research, I honed my research skills, developed my critical thinking and writing skills, and learned to anticipate and appreciate critical feedback that improved my work. I discovered how to use key words to narrow down results lists and skim abstracts to determine if an article was relevant to my project. I learned to seek out both qualitative and quantitative studies and to look for unexpected results and authors who agreed or disagreed with each other. I also spent a considerable amount of time reading and rereading my APA manual and exploring websites that could help with formatting and citation questions. One useful, specific skill that I will take away from this project is making tables. When I first began writing this paper, I wondered what excuses I could invent so as to not have a single table in the paper. Now, I am comfortable enough with the concept to guide a fellow scholar.

Growth as a practitioner. I have also grown as a practitioner. As a second grade teacher, conducting a study on increasing parent involvement had a direct influence on my teaching practice. After interviewing parents to determine their perceptions about parent involvement, I had a greater understanding of what the parents of my own students were expecting and hoping for. Researching solutions to those hopes and expectations has given me a plethora of new strategies to attempt in my own classroom, as well as a new excitement and confidence. I have a greater understanding of the problem of parent involvement and as a teacher, I know that I hold part of the solution in my own hands.

Interviewing participants and researching and developing this PD has changed the way I interact with the parents of my students. This process has challenged me to

examine my own assumptions, face and acknowledge my own biases, and clarify my own expectations. I have learned to initiate conversations, both positive and negative, and to seek out parent feedback more frequently, using strategies that make our interactions more effective.

Researching and developing this project has also given me the confidence and courage to disseminate what I have learned to my peers. I have a wealth of new information and strategies to suggest when questions or complaints about involvement arise and I can share the communication game I developed at our next grade-level meeting. I have also submitted my project proposal to the PDC and am awaiting feedback on an opportunity to present this fall.

Growth as a project developer. I have also grown as a project developer. This was the part of the process that I most anticipated. A Masters in Curriculum and Instruction and several years teaching Sunday school without curriculum had taught me how to turn research into worksheets, lectures, and activities. The research and development for this project built on that foundation.

While designing the workshop, I had to sift through the study findings to determine which would be the most immediately beneficial to teachers and parents, and which would have to be saved for another time. This required me to look critically at the data from the viewpoint of both teachers and parents. Once the topics were chosen, I then had to evaluate my teaching practices to determine, first, which were research-based and, second, which were appropriate for use with adult learners. I had a specific body of information that I wanted to share, but I needed it to be interesting and relevant. I also

needed to find ways to address any differences in the knowledge bases of participants, and I had to consider the types of motivation and determine how to keep teachers engaged throughout the three days of the workshop. By examining the research, I learned that using reflection, discussion, and active learning were all strategies that would both increase engagement and help cement new learning so I scattered them throughout the three days. The end result is two-fold. First, I have developed a series of topics that can be taught as a 3-day workshop or broken into modules and taught individually during the school year. Second, I have become a researcher. I am more confident about my own skills as a program developer and facilitator and I am excited about this project and others I can create using this research.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of local parents about their engagement in school activities as a means of identifying strategies to increase their involvement. The purpose of this PD was to use the findings of this study to build teacher confidence and to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to more effectively involve parents in the local school.

This study is important because it explored the perceptions of the parents in the local school. These are the people that we want to be more involved, so it makes sense to determine their motivations, wants, and needs. By building on those findings, this PD will equip teachers to address the concerns and felt needs of parents. By helping teachers improve their invitation practices and communication strategies, parent self-efficacy and

social capital may be improved. This can lead to increased parent engagement at the local school.

This study is also important because it raised important findings. When I began conducting the interviews, I was expecting to find differences in what parents wanted for involvement and what I knew from my own experience that teachers want from involvement. Researchers have shown that parents and teachers often have differing expectations (Deslandes et al., 2015). I did find a few of these differences. However, I was surprised by one commonality. Every parent I interviewed mentioned a need for improved communication between the school and the home. This is a problem that other teachers had also previously mentioned. This finding highlighted the need for better training in effective communication practices for both parents and teachers.

Another important, unexpected discovery was that parents at the local school wanted more workshops. Workshops had previously been held at the school with very low attendance rates. According to the parent interviews, parents usually did not attend those workshops because they had scheduling conflicts, did not know about the workshops, or were not interested in the topics of the workshops being offered. These same parents indicated that they would work to overcome any barriers to attend a workshop on a topic they requested. This indicated a need for schools to determine what the specific parent needs are at a school before creating parent workshops. While a survey had been conducted of parents who attended an Open House at the school, none of the parents interviewed could remember ever being asked for suggestions about parent

workshops and events. Perhaps an annual survey of parents asking for workshop topics could be beneficial. This survey should be distributed to all parents in the school.

Finally, this workshop is important because it can be used in multiple locations. This workshop will equip teachers to more effectively communicate with parents. By exploring their assumptions, clarifying their expectations, and implementing the suggested strategies, teachers can invite parents to engage more effectively with schools. Although it is based on findings from the local school, the research-based content of this PD can be beneficial in any school district seeking to increase the participation and involvement of their parents.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study has many implications for social change, as well as applications for future PD and training for teachers and parents. This section contains the implications and applications of the research and PD, and suggestions for future research on the topic of parent involvement.

Implications

This study and the PD have the potential to create social change on multiple levels. On the individual level, they can equip teachers to more confidently and effectively interact with parents. By encouraging teachers to explore their assumptions and biases and to clarify their expectations, this PD may help them collaborate more effectively with parents, peers, and students. These improved relationships may, in turn, positively influence students academically, socially, and behaviorally.

This PD also has the potential to create social change on an organizational level. If enough teachers from the local school participate in the workshop, it may be possible to use McNeal's (2014) spillover effect to positively influence the entire school. Teachers who have attended the workshop can also disseminate the information to their grade-level teams. It is hoped that teachers who attend the workshop can use their training to increase the involvement of the parents they work with. This may then influence the role construction of other parents in their social circles leading to even greater parent involvement at the local school.

Applications

This PD can be used to train teachers at the local school, equipping them to more effectively communicate with and involve parents. However, it also has the potential to be used outside of the school district. Although it is based on findings from the local school, the research-based topics and strategies will be effective in any classroom. This PD can be used in any location where administrators and teachers are seeking strategies to increase parent involvement.

The findings of this study can also be used to create other PD and training opportunities. This study showed that parents are seeking clear and consistent communication from teachers. This finding could be used to develop a course on effective communication for either parents or teachers. It could also be used to develop a workshop for parents and teachers, assigning them a challenge and then training and equipping them to work collaboratively to meet a goal.

This study showed that parents are seeking greater transparency from the school, along with more opportunities for involvement. These findings can be used to research and create new school policies governing communication, transparency, and parent involvement. Along with these new policies, the findings could guide the creation of handbooks, flyers, and websites geared toward greater transparency and collaboration between the school and the home. There are many possible implications of this research, some involving more research.

Future Research

Although this study adds to the body of research on parent involvement, further research is needed on topic. There is still much debate on how to define parent involvement and which parent involvement practices are most beneficial. While there is a significant amount of research on the benefits of involvement and ways to overcome the barriers, the plethora of research shows that a lack of parent involvement continues to be a problem nationwide.

All of the participants of this study recognized the benefits and social value of parent involvement. However, the participants of this study were all volunteers. It is possible that they volunteered for a study of parent involvement because they saw the value of it. Although this might be difficult to do, it could be beneficial to solicit the participation of parents who would not choose to volunteer and explore their perceptions of and experiences with involvement, ascertaining how they differ from those of the participants in this study. It might also be beneficial to explore the perceptions of more fathers at the local school. The motivations and role constructions of fathers are often

different from that of mothers (Kim, 2018). Also, when a mother is more involved, the father in the same family tends to be less involved (Kim, 2018). It could be beneficial to solicit information from more fathers in the district in order to effectively involve them as well.

Another possible study could explore the local teachers' responses to the findings of this study. According to this study, parents want to collaborate with teachers, working as a team to help their children grow academically. It could be beneficial to interview teachers at the local school and determine their perceptions of working closely with parents. Further research could determine what teachers expect this team to look like, and explore exactly how involved, and in what ways, teachers want parents to become.

Conclusion

Parent involvement has been shown to influence student achievement and the value students place on education (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2015). In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed nine parents at the local school to explore their perceptions of parent involvement using a framework based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research on motivation constructs. I explored parents' role construction for involvement, self-efficacy for involvement, and perceptions of teacher invitation. While analyzing the data, I discovered that parents value involvement and want to be more engaged. Parents also want to be on a collaborative team with the teachers, and are seeking better two-way communication with the school and more opportunities to be involved during the school day.

The problem that prompted this study was that a large number of parents at the local school were not engaged in certain activities that have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement. The findings showed that there are current barriers in the local district preventing more involvement. These barriers include a lack of time, family responsibilities, a lack of clear communication, and a perceived lack of teacher invitation. Parents also indicated that they would make the effort to overcome these barriers if the workshop topic was important to them.

These findings led to the development of a workshop designed to equip teachers to more effectively involve and invite parents into the school. During this workshop, teachers will learn about the motivational constructs for involvement, practice effective communication strategies, and explore a variety of media for communication. Teachers will also create several involvement opportunities for parents, brainstorm possible barriers to implementing them, and design potential solutions. Through helping teachers gain the confidence and strategies to more effectively communicate with and invite parents, it may be possible to increase the levels of participation at the local school. This could then raise the current levels of student achievement and increase the value local students place on their own education, potentially encouraging them to become successful lifelong learners.

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Appendix A: The Project

Teachers Engaging Parents
A 3-Day Professional Development Workshop

Purpose: The purpose of this PD is to build teacher confidence and to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to more effectively involve parents in the local school.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this workshop, participants should have an understanding of their own expectations for involvement, as well as of the motivations and needs of parents. They will also have practiced many new strategies for more effectively inviting and involving parents.

Target Audience: Teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators interested in more effectively involving parents in the local school.

Day One

Motivations, Expectations, and Barriers

Time	Topic	Activities
9:00-9:30	Housekeeping, Survey	Ice Breaker, Norms, Self-Assessment
9:30-10:50	Parent Involvement and Motivation	Guided Reflection, Define Involvement, PowerPoint with Lecture, Handout, Group Brainstorm
10:50-11:00	Break	
11:00-12:00	Setting Expectations	Guided Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Setting Expectations Activity, Write a Newsletter
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-2:00	Overcoming Barriers	Group Brainstorm, PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Work, Guided Reflection
2:00-2:30	Work Session	Group Work
2:30-3:00	Closing Session	Q+A, Exit Ticket

Materials Needed

- chart paper (multiple sheets)
- tape
- poster markers
- sticky notes
- writing paper

Handouts:

- Parent Involvement Self-Assessment Form
- Epstein et al. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. p. 16-18.
- Day One Exit Ticket

Facilitator Notes:
All activities and assignments are detailed in the slides.

Slide 2. Have the icebreaker slide on screen as participants enter.

Slide 3. Point out the parking lot and post-it notes for participants to write down questions and comments to be revisited during the Q+A. Make sure everyone knows where the bathrooms are. Pass around the district sign-in sheet.

Slide 5. Provide the handout: Parent Involvement Self-Assessment Form.

Slide 7. Give participants five to ten minutes to work in groups to create a definition of parent involvement. Groups can write them on large sheets of paper and post them around the room. Then participants will walk around the room, reading the other definitions and writing their reflective comments on post-its to place on the charts.

Slide 9. Provide the handout on the six types of involvement (Epstein, p. 16, 17, 18). Table 1.1.1 (p.16) shows the school's role for each type of involvement and lists some sample practices for schools and teachers. Page 17 shows some of the specific challenges to each type, and page 18 shows the expected results from each type.

Slide 10. If there is time, have participants work in groups to rank the types of involvement in order of perceived importance. This is not an essential activity for the workshop, but will get participants thinking about what types of involvement they value most in preparation for setting their expectations later.

Slide 11. Have participants orally brainstorm as a group the benefits of, and reasons for, involving parents. Write their suggestions on chart paper and have them explain their reasoning.

Slide 12. Compare this list with that brainstormed by participants and discuss any not previously mentioned. Encourage participants to share examples or confirm or deny anything on the list.

Slide 15. Solicit a few suggestions for involving parents before moving on the next slide.

Slide 16. Give participants time to brainstorm a list as a small group. Discuss a few of them whole group.

Slide 20. Discuss any questions that have been posted on the parking lot and any new ones that have arisen.

Slide 22. Give participants time to briefly mention some of their expectations.

Slide 23. Give participants time to think about the following prompts and then talk about them briefly in whole group. It is not necessary to come to a consensus on any of these – just to get people thinking about their own expectations and beliefs.

Slide 27. Have participants work as a group to discuss their expectations and write down some of their ten expectations.

Slide 28. Give participants quiet work time to begin formulating a newsletter explaining their expectations to parents. Have exemplars available for perusal.

Slide 29. Discuss any questions that have been posted on the parking lot and any new ones that have arisen.

Slide 31. Give groups 5-10 minutes to work and then have a group discussion of the results. Make a master list of barriers.

Slide 32. Compare this list with that brainstormed by participants and discuss any not previously mentioned. Encourage participants to share examples or confirm or deny anything on the list.

Slide 35. Part 1: Give participants 5 minutes. Part 2: 5-10 minutes depending on participation and time available.

Slide 36. Discuss any questions that have been posted on the parking lot and any new ones that have arisen.

Slide 37. (20- 30 minutes) Give participants time to work. They should start by brainstorming a list of suggestions as a group. Then they should spend the rest of the time addressing the specifics for each suggestion (motivation, barriers, etc). (10 minutes) Have each group share their top suggestion. If there's time, each group can share a second strategy. Then collect the lists to compile into a master list to be distributed later.

Slide 38. Discuss any questions that have been posted on the parking lot and any new ones that have arisen.

Slide 39. Handout: Exit Ticket

Workshop Slides:

Slide 1

Teachers Engaging Parents
Day 1

Created and facilitated
by
Monica L. Nelson

Slide 2

Ice Breaker: Introductions

- ✓ Introduce yourself to a classmate and share your favorite teaching meme.

Slide 3

Day 1 Timetable

9:00 Housekeeping and Survey
9:30 Parent Involvement and Motivations
10:50 Break
11:00 Setting Expectations
12:00 Lunch (not provided)
1:00 Overcoming Barriers
2:00 Creating a Top Ten List
2:30 Q+A, Exit Tickets

Slide 4

Workshop Norms

- ✓We will respect everyone's time by beginning and ending on time.
- ✓Silence phones and other devices.
- ✓Ask questions for clarification. Less urgent questions or off-topic comments can be written on sticky notes and addressed during Q+A sessions.
- ✓Only one conversation at a time. Refrain from side-talk.
- ✓Balance your participation – speak *and* listen.
- ✓Encourage everyone in the group to participate.

Slide 5

Where we stand now…

Use the handout and the scoring rubric below to rate your current parent involvement practices.

1 – Never
2 – Rarely (Done with a few families)
3 – Sometimes (With some families)
4 – Often (With many, but not all families)
5 – Frequently (With most or all families)

Slide 6

Guided Reflection

- ✓ Three minutes: Take time to think about your experiences interacting with parents. Consider face-to-face, phone calls, notes, and any other interactions.
- ✓ Five minutes: Have everyone at the group share one interaction they had with parents and explain why they chose it.
- ✓ Seven minutes: Share your group's most interesting experience with the class.

Slide 7

What does parent involvement mean to you?

What?

Where?

Who?

Slide 8

- ✓ Parent involvement is a two-way partnership between schools and families with the goal of helping students succeed in both school and life (Epstein, 2009).
- ✓ Involvement includes both parent presence in the school and creating a home environment that supports academic success (Jeynes, 2010).

Slide 9

6 Types of Parent Involvement

Joyce Epstein and Associates

- ✓ Parenting
- ✓Communicating
- ✓Volunteering
- ✓Learning at Home
- ✓Decision Making
- ✓Collaborating with the Community

Slide 10

In your group, share some examples you've experienced from each category.

- ✓Parenting
- ✓Communicating
- ✓Volunteering
- ✓Learning at Home
- ✓Decision Making
- ✓Collaborating with the Community

Slide 11

Why do we need parents to be involved?

?

Slide 12

Known Benefits of Parent Involvement

- ✓ Improves math, science, and reading achievement
- ✓ Raises test scores
- ✓ Increases educational expectations
- ✓ Increases school-wide achievement
- ✓ Decreases student absences
- ✓ Decreases social emotional problems

Slide 13

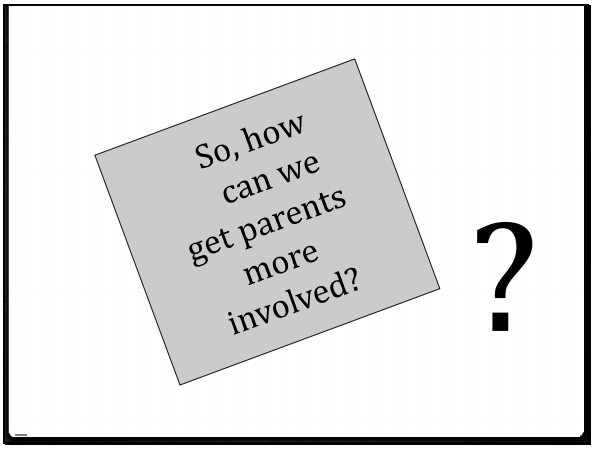
The Spillover Effect

Students whose parents are less involved or uninvolved still receive the benefits of involvement in a school with a high rate of parent involvement. (McNeal, 2014)

Slide 14

"Parents and teachers working together produce something more than either working alone in isolation"

Slide 15



Slide 16

Involving Parents

What have you tried?

- ✓ Work as a group to create a list of strategies you've used to get parents more involved.
- ✓ Star the strategies that were successful.

Slide 17

Types of Motivation

- ✓External
- ✓Introjected
- ✓Identified
- ✓Intrinsic

(Grolnick, 2015)

Slide 18

Identified – value of the task
Intrinsic – enjoyment
External – rewards + punishment
Introjected – guilt

Slide 19

What's the Motivation?

Look back at your list.

- ✓ Determine what types of motivation might be involved with the strategies on your list.
- ✓ Identify ways that you can encourage more identified motivation.

Identified – value of the task
Intrinsic – enjoyment
External – rewards + punishment
Introjected – guilt

Slide 20

Any questions?

?

Slide 21

Let's take a break!

Slide 22

What *exactly* are you expecting from your students' parents?

?

Slide 23

What is the parent's role…

- ✓in completing homework?
- ✓in determining grades?
- ✓in teaching students how to read?
- ✓in supporting teachers?
- ✓in selecting school curriculum?
- ✓in communicating with teachers?

Slide 24

What are our Expectations?

✓Two minutes: Think of an example of a time you and a parent had differing expectations. Briefly describe it on a piece of paper.

✓Three minutes: Hand your paper to the person on your left. Take the paper from your right. Read their note and respond to it before passing it to your left. Repeat.

✓Five minutes: Talk in a small group about what we as teachers expect from parents in each of the six involvement categories.

Slide 25

Expectations for parents

Teachers believe

Parents should
- Provide supplies
- Supervise homework
- Motivate children
- Initiate conversations

Parents believe

Parents should
- Collaborate
- Be a source of knowledge
- Prepare students for classroom
- Extend classroom learning

Slide 26

"The members of the school family community have to have a shared vision of what a collaborative relationship means to all of them."

2015

Slide 27

Setting Clear Expectations

Write down ten things you expect from your students' parents.

Think about:

Homework	Phone calls	Emergencies
Behavior	Rewards	Consequences
Volunteering	School supplies	Birthdays
Absences	When and how to contact you	

and anything else…

Be detailed and specific.

Slide 28

Share Your Vision

Write a newsletter for your classroom explaining your expectations for parents.

Slide 29

Any questions?

?

Slide 30

Lunch time

Let's meet back at 1:00.

Slide 31

Barriers to Involvement

Work with your group to create a list of the top ten barriers to parent involvement.

Slide 32

Known Barriers of Parent Involvement

- ✓ Time
- ✓Child care needs
- ✓Unwelcoming environment
- ✓Lack of invitation
- ✓Lack of information
- ✓Disinterest in events offered
- ✓Student unwillingness
- ✓Unresolved issue with teacher
- ✓Shyness
- ✓Language/Cultural barriers

Slide 33

Removing the Barriers

Identifying Barriers: Creating Solutions to Improve Family Engagement

Timberly L. Baker
Jillian Wise
Gwendolyn Kellen
Russell J. Skiba

- ✓ Provide opportunities for involvement
- ✓ Improve communication
- ✓ Welcome families into the building
- ✓ Encourage engagement

Slide 34

Removing the Barriers

Look back at your list of barriers.

- ✓ As a group, develop 3-5 strategies for overcoming each barrier.
- ✓ Analyze how the type of motivation can influence (or be influenced by) each barrier.

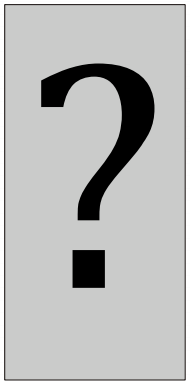
Slide 35

Guided Reflection

- ✓ Part 1. Reread your newsletter or list of parent expectations. Evaluate them in terms of the barriers parents may experience when trying to meet your expectations.
- ✓ Part 2. Have the person in the group with the next birthday share one expectation. Discuss barriers and brainstorm possible solutions. If you have time, have another person share an expectation.

Slide 36

Any questions?



Slide 37

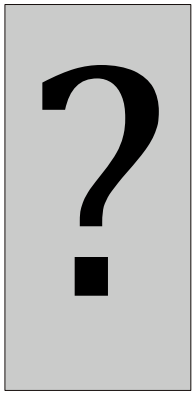
Parent Involvement Top 10

Work as a group to create a list of your top ten suggestions for involving parents.

- ✓ Be creative, specific, and detailed.
- ✓ Address potential barriers.
- ✓ Consider parent motivation.
- ✓ Think outside the traditional box.

Slide 38

Any questions?



Slide 39

Exit Ticket

Please leave your exit ticket on the table.

We'll see you tomorrow at 9:00 to talk about parent networking and communication.

Slide 40

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Handout: Parent Involvement Self-Assessment Form

The purpose of this Form is to identify in which areas you are currently involving parents in meaningful ways and to become aware of areas that would benefit from improvement. The questions are adapted from Epstein et al's (2009) Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships.
Please use the following scale to rate yourself on each item.

Scoring Scale
1 – Never
2 – Rarely (Done with a few families)
3 – Sometimes (With some families)
4 – Often (With many, but not all families)
5 – Frequently (With most or all families)

1. I produce information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I ask families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I provide families with age-appropriate information on developing home conditions or environments that support learning	1	2	3	4	5
4. I review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I provide communication in the language of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I conduct an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs, reactions to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I conduct an orientation for new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I contact families of students having academic or behavior problems.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I produce a regular class newsletter with up-to-date information about the class, special events, meetings, and parenting tips.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I conduct annual surveys to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers to match their skills and talents with classroom needs.	1	2	3	4	5

13. I create flexible volunteering opportunities and schedules, enabling employed parents to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I train volunteers so they can use their time productively.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I recognize volunteers for their time and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I encourage families and the community to be involved with the school in various ways.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I provide information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I provide information to families on required skills in major subjects.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I provide specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I schedule regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I deal with conflict openly and respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I provide a resource directory for parents and students on community agencies, services, and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I involve families in locating and using community resources.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I work with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I help parents make connections with the other parents in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

Handout: Day 1 Exit Ticket

Day 1 Exit Ticket
3*2*1

Write down **three** specific things that you learned today.

Write down **two** new strategies you want to try implementing.

Write down **one** suggestion to help improve this workshop.

Day 1 Exit Ticket
3*2*1

Write down **three** specific things that you learned today.

Write down **two** new strategies you want to try implementing.

Write down **one** suggestion to help improve this workshop.

Day Two

Effective Communication, Communication Media, Social Capital, and Parent Networking

Time	Topic	Activities
9:00-9:15	Housekeeping	Sign-in, Ice Breaker
9:15-10:50	Communication	Best and Worst, Article Discussion: The Four A's, Role Playing
10:50-11:00	Break	
11:00-12:00	Communication Media	Reflection Activity, PowerPoint with Lecture, Gallery Walk, Website Exploration and Peer Sharing
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-2:00	Social Capital and Parent Networking	PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Activity, Trust Self-Assessment, Writing Action Steps, Reflect and Share
2:00-2:30	Work Session	Apply It
2:30-3:00	Closing Session	Q+A, Preview Tomorrow's Task, Exit Ticket

Materials Needed

- chart paper (multiple sheets)
- tape
- poster board markers
- communication practice game
- timer

Handouts

- Article: Hoerr, T. (2017). Swimming with your shoes on. *Educational Leadership, Sept.,* 86-87. Retrieved from www.acsd.org
- Communication Sayings and Quotes from wiseoldsayings.com
- Exit Ticket

Facilitator Notes:

Activities and directions are detailed in the slides.

Slide 2. Have this slide on screen when participants enter the classroom. Have some people share their word and briefly explain why they chose it.

Slide 3. Point out the parking lot and post-it notes for participants to write down questions and comments to be revisited during the Q+A. Make sure everyone knows where the bathrooms are. Review norms (one person speaking at a time, respectful of each other, enter and exit the room quietly).

Slide 5. Part 1: 5-10 minutes depending on participation. Part 2: Start two anchor charts listing what elements contributed to making an experience the best or the worst.

Slide 6. Give groups about 5 minutes to think of examples. Share some with the whole group.

Slide 7. Handout: Swimming With Your Shoes On, by Thomas R. Hoerr, 2017. Give participants 5-10 minutes to read the article and determine their four a's. Each round should take about ten minutes. Plan on doing two rounds, using a timer and cues to guide participants.

Slide 8. Have participants explain what they've found works well (and possibly what doesn't work). Add any ideas to the anchor chart.

Slide 9. Discuss any of these that participants haven't yet mentioned. Revisit in more depth items that were mentioned.

Slide 10. Give participants five minutes to read the cards and prepare, then ten minutes to hold a conference. If there is time, repeat the activity with new cards.

Slide 14. Have volunteers read each of the quotes.

Slide 15. Have volunteers read each of the quotes. Handout: Communication Sayings and Quotes taken from wiseoldsayings.com.

Slide 16. Part 1: 5-10 minutes depending on participation. Part 2: 5 minutes.

Slide 17. Name various media and have participants raise their hands as you mention one they like to use. Ask if there's any they don't like or even dread using or any they use that weren't mentioned.

Slide 19. 15 minutes Gallery walk: Post chart paper around the room, each with a different medium written on it (emails, phone calls, etc). Have participants walk around the room and write on each piece using the guiding questions.

Slide 20. Have members generate a list of social media, websites, and computer programs they use and recommend. If participants have access to the web, have them spend the time until lunch exploring the fifteen messaging apps and websites on this link. Many of them are free. If participants don't have their own access, use the main computer to explore them together. Ask teachers who are already using any of them to review them for the class.

Slide 23. Have projected as participants return from lunch.

Slide 25. One example of this is when parents use school-choice to send their child to a school they think is better. Have participants give other examples they've seen or heard of.

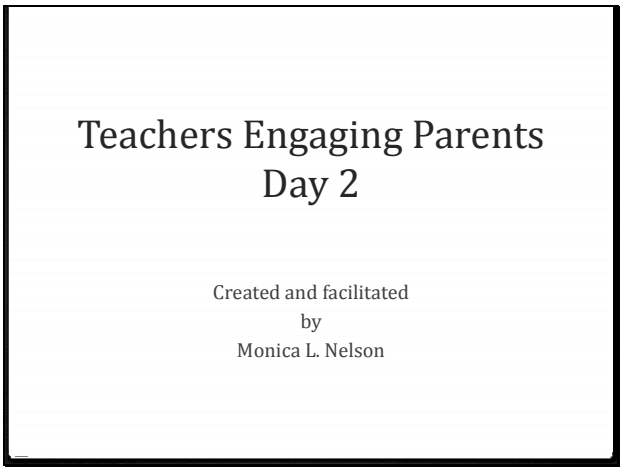
Slide 26. 5-10 minutes. Assign each group a checkmark. Have them complete the 1-2-3 activity.

Slide 28. Give participants a few minutes to think about these questions before having them discuss it with their groups. Then invite groups to share something they talked about with the whole class.

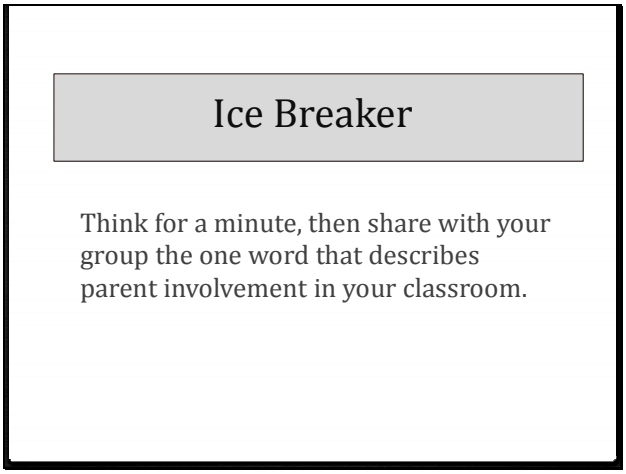
Slide 33. Encourage participants to brainstorm ways to connect with parents, and ways to help other parents connect. Start a list on chart paper.
Slide 34. 5-10 minutes. Make a master list from some of the descriptors.
Slide 35. Ask: Do any of these surprise you? Are there any you would like to add to the list?
Slide 36. Give groups about 5 minutes to think of examples for each type of interaction. Share some with the whole group.
Slide 37. 5 minutes
Slide 38. 15-20 minutes
Slide 41. Handout: Exit Ticket.

Workshop Slides:

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

Day 2 Timetable

9:00 Effective Communication
10:50 Break
11:00 Communication Media
12:00 Lunch (not provided)
1:00 Social Capital and Networking
2:30 Q+A and Exit Ticket

Slide 4

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

- George Bernard Shaw

Slide 5

Best and Worst

✓Part 1. Share with your small group your best and worst experiences communicating with parents.

✓Part 2. Choose one best and one worst experience from the small group to share with the whole group.

Slide 6

Parents want *transparency* in communication.

Brainstorm with your group what this could look like.

Slide 7

Swimming With Your Shoes On
(Thomas R. Hoerr, 2017)

The Four A's

✓Read the article, reflecting on the following questions:

- What do you Agree with in the text?
- What do you want to Argue with in the text?
- What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to?
- What do you want to Add to the text?

✓In each round, have each person identify one **agree**, **argue**, **aspire**, *or* **add** along with their reasons, allowing others to respond.

Slide 8

What strategies can help us communicate more effectively with parents?

?

Slide 9

Effective Communication

- ✓ Listen ("I heard you say…")
- ✓ Problem solve *together*
- ✓ Set a goal for the conversation
- ✓ Keep returning to that goal
- ✓Summarize what you want to say *before* the meeting
- ✓Avoid jargon and acronyms

✓Practice, practice, practice...

Slide 10

Communication Practice: Role Playing

Remember:
- Summarize
- Set a goal
- Listen
- Problem solve together
- Avoid jargon

✓Break into groups of two or three.

✓ Choose an envelope and pass out the cards inside. Take a few minutes to read your card, identify your role, and prepare for your conference.

✓ When the timer starts, begin your conference.

Slide 11

How did it go?

✓Where you able to set a goal together?
Did you meet it?

✓What would you do differently next time? What will you do the same?

✓What did you learn from this exercise?

Slide 12

Any questions?

?

Slide 13

Let's take a break!

Slide 14

Wiseoldsayings.com

✓When the trust account is high, communication is easy, instant, and effective. *Stephen R. Covey*

✓We never listen when we are eager to speak. *Francois de la Rochefoucauld*

✓The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said. *Peter Drucker*

Slide 15

Wiseoldsayings.com

- ✓The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through. *Sydney J. Harris*
- ✓I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university. *Albert Einstein*
- ✓Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know. *Jim Rohn*

Slide 16

What do you say?

- ✓Part 1. Which quote most resonated with you? Share your thoughts with your group.
- ✓Part 2. Formulate your own quote about communication. You can work independently or in a team.

Slide 17

What is your preferred method of communication?

Phone?

Text?

Social Media?

Slide 18

Email

Pros
- Convenience
- Accessable on phone
- Asynchronicity – provides time to think and respond
- Documents the conversation
- Translation aps

Cons
- Easily misconstrued
- Less personal
- Confidentiality issues
- Asynchronicity – have to wait for a response

Slide 19

Multiple modes of communication

Emails
Phone calls
Face-to-Face Meetings
Texts
Flyers
Social Media Postings

Gallery Walk
1. When would this be a useful medium?
2. What is a barrier to this medium?
3. What advice do you have for using this medium?

Slide 20

Exploring Our Options

https://www.commonsense.org/education/top-picks/best-messaging-apps-and-websites-for-students-teachers-and-parents

Slide 21

Any questions?

?

Slide 22

Lunch time

Let's meet back at 1:00.

Slide 23

Slide 24

Social Capital

Parents beliefs about their ability to achieve what they want to accomplish.
(Stevens & Patel, 2015)

- ✓Self-efficacy
- ✓Nontangible resources
- ✓Behavioral norms
- ✓Trust
- ✓Social networks
- ✓Education
- ✓Experience

Slide 25

When have you seen parents using their social capital?

?

Slide 26

Increasing Social Capital

1-2-3
1 – Create an activity that will address your social capital component.
2 – Brainstorm two potential barriers and suggest solutions for them.
3 – Describe three ways you will communicate about this activity with parents.

- ✓Provide access to essential information
- ✓Offer homework help
- ✓Help with parenting responsibilities
- ✓Provide support systems
- ✓Encourage social networking

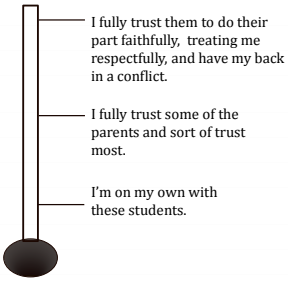
Slide 27

Trust (verb)
to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable

Slide 28

What is your Trust Level?

- ✓ Do you trust the parents of your students?
- ✓ Do those parents trust you?
- ✓ Why?



Slide 29

The Six Steps to Trust

Joseph Folkman
contributor for Forbes
https://www.forbes.com/sites/joefolkman/2013/06/18/the-six-steps-to-trust/#61acb5c8788a

1. Build positive relationships.
2. Stop competing.
3. Throw others a bone.
4. Be balanced.
5. Track your commitments.
6. Accept blame and share credit.

Slide 30

Talk about the steps in your group.

Choose one and write down three action steps you will take to improve trust.

1. Build positive relationships.
2. Stop competing.
3. Throw others a bone.
4. Be balanced.
5. Track your commitments.
6. Accept blame and share credit.

Slide 31

Parent Networking

A form of parent involvement where parents make connections with other parents in the community

- ✓Increases parents' social capital
- ✓Increases school-wide achievement
- ✓Increases parental self-efficacy
- ✓Influences parental motivational beliefs

(Park & Halloway, 2017)

Slide 32

Parent Networking Red Flags

- ✓Changing schools
- ✓Parents' age
- ✓SES
- ✓Race
- ✓Number of parents
- ✓Number of children

Slide 33

How can we connect?

- ✓Publicizing community events
- ✓Special interest groups
- ✓Introducing parents with similar backgrounds
- ✓Social media
- ✓Hosting events

What else?

Slide 34

Hosting School Events

- ✓Think of a school event that you attended as a teacher or a parent.
- ✓Was it successful? Create a list of the characteristics that helped make it successful or unsuccessful.
- ✓Share your list with your group.

Slide 35

Hosting School Events

When asked to describe the best school event they'd been to, these are the words parents used:

Fun
Organized
Whole family
Ice-cream

Interaction
Met other parents
Relevant
Smiling teachers

Activities
In the classroom
Across grades
Curriculum-focused

Slide 36

Parents want *interaction*

- ✓Parent with student
- ✓Parent with parent
- ✓Student with student
- ✓Student with teacher
- ✓Parent with teacher

Brainstorm with your group what each of these interactions could look like.

Slide 37

Brainstorm a list of school events that could meet some (or all?) of these descriptors.

Fun
Organized
Whole family
Ice-cream
Interaction
Met other parents
Relevant
Smiling teachers
Activities
In the classroom
Across grades
Curriculum-focused

Slide 38

Apply It

- ✓Alone: Think about the students you work with. Which ones might be at-risk for not developing adequate social networks?
- ✓Choose a student and list 3-5 activities that might help their parents connect with other parents.
- ✓Together: Choose an activity and flesh it out. Identify barriers and solutions. Determine when, where, and how the activity will be conducted. Describe the kinds of interaction involved and how it will be communicated to parents.

Slide 39

Any questions?

?

Slide 40

Tomorrow's Task

- ✓Work in groups of 3-5 to create a parent workshop that meets an academic need at your school.
- ✓Design the actual event and any communications leading up to it.

Things to Consider:

Motivation
Communication
Invitation
Interaction
Barriers
Parent networking

Slide 41

Exit Ticket

Please leave your exit ticket on the table.

We'll see you tomorrow at 9:00 to talk about insider opportunities and design a parent involvement opportunity.

Slide 42

References

- ✓ Park, S. & Halloway, S. D. (2017). The Effects of school-based parental involvement on academic achievement at the child and elementary school level: A Longitudinal study. *The Journal of Educational Research (110)*1, 1-16. doi:10.1080/00220671.2015.1016600
- ✓ Stevens, S. & Patel, N. (2015). Viewing generativity and social capital as underlying factors of parent involvement. *School Community Journal, 25*(1), 157-174. Retrieved from http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx

Communication Game: Teacher Cards (print on blue paper)

You scheduled this meeting because the child seems very upset at school. She cries often during math class and has trouble completing assignments. However, she did very well on the last standardized test in math.

It's parent conferences.

Student averages: Comprehension: 50%, vocabulary: 36%, formal spelling: 92%, math facts: 88%, math skills: 80%, effort: excellent

The child was suspended for an incident at recess. This is a reentry meeting.

It's parent conferences.

Student averages: Comprehension: 92%, Vocabulary: 89%, formal spelling: 105%, math facts: 90%, math skills: 92%, effort: low average

It's parent conferences.

Students averages: comprehension: 88%, vocabulary: 80%, formal spelling: 100%, math facts: 95%, math skills: 75%, effort: average

You scheduled this meeting because of behavior concerns. The child did extremely well on all placement tests, but failed the last four tests. He is disruptive during class, making a lot of noise and refusing to do assigned work.

Parent Cards (Print on red paper)

Although you can understand some English, you don't speak it. Unless you have a translator at your meeting, you can only listen, nod, and use hand gestures to communicate.

Your child is wonderful at home. They have never had behavior problems in the past and are very strong academically. Last year's teacher said they were gifted and should be given extra assignments to push them.

You've recently divorced your spouse and are concerned that the emotional stress may be impacting your child. However, you don't really want to talk about it.

You had some tough experiences at school as a child. You want to help your child succeed, so you're coming to the meeting. However, you're very nervous and don't feel very confident or comfortable talking with teachers.

You are having a hard time helping your child with the homework. You don't understand how to do it and your child fights you over it every night. You don't know what to do, but you don't want to look like a bad parent.

You work two jobs. Your mother gets the child on and off the bus and helps them with the homework. When you have time with them, your focus is to enjoy your time together.

Other Cards (Print on green paper)

You are a translator.	You are the child's other parent. You don't live in the home, but want to be involved in their life.
You're the parent's spouse. You support the parent and the school.	You're a special education teacher in the district, here to consult with the teacher.
You're the school principal, here to observe the meeting. You will participate if you feel the need.	You're a school guidance counselor, here to consult with the teacher.

Handout: Communication Sayings and Quotes

Communication Sayings and Quotes Excerpted from **wiseoldsayings.com**

When the trust account is high, communication is easy, instant, and effective.
Stephen R. Covey

We never listen when we are eager to speak.
Francois de la Rochefoucauld

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.
Peter Drucker

The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.
Sydney J. Harris

I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university.
Albert Einstein

Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know.
Jim Rohn

Part 1. Which quote most resonated with you? Share your thoughts with your group.

Part 2. Formulate your own quote about communication. You can work independently or as a group.

Handout: Day 2 Exit Ticket

Day 2 Exit Ticket
3*2*1

Write down **three** specific things that you learned today.

Write down **two** new strategies you want to try implementing.

Write down **one** suggestion to help improve this workshop.

Day 2 Exit Ticket
3*2*1

Write down **three** specific things that you learned today.

Write down **two** new strategies you want to try implementing.

Write down **one** suggestion to help improve this workshop.

Day Three

Teacher Invitation, Transparency, Presentations

Time	Topic	Activities
9:00-9:15	Housekeeping	Sign-In, Ice Breaker
9:15-10:50	Teacher Invitation	Guided Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Small Group Discussion, Article with Anchor Chart Activity,
10:30-10:40	Break	
10:40-11:30	Transparency	Reflection, PowerPoint with Lecture, Group Discussion
11:30-12:30	Lunch	
12:30-1:30	Work Session	Design a Parent Event
1:30-2:30	Presentations	Present Designed Event
2:30-3:00	Closing Session	Q+A, Evaluation Survey

Materials

- Chart paper
- Poster markers
- Writing paper

Handouts

- Article: Davis, C. & Yang, A. (2009). Keeping in touch with families all year long. *The Education Digest, (Sept.),* 61-64. Retrieved from eddigest.com.
- Evaluation Survey

Facilitator Notes:

Activities and directions are detailed in the slides.

Slide 2. Have this slide on screen when participants enter the classroom. Have some people briefly share their answers.

Slide 3. Point out that today's schedule will be different. We'll break for lunch earlier to provide more time to work and present in the afternoon.

Slide 9. Ask: What does this mean for us as teachers? 5-10 minutes: Have participants discuss in groups what "appropriate" teacher invitation is and create a list of examples. Share some with the whole group and make a master list to distribute later.

Slide 10. 5 minutes: Have participants name some examples for each tier (1: school website, fliers for field day, 2: Title I math night, autism workshop, 3: IEP meetings, conferences).

Slide 11. Tier 1: General welcoming attitude. Have participants suggest additions to either list. Then have them think about their own school using these lists. How is welcoming is their school?

Slide 12. Tiers 2 + 3 Have participants brainstorm some specific differences between the two items.

Slide 13. Do a gallery walk of the anchor charts. Have participants attach comments on post-its. 30 minutes.

Slide 16. Give groups about 5 minutes to think of examples. Share some with the whole group.

Slide 18. 5-10 minutes depending on participation. Ask: Is there anything you would like to add or remove from this list?

Slide 19. Give participants an opportunity to make suggestions. Compile them on an anchor chart.

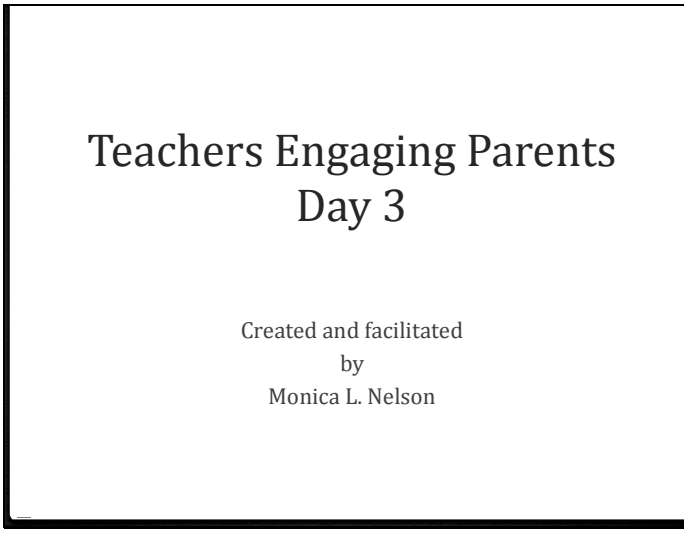
Slide 24. Group work.

Slide 25. Presentations.

Slide 27. Provide the exit ticket/program evaluation and the Google classroom link where all lists generated at the workshop will be available. There will also be a forum for ongoing communication for interested participants.

Workshop Slides:

Slide 1



Slide 2

Ice Breaker

What's the most creative invitation you've ever received, given, or seen?

Slide 3

Day 3 Timetable

9:00 Teacher Invitation
10:30 Break
10:40 Transparency
11:30 Lunch (not provided)
12:30 Work time
1:30 Presentations
2:30 Post Survey

Slide 4

Guided Reflection

✓Three minutes: Take time to think about the ways parents are invited into your classroom and school.

✓ Five minutes: Have everyone at the group share a positive and a negative example of invitation.

✓ Seven minutes: Share your group's most interesting examples with the class.

Slide 5

Influences on Parent Involvement

✓Role Construction

✓Self-Efficacy

✓Perceived opportunities for involvement

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997)

Slide 6

Role Construction

Parents' beliefs about what is expected of them as parents.

- Value of involvement
- Peer pressure
- Clear expectations

Slide 7

Self-Efficacy

Parents' beliefs about their own abilities to help their children.

- Level of education
- Beliefs about learning

Slide 8

Perceived Opportunities for Involvement

Parents' beliefs about how welcome they are at the school.

- Invitations from teachers
- Invitations from students
- School climate
- Teachers' behaviors

Slide 9

With appropriate teacher and school invitation, schools can change a parent's role construction and influence their self-efficacy.

(Curry et al., 2016).

Slide 10

Levels of Invitation

Tier 1: General welcoming attitude toward all students and parents

Tier 2: Specific invitations targeting chosen subgroups

Tier 3: Specific individualized invitations for families needing more support

(McDowall & Schaughency, 2017)

Slide 11

Parents' Perceptions of Welcome

Inviting	Not Inviting
▪ Smiling staff	▪ Locked doors
▪ Staff available to talk	▪ No greeter at door
▪ Monthly newsletter	▪ Small parking lot
▪ Flowers	▪ Not allowed in classrooms
▪ Student Artwork in halls	▪ No specific invitations

Slide 12

Teacher Invitation

Specific teacher invitations from teachers are more effective at increasing parent involvement than general invitations from schools.
(Fishman & Nickerson, 2014)

Think about the difference between

a piece of junk mail and **a birthday invitation**.

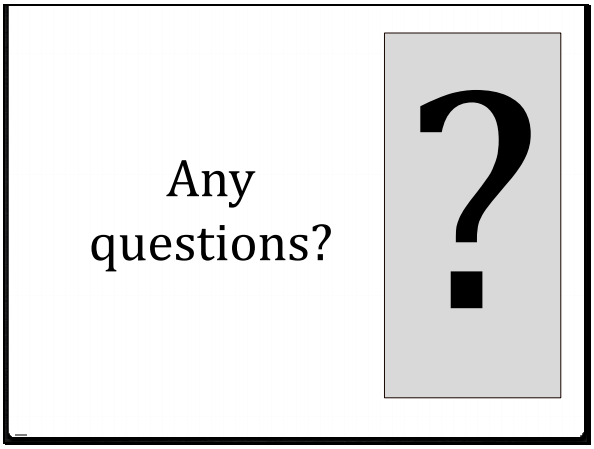
Slide 13

Anchor Your Thoughts

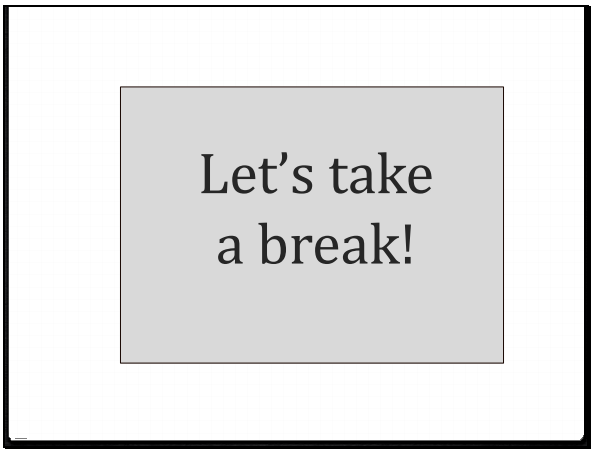
Keeping in Touch with Families All Year Long
Carol Davis and Alice Yang
2009

- ✓Read the article with teacher invitation in mind.
- ✓As a group, choose 3-5 key take-aways from the article.
- ✓Create an anchor chart displaying these key ideas.

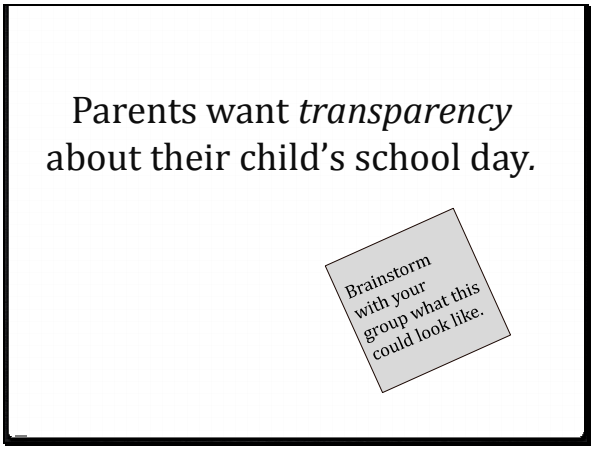
Slide 14



Slide 15



Slide 16



Slide 17

Being More Transparent

Parents would like teachers to

- ✓Share daily particulars
- ✓Notify of issues when they're still manageable
- ✓Provide newsletter updates
- ✓Clarify expectations
- ✓Invite them into the classroom
- ✓Explain the curriculum

Slide 18

Being Transparent

Share daily particulars
Notify of issues when still manageable
Provide newsletter updates
Clarify expectations
Invite them into the classroom
Explain the curriculum

- ✓Individually: Rank order these requests with the most important first and the least important last.
- ✓As a group: Compare your rankings noting similarities and differences. Then give examples of times parents have asked for more transparency.

Slide 19

Insider Opportunities

- ✓Being a mystery reader
- ✓Painting the playground
- ✓Making photocopies
- ✓Working in the cafeteria
- ✓Project demonstrations

(Snell, 2018)

What else?

Slide 20

Insider Opportunities

- ✓Make a list of 5-10 Insider Opportunities for the parents of your classroom.
- ✓Write a brief description for each opportunity, explaining the expectations and any qualifications needed.

Slide 21

Any questions?

?

Slide 22

After Lunch

- ✓Work in groups of 3-5 to create a parent workshop that meets an academic need at your school.
- ✓Design the actual event and any communications leading up to it.
- ✓Presentations will start at 1:30.

Things to Consider:

Motivation
Communication
Invitation
Interaction
Barriers
Parent networking

Slide 23

Lunch time

Let's meet back at 12:30.

Slide 24

Work Time

- ✓Work in groups of 3-5 to create a parent workshop that meets an academic need at your school.
- ✓Design the actual event and any communications leading up to it.
- ✓We'll meet at 1:30 to present our workshop proposals.

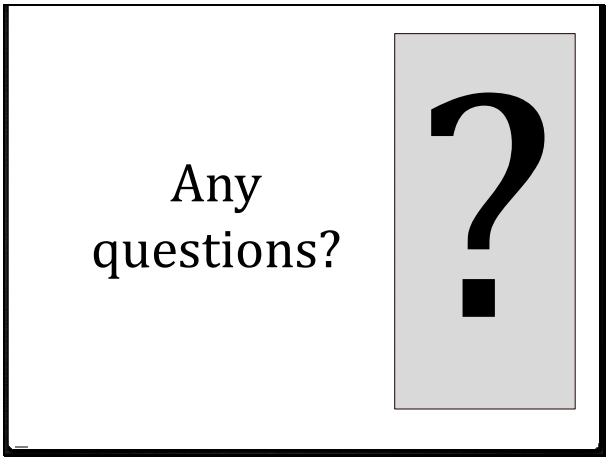
Things to Consider:

Motivation
Communication
Invitation
Interaction
Barriers
Parent networking

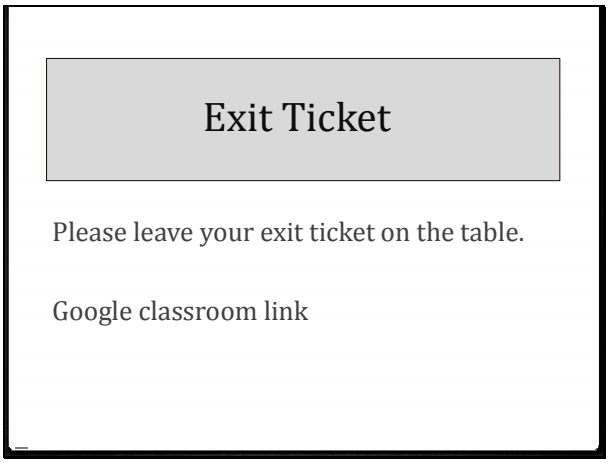
Slide 25

Team Presentations

Slide 26



Slide 27



Evaluation Survey:

Teachers Engaging Parents
Workshop Evaluation

Name (optional):
Date:
Location:
Presenter: Monica L. Nelson

Please circle your response using the following scale.
1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree
N/A=Not applicable

WORKSHOP CONTENT

1. This workshop provided me with strategies to more effective engage parents. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
2. The strategies taught in this workshop were relevant to my job. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
3. This workshop made me feel more confident to work with parents. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

WORKSHOP DESIGN

4. The workshop activities stimulated my learning. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
5. The activities in this workshop gave me sufficient practice and feedback. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
6. The difficulty level of this workshop was appropriate. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
7. The pace of this workshop was appropriate. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
8. There were a variety of activities that kept me engaged. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR (FACILITATOR)

9. The instructor was well prepared. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
10. The instructor was helpful. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
11. The instructor answered all of my questions. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

WORKSHOP RESULTS

12. I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop.1 2 3 4 5 N/A
13. The workshop was a good way for me to learn this content. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
14. I would recommend this workshop to a coworker. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

15. What improvements would you recommend to this workshop?

16. What was least valuable about this workshop?

17. What was most valuable about this workshop?

18. Other comments:

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Pseudonym:
Interview time and date:
Location:

Say: Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Through your responses, I hope to gain a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of parents about parent involvement in this school. If you are interested, the study summary will be made available at the end of the study. I want you to know that I am using a pseudonym for you and all of your answers will be kept confidential. The information I gather will only be used to answer the research questions, not to evaluate or judge you in any way. This interview should take about an hour. Remember that you can stop at any time and you don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Do you have any questions for me before we start?

Questions
The interview questions were designed to answer the research questions:

RQ1: How do parents describe their role within their child's school?

- Describe what you believe to be the perfect school event for parents.
    - Probe: Who would be invited?
    - Probe: Where would it be held?
- If you were creating a parent events calendar, what types of events would you include?
    - Probe: Can you think of any other events you would include?
- Do you feel the welcomed by the school employees?
    - Probe: What does the school do to create a welcoming or unwelcoming environment?
    - Probe: What do teachers do to make you believe you are welcome or not welcome at the school?

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions about their reasons for participating or not participating in school events?

- How would you describe a highly involved parent?
    - Probe: What contributions could a highly involved parent make to a school community?
    - Probe: How would you describe your level of involvement?
    - Probe: What activities do you participate in?
    - Probe: Why are those activities appealing?
- What are your experiences with attending school events?
    - Probe: Describe the best event you attended.
    - Probe: Describe an event which you attended that you would consider unsuccessful.

- Probe: Tell me about an event you decided not to attend and why you made that decision.

RQ3: What are parents' perceptions about what the school administrators and teachers can do to increase parental participation?

- How do you usually find out about school events?
- How would you like to be informed about upcoming events?
- What do you believe to be the school's role to provide parents with guidance so they can help their children?
- How does the school reach out to you to ask for your ideas and suggestions for events that could help you work with your child at home?
- Describe your experiences of attending parent workshops at the school.
    - Probe: Describe benefits you received from attending school events.
    - Probe: Describe drawbacks of attending educational events.